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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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The special feature of this issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* focuses on humanitarian protection.[1] After little more than a decade, 'protection' has grown from a collection of activities executed by a handful of specialised agencies to being a key component of humanitarian action. Yet protection issues are still not systematically identified and addressed in humanitarian response and advocacy. In his thought-provoking lead article, Marc Dubois argues that humanitarian actors must develop a more critical perspective on humanitarian protection, including an honest acknowledgement of their limitations. Related issues are examined in articles focused on the civilian protection mandates of peacekeeping missions and the challenges the protection cluster in Timor-Leste faced during the transition from emergency to development programming. We also examine World Vision's work to develop and test minimum standards in protection, a new field manual from ActionAid Australia and efforts to develop more community-based approaches to protection in Afghanistan, Burma, Kenya and Pakistan.

The policy and practice section contains a wide range of articles, including the application of health sector lessons from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to the recent earthquake disaster in Haiti; humanitarian financing in the Pakistan earthquake response; a defence of the UN's policy on integration; capacity-building in Northern Uganda; lessons learned from GTZ's Cash-for-Work programme in northern Afghanistan; and a Red Cross/Red Crescent field training model for preparing humanitarian workers for disaster response.

As always, we welcome any comments or feedback, which can be sent to hpn@odi.org.uk or to The Coordinator, Humanitarian Practice Network, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK.

1 Several of the articles in this issue are based on presentations made during the September 2009 Protection Conference in Oxford, co-hosted by the Refugee Studies Centre and the Humanitarian Policy Group.

Protection: fig-leaves and other delusions

Marc DuBois, MSF

Over the past decade, 'protection' has grown from a specialised function to a key piece of jargon in humanitarian circles: from a side issue to a core component of humanitarian action. As it has grown, so has the need for scrutiny. The articles in this special issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* attest to the drive to improve our collective humanitarian protection practice, and the equal push to develop a critical perspective on the emergence of humanitarian protection as an industry of its own.

Humanitarian protection aims to ensure that humanitarian action does not place people at greater risk (e.g. the well-worn example of not locating camp latrines in a dark corner of a camp) *and* to protect people from harm in the first place. It has been defined as encompassing 'all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e., human rights, humanitarian law and refugee law)'.[1]

> examining the real-world impact of protection activities highlights massive benefits, as well as unintended consequences

How well this concept is understood outside of humanitarian circles is less evident. At the Humanitarian Congress in Berlin last October, I asked the audience for a show of hands in response to the following: if you were walking in the street and saw a group of people beating a child on the ground, which of the following activities would you consider protection?

1. Run across the street and stop the attacker.
2. Keep walking. Lobby for better street lighting.
3. Run home and write down everything you witnessed as a report for publication.
4. Visit the family of the victim to offer replacements for torn clothing.

We humanitarians consider all four of these responses examples of humanitarian protection, whereas the public overwhelmingly thinks only of the first. This wilfully ignored discrepancy has consequences, and raises important issues regarding the significance of our protection activities.[2]

Examining the real-world impact of protection activities highlights massive benefits, but is also beginning to reveal unintended consequences – consequences which must be factored much more fully into our thinking.

This article begins with the assumption that we in the humanitarian community may well be able to articulate the limits of humanitarian protection within our own specialised discourse, but have devoted insufficient critical scrutiny to these limits in our actions and public discourse. In the end, the protection work of humanitarian NGOs may contribute to undermining the rights of people, all the while trumpeting the value of a protection-based approach.

The delusions of humanitarian protection

The rise of the humanitarian protection establishment has created a new enemy: the 'protection gap'. In places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur, we are called upon to fight this new enemy, to fill this gap. We must correct our analysis: it is not the lack of protection activities or legal protections *in the first instance*, but the surplus of violence that is the primary problem. Our obsession with protection reflects the degree to which we define the external environment through our activities. A sort of self-flagellation in the humanitarian community over the death and destruction of our beneficiaries has shifted the spotlight away from the violence and its perpetrators. Suddenly, rape, murder, pillage and general mayhem are a failure of aid-givers, and are addressed *in the first instance* through protection activities aimed at bridging the gap, rather than directly stopping the crimes.

Our humanitarian-centric analysis of this 'gap' amounts to misdirection, and it is the perpetrators who gain, followed by those authorities responsible for ensuring the protection of people. The logic of the protection gap pushes our gaze inward. How do we explain the gap between how the world depicts the violence of Darfur and the humanitarian community's labelling of Darfur as a 'protection crisis'?[3] To what degree have we lost sight of the fact that protection of civilians during periods of violent crisis (in the sense of providing physical safety) is not our job?

The humanitarian community, with enthusiastic support from major donors, has gone about building a protection bureaucracy – protection officers, protection working groups, protection modules, protection training, protection partnerships, protection monitoring. This has allowed protection to become one of the key focal issues in any

1 S. Giossi Caverzasio, *Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards* (Geneva: ICRC, 2001).

2 Marc DuBois, 'Protection: The New Humanitarian Fig Leaf', *Humanitarian Aid on the Move (URD Newsletter)*, April 2009, www.urd.org/newsletter/IMG/pdf/Protection_Fig-Leaf_DuBois.pdf.

3 Sara Pantuliano and Sorcha O'Callaghan, *The 'Protection Crisis': A Review of Field-based Strategies for Humanitarian Protection in Darfur*, HPG Discussion Paper, December 2006, p. 6.

given emergency (earning cluster status in the UN), along with stalwarts such as food security and healthcare. Hence, the protection gap is closed by ensuring that efforts are made to prevent violence through training and awareness, documentation and monitoring of violence, lobbying, facilitating, organising, disseminating and so on. Indicators for progress include increased participation in meetings and the issuing of regular reports. The many excellent suggestions and guidance notes that fill books such as Diane Paul's *The Sheltering Tree*, ALNAP's work on protection or Oxfam's excellent *Improving the Safety of Civilians: A Protection Training Pack* deserve praise and should be incorporated into our daily activities. But we have lost sight of the meaning of these actions, or more importantly the meaning of the word we use to describe them. None of this activity is in the same class as the above-described 'Run across the street and stop the attackers'. Rather, it is humanitarian protection – something most people do not think of as protection at all.

ALNAP characterises the development of protection thinking in humanitarianism as 'a new determination to develop truly practical programming that protects people from all forms of violation, exploitation, and abuse during war and disaster'.[4] That seems fairly ambitious – something of the order of bringing peace, harmony and prosperity to all people on Earth. Do we humanitarians really believe we can achieve such a goal? Of course not. The key to our hubris lies in the ambivalent meanings given to the term 'protection'. There is ample room for confusion: protection as a legal framework, protection as a set of activities to promote respect of that framework and protection as activities designed to stop violence. Hence, the real protection gap lies in the gap between the everyday understanding of the word and the specialised meaning given to it by humanitarian NGOs – the gulf between the protection people need and the protection we humanitarians offer.

Why does any of this matter? That humanitarians suffer delusions of grandeur when it comes to their role and capacity for protection seems harmless. It is not. The major political actors and national authorities – those with the responsibility and the means to act – have consistently hidden their failure to do so beneath the well-trumpeted and overly glorified provision of humanitarian assistance. In the end, the illusion – the humanitarian fig-leaf – that crises were being dealt with camouflaged the lesser truth that they were being dealt with only superficially. Yet it now seems that, having delivered the message that aid is not enough, we humanitarians have substituted a specialised notion of protection of rights for actions designed to provide *directly* and forcefully for the safety of people. We have seized upon the language of protection, colonised it and made the calculated decision to recast even the most mundane of aid activities as protection. The provision of a blanket takes on the garb of protection work; distributing sacks of corn flour equates to protecting people's right to food.

Promoting the message that aid is not a solution to the problem is anathema to us providers of aid. And

institutional donors do not broadcast the fact that their funding purchases sticking-plasters, not cures. Nobody wants their publics to be critical of the superficiality of aid-only efforts. Enter humanitarian protection centre-stage. The public feels good, and donor governments brag about their protection work, satisfying constituents who would call for more than throwing food at the problem. They are able to replace the use of military or diplomatic force in defence of people's lives with the funding of a civilian protection bureaucracy to defend rights. Important? Yes. Positive impact? Yes. Incomplete? Certainly. Dishonest? Good question.

What does the public perceive when we humanitarians boldly market ourselves as protectors? That the world is doing all it can to make sure people in places like Darfur are safe. Even more important, they *notice* the particular organisations that are active in this regard. Favoured protection activities – reports, campaigns, letters to the editor, media appearances, mass SMS messages – are all forms of work on behalf of beneficiaries. Unlike aid activities, they also tangibly serve the organisation, improving its financial health. Coincidence? The logic in favour of mainstreaming protection extends beyond the work done on the ground, and expediently dovetails with the incessant drive for public visibility on crisis issues.

Why does this matter?
If the integrity of humanitarian organisations were the only casualty of this delusion being perpetrated on our publics, it would warrant the hand-wringing of insiders, but little more. But what happens when others take notice of our focus on protection? In their eyes, the unqualified goodness of the mainstreaming and programming of protection activities may seem less obvious.

First, people in places like Darfur and DRC will notice the focus on protection. The protection agenda combines ease and lack of cost. Food, medicine, water and shelter are expensive, requiring lots of support staff and difficult logistics. By comparison, the 'advocacy' of protection work can be inexpensive and undemanding. An organisation can partake in the noble business of fighting violence – the underlying causes of food shortages and lack of shelter – rather than responding to the symptoms. Do we understand the underlying motivations for the growth of humanitarian protection? Have assistance and protection been juxtaposed, meaning less aid and more monitoring, training and lobbying?[5]

Second, governments have also noticed. When I was defending an MSF report to the Sudanese authorities, they charged that the only reason for this public reporting was to increase donations. In this regard, the *perception* that humanitarians are busy making noise for their own financial gain endangers their presence and undercuts the

4 Hugo Slim and Andy Bonwick, *Protection – An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, ALNAP, 2004.

5 The attacks on women IDPs seeking firewood outside of the relative safety of some of the big camps in Darfur became almost proverbial. A cynic could argue that the piles of reports written about this protection gap, if provided to the women, would have easily fulfilled their need for firewood. The gap was well-documented, yet nobody delivered the aid – firewood – that was its root cause.

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power of the protective message. Such accusations will never disappear. But a far more serious threat is posed by the fact that a government's suspicions may not always be completely unfounded. These issues call to mind the central theme of Hugo Slim's *Killing Civilians*, namely that the perpetrators of all this violence understand it completely differently from the way that we humanitarians do.

Third, there are the unintended consequences of protection work. For example, forceful advocacy on behalf of refugees may risk *refoulement* or the non-admission of newly arrived asylum seekers. Finally, there is a great risk to humanitarian access to people in crisis from the linkage between protection activities and their potential to embarrass governments or directly threaten the interests of powerful individuals. Engaging in protection work involves a careful analysis of the potential backlash. In certain contexts, however, humanitarians no longer control the *meaning* of their protection activities as interpreted by those with power, guns or blood on their hands.

The actual and perceived cooperation of NGOs with the International Criminal Court has sharpened the potential backlash against agencies engaged in certain types of protection work. In Darfur, MSF's mental health programmes, which involved counselling, were forcibly curtailed by the authorities because they resembled interviews documenting abuse, and so aroused suspicion.

As humanitarians we have thumped our fists on the hallowed tomes of the Geneva Conventions to demand access to civilians in need of assistance. The 'right of initiative' clearly establishes the right of an impartial humanitarian entity to offer its services in a conflict situation without this offer being interpreted by states as an unfriendly or hostile act. Others – from Human Rights Watch to the BBC – do not possess such a right, no matter how salutary their work. At what point, though, does a humanitarian agency lose this right of access if its essential aim is to replicate the work of a human rights organisation? At what point does this question affect the entire industry's access? Does IHL oblige governments to tolerate hordes of rights workers running around in the guise of relief personnel? And, with the creation of the International Criminal Court, can we imagine government officials facing the threat of prosecution for war crimes

actually letting this happen with any regularity? What impact does this have on the humanitarian imperative for food, water and healthcare?

And what of the impact emerging from victims and beneficiaries themselves? In many contexts the humanitarian apparatus has become the primary vehicle through which populations exercise their right to be protected from harm – humanitarians becoming the principal conveyor of this fundamental human wish. If people employ the humanitarian community as their protector, then any hope of neutrality *vis-à-vis* the perpetrators is destroyed. Instead, we become the enemy of the beneficiaries' enemies.

Conclusion

While NGOs and governments pat themselves on the back for the launch and growth of the humanitarian protection establishment, violence against people maintains its own forward momentum. We should not abandon our work – we *should* pat ourselves on the back for breaking through the barrier of 'aid alone'. But we need to understand and accept the limits of humanitarian protection. First, we should stop lamenting the protection gap as if it were the real problem. Second, we need to put institutional interests aside and practice aid/protection for the sake of the beneficiaries. Third, we need to scrutinise humanitarian protection much more closely, both in terms of the reasons for and logic of our commitment, and in terms of its impact.

We humanitarians need to be honest about what we call protection. Limited risk reduction or raising awareness should not be branded 'protection' activities when we know the word conveys so much more to the public. That is false advertising – placing the shiny wrapper of protection on our work and handing it to a public unable to look inside the box. Put simply, the protection fig-leaf is our creation, and it is our responsibility to put it right.

Marc DuBois is Executive Director, Médecins Sans Frontières – United Kingdom. The views expressed here are the author's, and should not be imputed to his employer. Substantial portions of this paper have been published previously elsewhere. See Marc DuBois, 'Protection: The New Humanitarian Fig Leaf', *Humanitarian Aid on the Move (URD Newsletter)*, April 2009, www.urd.org/newsletter/ IMG/pdf/Protection_Fig-Leaf_DuBois.pdf.

Safety with dignity: integrating community-based protection into humanitarian programming

Kate Berry and Sherryl Reddy, Network Paper 68, March 2010

This Network Paper explores the concept and practice of community-based protection, and highlights opportunities and challenges associated with implementing a community-based protection approach. The paper draws on ActionAid's publication *Safety with Dignity: A Field Manual for Integrating Community-based Protection across Humanitarian Programs*, which aims to provide practical guidance for field staff working in humanitarian and development settings on how to integrate community-based protection across sectors and contexts.

A community-based protection approach to humanitarian and development programming reflects the right, capacity and desire of crisis-affected communities to engage in international humanitarian efforts to enhance their protection. It recognises that effective protection for crisis-affected people requires strong and genuine partnership between communities, states and international actors, in order to understand and address the complex factors involved in achieving safety and dignity for people in crisis situations.

Making space for community-based protection in the humanitarian protection landscape

Kate Berry and Sherryl Reddy

First we lost our lives, then we lost our dignity – it seemed like international humanitarian agencies had their own agendas – they did not give attention to our own capacities to cope with the crisis. Local NGO volunteer, Gaza, 2009

In recent years, international engagement and activity in the field of humanitarian protection has significantly increased. But has this led to enhanced safety, security and dignity for populations at risk? Or have we somehow lost sight of the core subject, goal and agent of protection – namely crisis-affected communities themselves? Protection practice must reflect the right, capacity and desire of crisis-affected communities to engage, and be engaged, in international humanitarian efforts to enhance their protection. The conceptual and operational frameworks and tools for supporting community-based protection need greater attention and development. In this article, we explore community-based protection, drawing on insights and operational experiences gained through the development and field-testing of ActionAid's manual, *Safety With Dignity*.[1]

have we lost sight of the core subject, goal and agent of protection?

Humanitarian protection

When reflecting on the concept and practice of humanitarian protection, the major issues and debates that come to mind generally revolve around international and state actors. Protection is often conceived of as an activity or process delivered in large-scale humanitarian crises, as part of an organised humanitarian response. Equally, protection is often conceived as a response to the most visible and serious human rights violations perpetrated by states, armed groups or international actors. These conceptions focus our attention on primary (i.e. state in question), secondary (i.e. other states) and tertiary (i.e. international mandated and non-mandated humanitarian actors) levels of protection engagement. As such, humanitarian protection is largely centred on the international community's protection presence, actions and efforts.

This understanding of humanitarian protection arguably detracts from, rather than enhances, the protection of communities. It often fails to recognise and respond to protection problems that exist at individual, family, social network and community levels; frequently fails to involve the community – beyond initial assessment – in the design, development and evaluation of humanitarian response programmes and interventions; and consequently may lead to humanitarian aid-induced protection problems.

While the role and responsibility of primary, secondary and tertiary duty-bearers is not in question, the role and responsibility of those we seek to protect – at-risk individuals, families and communities – has arguably been marginalised in current international humanitarian protection discourse and practice. The role of crisis-affected populations and communities in surviving and responding to protection threats is critical – not simply as informants to, and beneficiaries of, international humanitarian assistance and protection, but as active analysts, evaluators and agents of their own protection. Yet this features little in current humanitarian protection practice, despite the reality that affected communities actively engage in their own protection before, during and after a humanitarian crisis; before, during and after the entry and exit of external humanitarian actors.

The role of communities in protection

Communities engage in their own protection on a daily basis.[2] They are often the first line of assistance for people affected by crisis and a source of continuing support. Communities can organise their resources to prevent, mitigate or respond to protection threats and increase the safety and dignity of the most vulnerable. At the same time, communities can also actively or unintentionally *cause* protection problems or contribute to harm. Individuals, families, social networks and community structures can perpetrate, accept or condone violence or abuse. Community power dynamics, based on gender, caste, class, religion or any other factor, can harm, neglect and isolate people, creating protection problems independent of any humanitarian emergency.

What is community-based protection?

Community-based protection aims to empower communities to achieve their rights with safety and dignity. It engages

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1 *Safety With Dignity: A Field Manual for Integrating Community-based Protection Across Humanitarian Programs*, ActionAid Australia, October 2009, http://www.actionaid.org.au/index.php/protection-manual.html. The manual was developed by ActionAid Australia between June 2008 and July 2009 with funding from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Research, trials and testing of the manual were undertaken by ActionAid offices and local partners in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

2 The term 'community' is used to refer to a range of actors operating at the local level, including individuals, families, social networks (such as friends, neighbours and colleagues), local organisations/charities and civil society (such as social movements, local media, and activists). In using this term, it is acknowledged that defining 'community' is problematic as it assumes a level of homogeneity, unity and common identity by the group, when in reality the term is often used by those outside it. However, it is the most flexible and appropriate term currently available.

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crisis-affected communities – and the humanitarian actors seeking to assist them – in identifying the protection risks of greatest concern to the community, exploring the causes and consequences and reflecting on existing prevention and response strategies.

Community-based protection directs the attention of communities towards protection problems over which they have some control and responsibility. This is possible even in circumstances where the most serious human rights violations are actively perpetrated by the state, non-state actors or international actors. Communities may not be able to stop or prevent such attacks, but they play a critical role in restoring dignity and enhancing physical, economic, social and psychological security for those harmed or affected by such violations.

Community-based protection also recognises that many protection problems *pre-exist* a humanitarian emergency, and may be exacerbated by it. These problems include harmful traditional practices, domestic violence, public violence and criminal behaviour, neglect of persons with special needs and exclusion or discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or other social grouping. Community-based protection therefore acknowledges the need to critically examine the role of communities, recognising them both as sources of support *and* assistance and as sources of threat and harm.

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community-based protection aims to empower communities to achieve their rights with safety and dignity

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Community-based protection is therefore *more than* communities being consulted or taking part in rapid assessment or information-gathering processes. It is a continuous process which engages communities as analysts, evaluators and implementers of their own protection. As such, it can and should be integrated into humanitarian response programmes across sectors and humanitarian contexts.

Operationalising and implementing community-based protection

Very few resources focus on how to integrate community-based protection into humanitarian response programmes. *Safety with Dignity* aims to provide practical guidance for humanitarian organisations on the integration of a community-based protection approach throughout the programme cycle, across sectors and contexts. It draws together key protection concepts, methods and tools, which can be systematically applied to all programming efforts.

The development and field-testing of the *Safety with Dignity* manual documented a range of strategies used by crisis-affected communities to enhance their own protection. These fell into four general categories.

The first category is *positive* protection strategies. Communities actively engage in the mobilisation of resources and allies to develop local strategies for responding to protection problems. For example, in a town in eastern Sri Lanka community organisations and parents were able to stop abuse by teachers against lower-caste children through local-level negotiations with school principals.

The second type of strategy *aims to be positive but has harmful impacts*. Examples can be found in crisis situations such as forced displacement and active conflict, where communities are faced with limited options and must weigh up relative risks. For example, in a town in the occupied Palestinian territories parents chose to send their children to live with grandparents in another town for the duration of the school year in order to reduce the children's exposure to violence from Israeli settlers and ensure the continuation of their studies. While parents recognised that this strategy succeeded in its aims, they also acknowledged the damaging impact of family separation.

The third category relates to *active engagement in negative coping mechanisms*. Here, crisis-affected individuals or communities carry out harmful behaviour as a means of coping with pressures arising from macro-level issues, such as armed conflict or displacement, or life changes such as unemployment, death or divorce. Examples include alcohol and substance abuse, family violence, public violence and suicide. Individuals, families and communities engaging in these strategies failed to recognise their capacity to improve their own protection or their responsibility not to harm others.

The final category is *unrecognised resources and capacities*. There were many situations where communities failed to recognise and utilise available material, natural and social resources. For example, through participatory protection analysis exercises with women in disaster-affected communities in South-East Asia, those taking part in the exercises recognised that their capacity to assist each other was not solely dependent upon, or limited by, their lack of financial resources. The women realised that simple acts, such as sharing stories of grief, caring for each other's children and accompanying each other to the health post, were within their capacity and control, and helped them to recover from the impact of the disaster as well as reducing vulnerability to secondary protection risks, such as depression and neglect of their children.

These examples illustrate that communities regularly evaluate and make choices about their safety and dignity, even where options are limited.

Communities play an essential role in protection, but they do not stand alone. In examining community-based protection strategies, the different yet complementary protective roles of communities and states need to be acknowledged. Communities do not replace the state, or its vital security, justice, legislative and social functions. Community-based protection aims to help affected or at-risk communities take action to prevent and respond to protection issues. This includes supporting communities to join with other actors

at state and international levels in order to promote and strive towards the achievement of effective protection.

Appropriate and effective community-based protection can be operationalised and implemented through:

- Actively recognising the role of communities in their own protection, and building upon existing community capacities as a foundational commitment in protection mainstreaming, integration or stand-alone projects.
- Working together with CBOs and local NGOs to strengthen their capacity to respond to community-identified protection priorities and needs.
- Integrating a community-based protection approach into the assessment, design, implementation and monitoring phases across programmes in all sectors and contexts.
- Ensuring that staff engaged in participatory protection processes are appropriately trained in facilitation skills and do not expose people to harm.

Challenges for community-based protection

While community-based protection is an essential component to building a protective environment, many challenges exist for community-based protection, in theory and in practice. These challenges reflect the operating environment as well as the nature of humanitarian response.

Evolving protection frameworks

Community-based protection is not immune from the challenges facing the wider protection field. In the development of *Safety with Dignity*, the challenge was to provide effective guidance while using a flexible framework and tools that could enable humanitarian organisations to respond to the specific dynamics and protection dimensions of each affected community. The approach adopted in the manual emphasises *analysis*,[3] enabling humanitarian organisations to help affected populations assess their own resources and capacities to reduce threats and vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience.

> **mandated protection actors have raised valid concerns about non-specialist, non-mandated organisations engaging in protection work**

Do no harm

Mandated protection actors have raised valid concerns about non-specialist, non-mandated organisations engaging in protection work without the requisite skills or expertise. As with all humanitarian and development programming, do no harm must be the foundation of any community-based protection intervention, ensuring that such interventions do not expose affected populations to further protection risks.

3 The manual contains a toolkit of participatory protection assessment, analysis and action-planning tools that can be applied, adapted and integrated into humanitarian response programmes throughout the programme cycle, across sectors, and across contexts.

Applicability of community-based protection across sectors and contexts

Operationalising community-based protection has arguably been hampered by an assumption that it is best suited to situations of relative stability. Community-based protection may therefore be *mis*perceived as applicable in development contexts only. In fact, the design and implementation of protection-oriented emergency relief, early recovery and longer-term development initiatives that centre on and spring from the affected population themselves is an indispensable component of humanitarian protection. Community-based protection is critical to support protection interventions, ensure that impacts endure beyond the timeframe of the crisis and avoid aid-induced protection problems.

The approach taken in *Safety with Dignity* is to highlight analysis tools that can be adapted to different humanitarian contexts, including natural disaster, conflict, transition and development settings. It provides guidance on how field staff can work with affected populations to identify their protection concerns and develop positive protection strategies – as far as the context allows – as a framework for interventions across all sectors.

> **too often, humanitarian protection is seen as separate from affected communities themselves**

Conclusion

Too often, humanitarian protection is framed and implemented as an activity, process and goal separate and distinct from local capacities, local protection strategies and affected communities themselves. There is a need to enhance operational awareness and the practice of community-based protection among local, national and international actors engaged in protection work – across sectors and contexts – to support the active engagement of at-risk populations in their current and future protection, as individual and collective agents of change.

Effective protection requires strong and genuine partnership between state and international protection actors and local, community-based actors, which recognises the multi-layered complexity of protecting people in crisis. Effective protection calls for a reorientation of the humanitarian protection discourse and practice that embraces the protective agency of crisis-affected communities and their rights to safety, security and dignity.

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A community-based approach to refugee protection in a protracted refugee situation

Joel Harding and Sheila Varadan, IRC

The Burmese refugee camps on the Thai–Burma border are characterised as a protracted refugee situation.[1] The nine camps spread across four provinces have been in existence since the mid-1980s, and have a collective population of approximately 135,000 people.[2] The ethnic conflict precipitating much of the forced migration continues unabated in Burma, with at least 3,000 people fleeing to Thailand in 2009.[3]

Until 1998, there was no formal protection programming in the camps. UNHCR was barred from entering them, and NGOs were prohibited from implementing programmes focusing on refugee rights. Camp residents faced (and still face) an array of threats from state as well as non-state actors: substance abuse, sexual violence and other criminal behaviour were widespread within the camps; abuse and exploitation at the hands of Thai officials and local communities also occurred, as did intervention from military groups across the border. Years of negative experiences and sparse communication eroded trust and engendered suspicion between Thai and refugee communities. The Thai authorities were reluctant to assert jurisdiction in the camps, while camp residents were equally suspicious of the Thai legal system. To manage the situation, the camps devised their own justice system to handle civil and criminal disputes. Although the system offered some legal remedy, outcomes were less than ideal and the system could not address underlying protection issues. The consequence was a lacuna in protection for camp residents.[4] Refugees were left with little or no access to justice or legal protection within the camps.

In 2007, UNHCR in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) created a programme to improve access to justice and physical protection in the camps. In July 2007, the Legal Assistance Center project (LAC) became operational. Piloted in three camps[5] along the Thai–Burma border, the project provides legal advice and counselling,

facilitates training and mentoring, provides material assistance and offers interpretation and transport services to witnesses and others. The goal of the project, however, is to use community engagement and capacity-building to foster a greater understanding of and appreciation for the rule of law and protection amongst Thai stakeholders and refugees, thereby establishing a functional system for accessing justice, providing legal protection and upholding the basic rights of refugees.

the protracted nature of displacement warranted something other than the traditional emergency response model

The protracted nature of displacement warranted something other than the traditional emergency response model. Because the camps had been in existence for almost 20 years, IRC and UNHCR had to apply protection programming in an unusual humanitarian context. Camp-based judicial institutions could not be overlooked, so engagement and capacity-building within these structures had to be considered. Moreover, with no foreseeable resolution to the political situation in Burma, the protection programme had to be sustainable and flexible with a long-term perspective. What emerged was a model for protection programming grounded in the development framework and focused on community engagement. This article discusses the advantages of such an approach in protracted refugee settings.

A Human Rights-Based Approach to protection programming

Although often cited in development contexts, the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) is not always made explicit in protection programming. The HRBA consists of the following elements: (1) using international human rights standards; (2) empowering target groups; (3) encouraging participation; (4) ensuring non-discrimination; and (5) holding stakeholders accountable to fundamental rights.[6] The HRBA is advantageous in two key respects: it encourages a process that emphasises empowerment, participation and non-discrimination, each of which is vital to achieving sustainability and community engagement; and it grounds the project and its outcomes within a human rights framework, facilitating monitoring and stakeholder accountability. The LAC project applies the HRBA as an

1 The UNHCR defines protracted refugee situations as 'refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in developing countries'. 'Protracted Refugee Situations', Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee, 30th Meeting, UN Doc. EC/54/SC/CRP.14, 10 June 2004, p. 2.

2 See Thai–Burma Border Consortium website, http://www.tbbc.org/camps/populations.htm.

3 The Thai government is not party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor does it recognise refugees within its domestic legislation. Although the government tolerates the camps, the status of residents remains precarious, and they are subject to resettlement or eventual deportation.

4 See J. Harding et al., 'Access to Justice and the Rule of Law', *Forced Migration Review*, Issue 30, April 2008.

5 Ban Mai Nai Soi in Mae Hong Son; an Mae Sariae in Mae Hong Son; and Mae La in Tak.

6 The project adopts the concept of a Rights-Based Approach as defined by the International Human Rights Network in *Human Rights Approaches to Development: Overview*.

essential tool in realising protection programming that is sustainable and community-based.

Government engagement

Prior to the LAC project, many local Thai government departments, particularly in the justice sector, had by and large never visited the camps or engaged with the refugees. To formally mandate the work of the project, the Thai central government sought to establish a government-led Steering Committee[7] to endorse project activities. With the assistance of this committee, IRC has been able to cultivate engagement between local police and prosecutors, juvenile justice and municipal officials and camp leaders. Greater engagement between Thai stakeholders and camp residents has led to increased understanding and collaboration. For example, meetings between Thai judges and camp leaders led refugees to change their perception of the Thai authorities. Refugees became more willing to share ideas and work collaboratively with the Thais. Equally, the Thai judges themselves reached a better understanding of refugees and of the camps in general. Police were brought into the camps to train camp security officers, developing a greater sense of partnership between the two.

Greater trust between Thais and refugees has seen an increased willingness among camp leaders to refer serious crimes to the Thai justice system; in turn, the Thai government is increasingly willing to accept jurisdiction in serious cases and involve itself in the camps. The refugees have come to acknowledge that certain crimes are best handled outside of the camp justice system. For example, cases of murder, serious assault, child rape and drug offences would be handled in the Thai justice system, whereas civil disputes, petty crime, public disorder and minor violence would be handled within the camp justice system. The law reform process described below clearly sets out the jurisdictional boundaries. In the year prior to the LAC project, seven cases were dealt with in the Thai justice system, compared with almost 300 since the project became fully operational. This represents a transformation in the way crime is handled in the camps.

Better relations have also translated into improved mechanisms for dealing with abuse in the camps. For example, tension between Thai security volunteers and camp youth culminated in the shooting of a young camp resident in late 2007. A Thai government Peace Restoration Committee was formed; a process for legal remedies and redress for both parties was devised; and a process of law reform in the camps was initiated. What could have become a protracted stand-off between the Thai volunteers and the refugees became a forum for discussion and confidence-building.

Engaging with refugees

Adopting the principles of HRBA, IRC staff initially worked to win the trust and support of camp leaders. The LAC project focused on relationship-building with senior camp leaders. The project then branched out, to all groups and levels within the camp, using different methodologies and approaches tailored to the stakeholders and their respective positions, including community-based organisations and civil society groups. Engaging with the refugees was essential for the LAC project to be able to build capacity and work with the camps' judicial structure. It also allowed for greater community ownership of protection programming initiatives.

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better relations have translated into improved mechanisms for dealing with abuse in the camps

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The law reform process

The law reform process begun in earnest after the 2007 shooting incident is one example of how better relations between refugees and government authorities can lead to better access to justice and physical protection within the camps. The law reform process was requested by the camp leadership and the Thai authorities. The objective of the process is to establish a legal code for the camps that adheres to Thai law, while also recognising informal justice practices within the camps. For the refugees, the process is an opportunity to inject more clarity and consistency into the informal justice system. For the Thai authorities, it is a chance to become part of the judicial process in the camps, and bring it into conformity with Thai law. IRC provides assistance on Thai law, while a drafting committee discusses and drafts the law. Once a draft is completed, the camp leadership hosts a public forum to discuss the proposed law. All branches and levels of the camps are represented, with special priority given to minority or 'vulnerable' groups. All parties are given an equal voice in the forum; if one group does not agree with the draft, there is discussion until consensus is achieved. Once a draft is approved, it is forwarded to the Thai authorities for review. The authorities are invited to give comments and informally endorse the draft.

The benefits of the law reform process are two-fold. First, a mutually agreed legal code is helpful in reducing conflict and misunderstanding, establishing greater clarity on what is permissible and what is prohibited behaviour in the camps. Second, the law reform process works to change the negative attitudes and local prejudices that cloud relations between the refugees and the Thai authorities by increasing engagement, dialogue and cooperation. Since the reform process began, the Karenni Refugee Community has completed a camp Constitution, created a referral procedure for serious crimes to the Thai justice system and produced a code of general crimes in the camps.

Development and sustainability in protection programming

A development framework, grounded in long-term sustainability and community engagement, is preferred in protracted refugee situations for a number of reasons.

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7 The LAC Working Committee consists of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice, the Thai police and the departments of National Security, Provincial Administration and the Office of the Prosecutor, as well as UNHCR and IRC.

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Because this approach makes more sense in a protracted context it is easier to get stakeholder support. Donors see it as more financially viable; community members who are engaged as key stakeholders in protection programming gain greater control over their own situation; and the host state is provided with management tools better suited to handle protracted refugees situations, in place of a precarious assurance of emergency assistance.

One aspect of the LAC project's sustainability strategy is its network of paralegals in the camps. The long-term objective is for the paralegals to take on the majority of functions: providing legal advice and client follow-up; monitoring detentions in the camps; and assisting in the capacity-building of camp leaders. Using community-based paralegals means that the refugees are engaged and actively participating in their own protection. Such an approach is beneficial, not only in engendering community ownership of the protection programme, but also in achieving sustainability, institutional functionality and community capacity-building. The project encourages a structure that is progressively less reliant on IRC and UNHCR support and donor funds. And it provides the refugees with knowledge and skills that will endure beyond the end of the funding cycle, whether they remain in Thailand, resettle in a third country or return to Burma.

Conclusion

The LAC project has only been fully operational since 2007. Nonetheless, initial results are promising. As mentioned above, the numbers of refugee cases handled by the Thai justice system has increased dramatically. In 2008 and 2009, the Thai authorities provided, for the first time, workshops for camp leaders on policing, security and the law. Both the Thai authorities and the refugees have provided positive feedback on their experiences with the LAC project.

The LAC project represents a new approach to programming in protracted refugee settings. Faced with the complexities of a long-term situation, LAC opted for a project that did not follow the traditional emergency response model. Using HRBA, LAC designed a project model grounded in a development framework, focused on sustainability and community engagement. The objective was to create a programme that is not only empowering to the refugees, but also sustainable for donors and the host state.

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Exploring the role of community partnerships and empowerment approaches in protection

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Even in the face of extreme poverty, conflict and crisis, civilians often play a critical role in responding to threats to their safety and dignity and violations of their fundamental rights. The focus on legal duty-bearers in the academic discourse on protection does not go far enough to acknowledge the part that non-formal actors, including affected communities themselves, play in protection. This is particularly true in contexts where effective government presence is lacking or non-existent. This article pulls together knowledge from Church World Service (CWS) programmes implemented in East Africa and Afghanistan to illustrate how community-based empowerment approaches can reduce protection threats and increase individual and community capacities to cope. While the contexts and conflicts referenced are different in many ways, programmes in these areas illustrate the potential positive impact of community-based empowerment approaches on civilians' safety and dignity.

Giving Hope in East Africa

The *Giving Hope* programme helps child heads of household, or youth caregivers, achieve self-sufficiency through an empowerment and asset-building methodology. An estimated 12 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa have taken on the role of heads of household. Over a period of three years (2003–2005), CWS worked with partners across East Africa, particularly in Rwanda, to identify and address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS and conflict. The *Giving Hope* programme methodology evolved out of this collective experience.

Rather than focus on their vulnerability, *Giving Hope* highlights youth caregivers' inherent capacities and strengths, including their knowledge, skills and relationships. Participants form peer support groups of about 10–15 individuals, and choose an adult from the local community to act as facilitator. Youth group members take turns assisting each other with income-generating projects, financed through an asset-building fund. From 2004 to March 2009, *Giving Hope* programmes engaged a total of 9,511 youth caregivers in 434 communities in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Mozambique, touching the lives of 31,183 children living in youth-headed households.[2]

1 Marvin Parvez, Daniel Tyler, Montrella Cowan and Andrea Lang also contributed to this article.

2 T. Mott et al., *Giving Hope: Asset-based Empowerment and Reconciliation for Youth Caregivers*, Church World Service/East Africa, May 2009.

Children in Mathare slum, Nairobi

Impact of post-election violence on youth caregivers in Kenya

The outbreak of violence in Kenya that followed allegedly fraudulent elections in December 2007 left more than 1,100 people dead and at least 300,000 internally displaced by the end of 2008. Poorer areas were among those hardest hit – including areas with high concentrations of orphans and youth-headed households. In the Kibera slum in Nairobi, where violence was particularly acute, more than 50% of residents are unemployed, and tens of thousands are AIDS orphans.

> rather than focus on their vulnerability, *Giving Hope* highlights youth caregivers' inherent capacities and strengths

Young people played a pivotal role in the violence, with youth mobs incited by politicians and community leaders attacking, raping and murdering civilians. While the violence had an ethnic character, the fact that so many young people participated can be seen as a function of their own frustration at a lack of economic opportunity and an oppressive political system, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians and elders pursuing their own interests.

Although *Giving Hope* participants generally fit the same socio-economic and demographic profiles as the youths who engaged in violence, the majority of participants stood aloof from the violence. Instead, participants in the *Giving Hope* programme demonstrated that they were better prepared to cope with, respond to and resist violence than their youth counterparts. There are numerous reports of youth programme participants who intervened to stop other youth from rioting, protected women from rape and

organised community meetings in an effort to encourage dialogue. As an example, Rose, a participant from the Mathare slums in Nairobi, witnessed the death of her brother, who was killed when they left their home to search for kerosene in the midst of a mob. A police officer shot in the air to disperse the crowd, hitting an electric wire that fell on Rose's brother. Months later, while speaking of her brother's death, Rose was still healing. Yet she was also deeply grateful for the support she had received from her youth group, saying:

> *Our relatives had fled upcountry, afraid of losing their lives. But my friends from the working group gave us support. They stayed with us every day. They would come to check on us and help us with work. They comforted us and supported us in making funeral arrangements and meeting some of the costs … I received booster capital [to rebuild my business].*

Rather than retaliating, Rose continued to meet her support group and participated in peace marches and community meetings. Through these activities, she has mended relations with friends from other ethnic groups, and maintained her dignity and means of survival.

Around the country, youth groups re-established and restocked more than 100 small businesses, and carried out additional income-generating activities. They also organised public events, including a conference in Kisumu that brought together 500 young people to discuss peace and reconciliation; arranged over 50 community sporting tournaments, promoting peaceful social interaction; and produced a television documentary highlighting the role youth played during and after the violence.

While not an explicit programme objective, a secondary result of the *Giving Hope* programme in Kenya was increasing community capacity to promote safety and dignity in times of crisis. From within a protection risk-

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reduction framework, the programme was successful in reducing vulnerability to exploitation and incitement to violence and increasing people's capacity to cope with violence. While this is not a means to stop ongoing attacks on civilians, it is an important component in long-term, sustainable civilian protection.

Relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan

Three decades of conflict and ten years of drought have resulted in widespread civilian insecurity in Afghanistan. There is little or no government presence in many areas, infrastructure is damaged or non-existent, livelihoods capabilities have been diminished, social support mechanisms ruptured and public services destroyed. Recent estimates put the unemployment rate in Afghanistan at about 40%. Violence is both a cause and a symptom of insecurity: in a November 2009 survey, 70% of respondents characterised poverty and unemployment as driving forces behind conflict.[3] Meanwhile, civilian aid workers are increasingly targets of armed groups. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 38 aid workers were killed, 147 abducted and 73 aid envoys and 63 aid facilities attacked in 2008.[4]

In this context, CWS and partners in Afghanistan implement programmes to address food security, water and sanitation, shelter, health and education needs. In Kandahar and Shamali, families returning after prolonged displacement in Pakistan and Iran are provided with support and resources to resettle and rebuild. In Nangahar, a community health project has significantly reduced maternal and child mortality: in 2007, the neonatal mortality rate in areas served by the Nangahar health programme was five per 1,000 live births, compared to 60 in the general population. In Zabul, reconstruction efforts include rebuilding infrastructure for agriculture and livelihoods activities.

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local community members are active partners in the design and implementation of interventions

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A key factor in the ability of CWS to carry out development and humanitarian programming in Afghanistan is the community-based approach the agency has adopted. Before beginning programmes, provincial and district *shuras* (local leadership councils) are consulted to establish criteria for beneficiaries and to publicise information in local communities. Local community members are active partners in the design and

implementation of interventions. Some programmes have a community contribution component, whereby beneficiaries contribute their own labour to infrastructure projects in exchange for construction materials. Other programmes engage community members in neighbour-to-neighbour outreach. In this way, community members gain vocational skills (in masonry, carpentry and healthcare) which increase their chances of employment once projects are completed.

The secondary benefits of a community-based approach are numerous, and sustainable. For example, work in Kandahar has improved relations between civilians and local and provincial government representatives. Whereas in the past people had no confidence in the authorities, they now approach them with concerns and questions. Community-based organisations have also been strengthened through this process.

One indicator of increased civilian protection as a secondary outcome of this approach is the diminished prevalence of poppy cultivation in programme areas, particularly in Zabul. Afghan farmers often turn to poppy cultivation for economic reasons, and they face intimidation from the armed groups that control the drug trade. Poppy cultivation also allows armed groups to increase their control over aspects of civilian political, economic and social life. Farmers and community members in the CWS livelihoods programme target areas are committed to reducing poppy cultivation, and follow-up work has shown that fields irrigated by rehabilitated infrastructure built with community involvement are largely poppy-free. This suggests that these communities are better able to assert control over economic activities, and that the threat from illegal armed groups associated with poppy cultivation has diminished. This may be a first step towards enabling communities themselves to resist the destabilising effects of conflict.

The community-based approach in Afghanistan seems to be successful at reducing civilians' vulnerability to exploitation by armed groups, and reducing the threat posed by those groups. That said, it is important that humanitarian and development programming be kept distinct from the counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan. When such programming is implemented by or associated with military actors or political agendas, not only does the quality of the programming decline and often cease to meet best practice standards,[5] but it may in fact place beneficiaries and aid workers in greater danger. Afghans seem to prefer receiving aid from people in civilian rather than military clothing, and are uncomfortable with military-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).[6]

Conclusions

Community-based empowerment approaches can help individuals and communities be better prepared to cope with, respond to and even diminish protection threats.

3 *The Cost of War: Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978–2009*, Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF), Afghan Peace and Democracy Act (APDA), Association for the Defence of Women's Rights (ADWR), Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA), Education Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan (ECW), Oxfam GB, Organization for Human Welfare (OHW), Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) and The Liaison Office (TLO) Report, 2009.
4 *Afghanistan: Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, UNAMA Human Rights Unit Report, January 2009.

5 *Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds: Exploring Afghan Perceptions of Civil–Military Relations*, European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) and the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) Report, 2008.
6 *Ibid.*

While it is important to be realistic about the extent to which community-based responses can be effective in cases where acute harm against civilians is occurring, it is equally important to be realistic about the extent to which state actors control protection outcomes in areas with little or no state presence. Civilian responses can complement those of formal actors in responding to protection threats, even in volatile situations. Further exploration of these community-based approaches may take us one step closer to protection as a preventive rather than a responsive action.

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Standards to incorporate protection into humanitarian response: do they work?

Louise Searle, World Vision Australia, and Kate Sutton, Oxfam Timor-Leste

Many agencies still find it difficult to effectively integrate protection into humanitarian sector programmes. Although protection is a cross-cutting issue in the Sphere handbook and agency staff are trained in the application of Sphere standards, protection issues are frequently not systematically identified and addressed in humanitarian response. Recognising this gap, World Vision Australia undertook a six-month research exercise to code existing standards and indicators relating to protection, leading to the development and publication of *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response*.[1] This tool is intended to help operational agencies to incorporate protection into their humanitarian programming and advocacy. It is not meant to present a comprehensive approach to protection, or to substitute for stand-alone protection analysis and response. Instead, it provides systematic guidance for general and sector staff in the minimum actions that should be taken to improve the safety and dignity of individuals and communities participating in humanitarian programmes.

In 2008, an inter-agency group comprising CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia began field-testing the *Minimum Standards* in Timor-Leste and Kenya, with World Vision UK leading field-testing in North and South Sudan, Somalia, Burma and Sri Lanka. A comprehensive framework was developed to assess the utility of the tool and its effectiveness in assisting agencies to integrate protection into humanitarian response. This

1 See http://www.icva.ch/doc00002448.pdf.

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WASH programming in Timor-Leste

article documents the field-testing process and provides an analysis of the initial results emerging from Timor-Leste and Kenya.

Field-testing process
Component One: Baseline data collection
Baseline data collection involves an assessment of staff knowledge and understanding of protection and protection mainstreaming, a measurement of agency alignment with the standards and an assessment of community perceptions of agency activities and their impact on a community's safety and dignity.

Staff interviews, a review of documentary evidence and observation of practice during field visits are used to gather and triangulate data about current agency practice and to determine agency alignment with each standard. Each of these methods utilises questions based on selected

indicators to determine alignment or non-alignment, and evidence is provided of the relative strengths and weaknesses of agency practice when measured against each standard. Focus group discussions with communities help agencies understand perceptions of protection and of agency impact on community safety and dignity (for more on this, see the accompanying article in this issue on community perceptions of protection in Kenya and Timor-Leste). This provides valuable triangulation and validation of data provided through the document review and staff interviews, and significant insights into the perceived professional competence and quality of agency practice in mainstreaming protection.

A comprehensive baseline report provides each agency with a snapshot of staff knowledge and understanding of protection, details of current alignment or non-alignment with each standard, and recommendations for increasing alignment. It provides a reference point from which agencies can measure performance against the standards over time, and highlights areas the agency can target to improve its practice in mainstreaming protection.

Component Two: Implementation process: human and financial support to reach and maintain the standards

The implementation process is designed to support changes in agency policy and practice through the provision of key technical staff and financial resources. Protection staff are employed in each location to work across participating agencies to support managers and sector staff to implement changes to increase alignment with the minimum standards. Project funding enables adaptations to the design or implementation of sector projects or the development of new initiatives to meet the standards. Field staff work with protection officers to develop 'mainstreaming action plans', which target particular standards and indicators for improvement, and establish a timeline of activities to achieve change.

Component Three: End-line data collection and evaluation

After 12 to 18 months of implementation, end-line data collection examines changes in agency practice and alignment with the standards by repeating the baseline process. An external evaluation collects data on the perceived utility of the tool, the feasibility of implementing the standards and the cost implications of the implementation model.

Application of minimum standards: changes to agency policy and practice

The inter-agency group has finished field-testing the standards in Timor-Leste and Kenya, and this section outlines examples of changes in practice that have occurred as a result of applying the standards and indicators in these contexts.

Institutional-level change

Staff code of conduct: In one agency a protection working group was established to review and update organisational policies to incorporate protection and meet the relevant standards. The working group is a cross-functional team comprising senior managers, technical staff and design, monitoring and evaluation staff. In response to a systematic review of its Code of Conduct, the agency established training for staff on their obligations, translated the code into the local language and disseminated it among community members at project sites. A simple pictorial version of the code was shared with community members who were unable to read. Community feedback mechanisms were concurrently strengthened to provide safe and confidential ways for community members to report suspected or actual misconduct.

Responding to human rights abuses: Common Standard 8 ensures that agencies respond appropriately to incidents of human rights abuse by requiring them to establish policies and procedures to guide response to abuses that staff witness or hear about in the course of their daily work. Baseline data collection in Timor-Leste revealed limited guidance for staff on how to respond in situations of abuse, and most staff members were uncertain about what they should do. In response, agencies are developing and documenting inter-agency procedures that will clearly outline steps for response, prioritising the 'Do No Harm' principle. In Timor-Leste the draft guidelines are being developed in partnership with government agencies and the protection cluster working group.

Inclusion of protection in the project cycle

Baseline data highlighted that the omission of adequate protection questions and analysis during the assessment phase is a key reason why sector staff find it difficult to include protection in programme design. Some agencies have adapted general and sector assessment formats to include questions to consistently identify issues relating to violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation during initial and rapid assessments.

> the omission of adequate protection questions and analysis during the assessment phase is a key reason why sector staff find it difficult to include protection in programme design

The standards and indicators have also demonstrated benefits during the monitoring of sector activities. For example, Food Distribution Points (FDPs) in Kenya now include protection mainstreaming indicators that are monitored by staff during distribution. In addition, staff have been trained in protection, and information relating to protection, particularly safety on routes home from distribution points, is collected in beneficiary homes during Post Distribution Monitoring.

Adaption and re-design of project activities

With staff routinely monitoring and reporting safety concerns associated with food programming, changes have been made to the way in which food programming

Figure 1: Alignment with Minimum Agency Standards (Agency A)
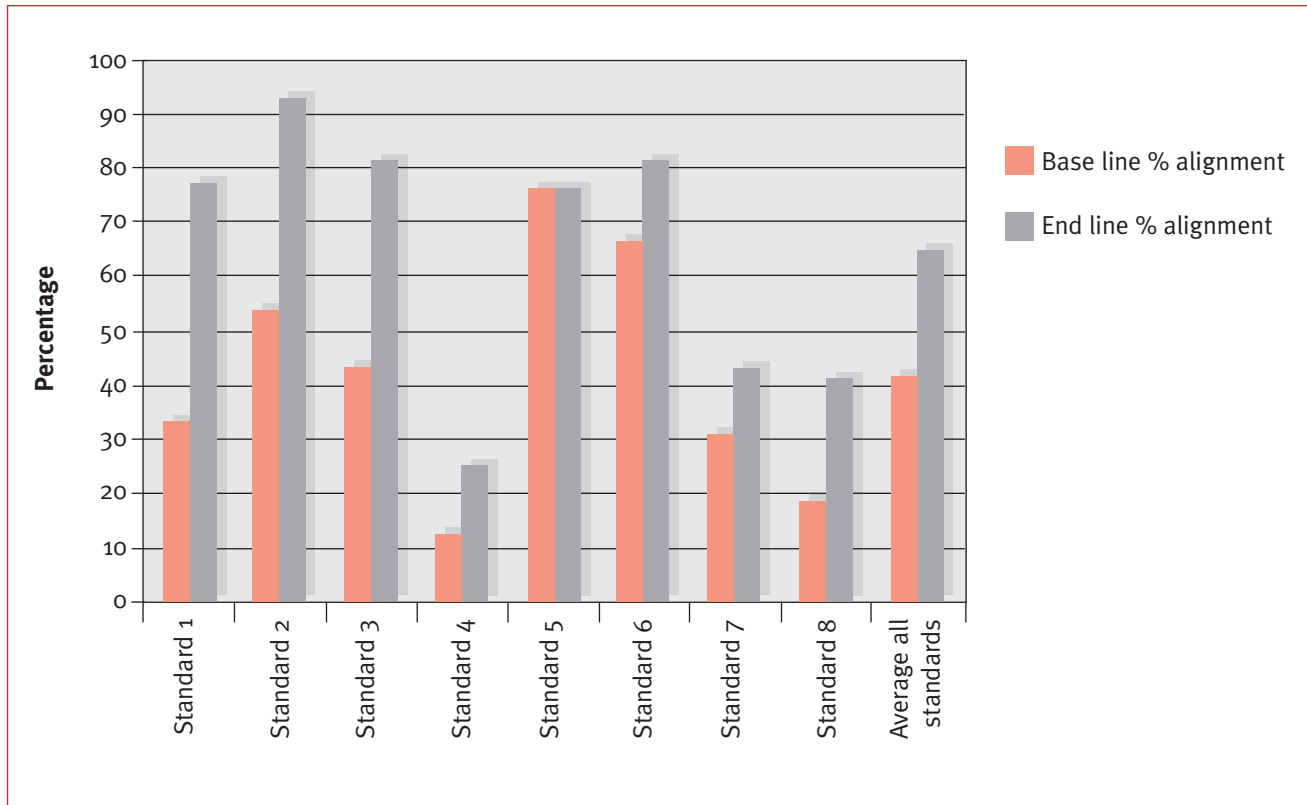
activities are implemented. In some areas the location of the FDP has changed in response to new information about safety on routes to and from distribution. Some FDPs have been split into two smaller points and others relocated. Specific information about the times of day when people are exposed to greatest harm has resulted in more concerted and consistent practice in starting distributions earlier and finishing promptly.

In Timor-Leste water and sanitation teams focused on incorporating protection into disaster preparedness activities. Technical drawings for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities were adapted to ensure access for all users. Contingency stocks were updated with materials and equipment to ensure the safety and dignity of all groups, including ready-to-install solar lighting, locks for toilet doors and frames to assist the elderly and the disabled to access and use facilities.

Field-testing outcomes
Measurable changes in practice
Field-testing demonstrated that agencies can achieve a measurable improvement in alignment with the standards. Overall, all agencies in Kenya and Timor-Leste increased their alignment with the standards. The extent of change is highlighted in Figure 1, which provides the baseline and end-line data for one of the participating agencies.

Agency A increased alignment across all eight standards. In the baseline Agency A was in alignment with two standards (standards 5 and 6), and with five standards (standards 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6) in the end-line. This represents significant

progress in integrating protection in key areas, including prioritising safety and dignity, analysing protection issues in context, providing impartial and equitable assistance and inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The impact of internal and external factors
The integration of protection at an institutional and programming level has not been uniform across all agencies. An independent evaluation report[2] of the inter-agency protection standards project, completed in October 2009, highlighted a number of factors that contributed to successful change within agencies, which should be considered in the development and implementation of protection mainstreaming strategies.

Senior management commitment and consistent engagement has been an important factor. Protection mainstreaming was more effective in agencies where managers were actively involved and a point person was assigned for project liaison. The skill and competency of the project team was also critical. The organisational and capacity requirements for effective protection mainstreaming have been emphasised elsewhere, with training to ensure a basic knowledge of protection, the ability to monitor trends and adapt programmes, an organisational policy and commitment to protection and dedicated headquarters capacity among the prerequisites for effective protection mainstreaming.[3]

2 Dr Paul Crawford, *Evaluation Report: Humanitarian Protection Standards* (2009), AID-IT Solutions Pty Ltd.

3 Sorcha O'Callaghan and Sara Pantuliano, *Protective Action: Incorporating Civilian Protection into Humanitarian Response*, HPG Policy Brief 29, December 2007, p. 3.

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The field-testing itself was also identified as contributing to successful protection mainstreaming. The process of measurement created incentives for change and a foundation for inter-agency accountability. The baseline directed agency attention towards areas of particular weakness, and guided the focus of action for each agency, and the end-line measurement provided valuable lessons regarding the effectiveness of mainstreaming action to achieve the desired change in practice.[4]

Agencies report that the process has been beneficial
Overwhelmingly, agencies reported that the project, and specifically the field-testing process, had been beneficial at the field office level. The evaluation assessed that the project added value in terms of the 'relevance and merit of the standards and associated processes of inculcation'.[5] In a final evaluation workshop in Timor-Leste, agency participants summarised four key outcomes of the project:

- Consciousness: 'we have achieved a new consciousness about protection'; 'we have inspired people to feel strongly about protection'.
- Knowledge: 'we have achieved increased knowledge and understanding of protection'.
- Action: 'we have achieved enhanced protection for communities through concrete action'.
- Institutionalisation: 'we have achieved integration of protection into institutional mechanisms'.[6]

Conclusion

The Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response tool is assisting agencies to improve how they identify and respond to protection issues in humanitarian response. Lessons from field-testing suggest that establishing minimum standards alone does not improve practice. The process of implementation through the presence and technical skill of protection staff, funding to adapt existing programmes, the systematic analysis of agency alignment with the standards and strong institutional endorsement and leadership support are all having a significant influence on agency practice. Applying an inter-agency approach has also enhanced learning and increased efficiency through the development of collaborative responses.

Anecdotal feedback from field staff and initial results from field-testing indicate that the collation of standards and indicators relating to protection, combined with targeted training, technical and financial support to adapt programming and ongoing field monitoring, is helping to shift protection mainstreaming from a somewhat abstract concept to a visible set of issues with a range of clear and tangible responses.

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4 Crawford, *Evaluation Report*, p. 10.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
6 *Ibid.*

Community perceptions of 'protection' in Kenya and Timor-Leste

Yvonne Ageng'o, Nicolau dos Reis da Costa and Louise Searle

Humanitarian protection is widely regarded as encompassing respect for the fundamental rights of people, for their safety, dignity and integrity as human beings.[1] Protection actors are encouraged to work directly with affected individuals and populations, and to strengthen the capacity of communities to protect themselves.[2] But to what extent do agencies and populations at risk share similar definitions, ideas and priorities regarding protection? In 2008 and 2009, Oxfam Timor-Leste, Caritas Australia (Timor-Leste), CARE Timor-Leste and World Vision Kenya conducted 34 focus group discussions in three locations in Timor-Leste and three locations in Kenya. The discussions were one component of baseline data collection to field-test minimum standards for including protection in humanitarian response.[3] The purpose of the discussions was to understand community definitions and experiences of safety and dignity, to gain insight into perceptions of how agency practice impacts on, or influences, safety and dignity, and to compare and contrast the priorities that communities and agencies place on agency response to protection issues.

Findings and analysis
Three critical areas of interest emerged from the community consultation exercises. First, agencies face significant

1 Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, *An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies* (2005), p. 33.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 53. See also International Committee of the Red Cross, *Towards Professional Standards for Protection Work: First Consolidated Draft* (2009), p. 13.
3 CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia, *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response* (2008), http://www.icva.ch/doc00002448.pdf. For more on the development and testing of the standards, see the accompanying article 'Standards To Incorporate Protection into Humanitarian Response: Do They Work?'.

A displaced Timorese child in a camp in Dili, February 2008

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conceptual and linguistic challenges in understanding community perceptions of protection. Second, community perceptions vary greatly, both between different contexts and between different groups within the same context. Third, community priorities for agency action on protection are often at variance with the actions prioritised by agencies.

> ## in many contexts there is no direct translation for the word 'protection', or associated words such as 'safety' and 'dignity'

Translating the concept of protection across different cultural and language groups

The first challenge in understanding community perceptions of protection is finding appropriate terminology to clearly convey the concept. In many contexts there is no direct translation for the word 'protection', or even for associated words such as 'safety' and 'dignity'. In Kiswahili, the national language of Kenya, several words are needed to express the full articulation of a rights-based approach to protection, as outlined in the definition adopted by humanitarian and human rights agencies in 1999.[4] When translating 'protection' into Tetun, the national language of Timor-Leste, even greater challenges arise. Not only does the word 'protection' not have a direct translation, but facilitators were unable to adequately articulate the concept in terms of its component ideas encompassing safety, dignity and rights. There are no Tetun words for 'safety' or 'dignity', and so Bahasa, the national language of Indonesia, and Portuguese terms were used instead. This

limited participation in focus group discussions to people fluent in languages other than their first language, and also required facilitators to prompt focus groups by providing descriptions and examples of what safety and dignity might look like, introducing bias into the findings.

Perceptions of protection

Community perceptions of protection varied greatly. Gender and age group differences were particularly evident, reinforcing that protection interventions must be adapted for different individuals and groups depending on the context and the nature of the threats and violations being encountered.[5] In Kenya, men across geographical locations and ethnic groups perceived the most important protection risks as relating to loss of livelihood, including through theft, cattle raids or ethnic conflict. Many focus groups also referred to the post-election violence in 2008, linking safety to freedom of movement, freedom of speech and the ability to earn a livelihood. Women, by contrast, were much more likely to describe protection as relating to their own personal safety while going about their household and caring duties, especially collecting water and firewood. In Timor-Leste the gender differences are comparable: women frequently identified domestic violence as the key protection concern and discussed safety as it related to themselves and their children within the household. Men reported protection concerns related to coercion during election periods, cross-border attacks and land disputes.

Perceptions regarding dignity tended to be very strongly linked to gender and cultural roles and responsibilities. In Kenya, women defined dignity in terms of receiving appreciation for their household and caring work. All men in the Kenyan focus group discussions strongly associated dignity with being able to provide for their families, including the ability to feed their families and pay school fees. Men felt that their dignity was undermined when they were not given the opportunity to speak or represent their community members in a public gathering or social setting. In Timor-Leste the concept of dignity (or lack thereof) is strongly linked with concepts of 'respect' and 'culture'; for example, women described the traditional practice of 'bride price' as compromising their dignity by turning them into possessions and exposing them to accompanying physical violence. One woman described the bride price practice as 'human trafficking in the family that is covered up with culture'.[6]

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4 See Slim and Bonwick, *An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, p. 33.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.
6 Focus group discussion with a women's group in Oecusse, Timor-Leste.

Perceptions of agency influence and impact on community protection

In Kenya, participants identified examples of agency practice that contributed to and improved their safety and dignity, as well as actions that undermined their dignity and had a negative impact on their safety. At times, both positive and negative examples of agency practice were identified within the same project area, and were associated with the same project activities.

All groups and locations in Kenya identified enhanced safety due to agency presence, largely as a result of agency representation and advocacy to the authorities in relation to community needs. Focus groups also cited safe and confidential mechanisms for voicing concerns to the agency and having their complaints addressed. The manner in which project activities are implemented was also seen as impacting on safety. In several contexts, community members said that the agency carried out its work in a transparent manner, and did not create conflict within the community. In one location, an agency's decision to split project areas into smaller sites enhanced access by reducing travel distances, enhancing security and increasing participation. Conversely, in locations where project sites were some distance away this was seen as having a significant negative impact on community safety. Community members highlighted several examples where food items were delayed or project activities ended late in the day, resulting in significant safety concerns when returning home. Inadequate attention to health and safety issues at project sites was also highlighted.

> **routinely informing project participants of their rights and responsibilities was cited as having a positive impact on dignity**

Community members also explored ideas about agency impact on their dignity. In areas where agencies treated community members with equal respect, including marginalised individuals such as widows and people with disabilities, the agency was described as promoting dignity. Routinely informing project participants of their rights and responsibilities, in writing and in pictorial format, was also cited as having a positive impact on dignity, allowing people to feel informed and meaningfully involved in the humanitarian response. Advocacy by agencies on issues such as protection and the promotion of child rights was identified as contributing to dignity as well as safety.

Minimum standards common to all sectors: perceptions and priorities

In Timor-Leste, a ranking exercise was conducted with communities and NGO representatives in addition to the focus group discussions, with participants being invited to rank a simplified version of the eight standards common to all sectors from the *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response*. Both communities and agencies regarded Common Standard 1 (agencies prioritise the safety and dignity of disaster-affected populations) as most important. Communities and agencies also had similar views on the importance of Common Standard 5 (recognising the state as the primary actor for protection), Common Standard 6 (including the rights, needs and capacities of vulnerable groups in all stages of agency response) and Common Standard 7 (agencies have policies and procedures to govern advocacy responses to protection concerns).

However, opinion varied greatly on the importance of two standards. Common Standard 3 states that 'humanitarian assistance and services are provided equitably and impartially, based on the vulnerability and needs of individuals and groups affected by disaster'.[7] While communities ranked this in third place, local and international agencies put it seventh and eighth respectively. Community respondents engaged in lively debate when considering this standard, and discussed instances where they felt agencies had not provided equitable and impartial assistance. Community members also highlighted the importance of agencies providing equitable access to information, as well as goods or services. This also suggests that, in the Timorese context, the rationale or justification for targeting is not always clearly or widely communicated. The relatively low ranking of this standard by agencies indicates that they may not be aware of how important this standard is for communities. Communities and NGOs also diverged over Common Standard 8, which ensures that agencies respond appropriately to human rights abuses in conformity with their mandate and recognised good practice. Overall, both communities and local NGOs placed this standard in eighth place, while international NGOs ranked it third. Respondents commented that they felt this was not an NGO responsibility but rather an issue to which local leaders (*xefe sucos*) should respond. When community responses were disaggregated by gender, women ranked this standard higher than men, with respondents suggesting that agencies must not remain silent on issues of abuse. This difference in response between men and women may be related to the fact that domestic violence perpetrated by men is one of the most prominent protection issues in Timor-Leste.[8] Men were inclined to see agency responses to 'private' protection issues as undesirable, while women were more open to agency engagement on this issue.

The ranking exercise holds two important lessons for agencies. First, as the minimum agency standards are being field-tested and redrafted over the next two years

7 Common Standard 3 of the *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response* is directly quoted from The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (2004), Common Standard 4: Targeting (p. 35).
8 H. E. José Luis Gueterres, speech to the Third Committee on Human Rights, 17 November 2003, available at http://www.mfac.gov.tp/media/spc031117.html. More generally, see Kathryn Robertson, 'Case Study on Gender-based Violence in Timor-Leste', UNFPA, August 2005, http://www.unfpa.org/women/docs/gbv_timorleste.pdf.

community input will be critical to ensure the development of standards and indicators that are coherent, relevant and useful, both for agencies and for communities. Second, agencies attempting to implement the standards need to know which ones are most important to the communities they are working with, and why. This allows agencies to prioritise protection mainstreaming programming, advocacy and resources in line with community preferences.

Conclusion

The extensive community consultations carried out in Timor-Leste and Kenya have been invaluable. The exercise has helped to inform our understanding of how communities define protection, and how agency action on protection issues can be brought more closely into line with community priorities. The significant barriers to translating and communicating protection concepts across different cultural and language groups need to be recognised and overcome. This may require the adoption of innovative, context-specific methods, such as the ranking exercises used in Timor-Leste. In addition, attempts to get to grips with differences in perception, both within and between cultural contexts, need to be continued and strengthened.

Ultimately, the work undertaken in Kenya and Timor-Leste emphasises again that, in order to effectively identify and respond to community concerns about protection, agencies must develop a deeper understanding of how the community perceives protection. This engagement may take more time and effort than has previously been acknowledged.

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Protection and early recovery in Timor-Leste

Louisa Medhurst

The South-East Asian nation of Timor-Leste declared independence on 20 May 2002 after three years of UN administration following the end of the Indonesian occupation in 1999. Four years later, in 2006, serious civil conflict broke out when sections of the Timorese army (known as 'Petitioners') protested against alleged discrimination by officers from areas of eastern Timor-Leste. Subsequent clashes, which also included the police and wider society, resulted in the displacement of approximately 150,000 people. The Cluster System was officially introduced in Timor-Leste in March 2009 to better coordinate the response to the conflict and also to plan for potential future emergencies, particularly natural disasters. Although the international community had responded rapidly to the crisis, by the time the clusters were introduced and terms of reference and work plans finalised almost all displacement camps had closed; by the end of November 2009, only transitional shelters remained.[1]

The Cluster System was introduced during the latter stages of early recovery, when the transition from humanitarian response to development action was very much under way. Most displaced people had either returned home or settled elsewhere with government support (known as 'recovery packages'), and donors had begun to work with the government on national development priorities.

1 For additional information on displacement and conflict in Timor-Leste, see IDMC's Timor-Leste Overview 'IDPs have returned home but the challenge of reintegration is just beginning', 9 December 2009, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org.

The experience of the protection cluster in Timor-Leste highlights the challenges of introducing the Cluster System at a time when the transition from emergency relief to development programming had already begun. The introduction of the Cluster System presented three key difficulties. First, remaining humanitarian actors and development partners were beginning to talk in terms of 'recovery' or even 'development', and it was difficult to get actors to engage with what is essentially a humanitarian coordination mechanism. Second, the focus of the Cluster System – recovery from the 2006 crisis and future contingency planning – meant that it was difficult for cluster members to engage with protection concerns that did not necessarily stem from that time. There was thus a lack of support for discussions around broader human rights issues. Third, despite the wealth of international work on the subject, there was little understanding on the ground of how to integrate protection into early recovery and development programming.

Protection in early recovery and the transitional phase

At the global level, extensive work has been undertaken to understand the relationship between protection and early recovery. In the Guidance Note on Early Recovery issued by the Global Cluster in April 2008, for example, cash grants, emergency social protection schemes and training peacekeepers in protection are highlighted as protection activities that could potentially be components of an early recovery strategy. As well as existing as clusters independently, the emphasis has been on mainstreaming

both protection and early recovery into the work of the other clusters.[2]

From a protection perspective, the minimum protection standards work of the NGO Inter-Agency Protection Project and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Professional Protection Standards are considerable steps forward at the global level to inform cross-sectoral protection programming. More needs to be done, however, to translate global policy achievements into work on the ground. Timor-Leste is no exception.

What happened on the ground?

By the time the Cluster System was introduced, the immediate humanitarian crisis in Timor-Leste was over. Nevertheless, following direction from the Humanitarian Coordinator and led by the Humanitarian Coordination Unit in the UN Integrated Mission (UNMIT), agencies began to take on leadership and co-leadership roles. Following the deployment of a senior Pro-Cap secondee, the Human Rights Unit of UNMIT agreed to take on the leadership of the protection cluster, with the Norwegian Refugee Council as co-lead. At this time, four government-led protection-related groups were already in place, on Gender-Based Violence, Child Protection, Counter-Trafficking and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, local NGOs met regularly on issues relating to land and housing rights, led by the Haburas Foundation and La'o Hamutuk.

> ## at the global level, extensive work has been undertaken to understand the relationship between protection and early recovery

Following direction from the Humanitarian Coordination Unit of UNMIT and the UNDP Early Recovery Advisor (deployed in May 2009), the protection cluster co-chairs began to work on Terms of Reference for the cluster and to look at membership. It was clear from the start that the government would not be attending protection cluster meetings. By the time the clusters were introduced, the focus of engagement with the international community had shifted to the government-led donor coordination mechanism, the National Priorities Working Groups. There

2 See protection and early recovery cluster documentation at www.humanitarianreform.org.

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Building transitional homes for IDPs in Timor-Leste, July 2007

was a real sense, both from the government and agencies on the ground, that to talk in humanitarian terms was becoming increasingly redundant. There was also little participation from national NGOs, although the national human rights ombudsman, the Provedoria, had begun to engage by October 2009 through the efforts of the co-chairs, and by virtue of the fact that cluster meetings were held in Provedoria's offices.

Despite the absence of national NGO and government engagement, the protection cluster pushed ahead with producing a workplan identifying protection concerns and highlighting any gaps in protection-related programming. Protection focal points were appointed in other clusters to mainstream protection in their work. Additionally, all of the clusters worked on developing contingency plans for future emergencies. This was another example of duplication, since the government, supported by international organisations including UNDP and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), was also working on contingency planning at this time. From a protection cluster perspective, it would have been better to concentrate on supporting the government's own contingency planning by making sure that its plans were protection-sensitive, rather than producing a separate contingency plan for the protection cluster, especially since the situation was not an emergency.

Following several meetings and further analysis it became evident that the major protection concerns identified by the cluster were either being discussed in existing coordination mechanisms or individual organisations had plans to address the issues independently, and often in coordination with the government. Many of these concerns, such as the issue of impunity, did not relate just to the 2006 crisis, but were broader protection issues that had their origins in many years of conflict during the Indonesian occupation, complex land and property rights being just one example.

Because the clusters were initiated to respond to the 2006 crisis and were narrowly defined as working on recovery from that crisis (and contingency planning), participants seemed to be less willing to discuss these bigger issues in the cluster environment. Certainly, the situation was past 'early recovery', but protection issues remained. However, the utility of discussing such issues in the cluster, rather than in the national-led meetings or donor coordination working groups, was questionable.

> one area where the protection cluster could have potentially added value was in the return of IDPs displaced by the 2006 crisis

One area where the protection cluster could have potentially added value was in the return of IDPs displaced by the 2006 crisis. A recent report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre notes that 'The few incidents of re-displacement, and the resettlement of many displaced households to new areas, indicate the continued opposition of some communities to accept returns and highlight the fact that the root causes of the 2006 crisis and subsequent displacement have not yet been effectively addressed'.[3] The government's rapid closure of IDP camps and transitional shelters, which began at the end of 2007, clearly presents a multitude of protection concerns. However, prior to and at the beginning of the camp closure process the Cluster System was not in place. Coordination focused on the logistics of movement out of camps, rather than substantive discussions about return. As transitional shelters began to close, the protection cluster called an ad hoc meeting in July 2009[4] to raise concerns associated with the camp closures. The government did not attend and, while partner organisations recognised the need to address protection concerns, this did not translate into recovery planning in communities of return that specifically took into account the needs of IDPs.

Late as they were, the efforts of the early recovery advisor did lead to discussions on the cash grant given by the government to returned IDPs, and how it might be used to support durable solutions for former IDPs. However, this was not facilitated through the Cluster System, but through an independent group of key international actors formed towards the end of 2009. Nevertheless, the planned research in this area can be seen as a positive step forward in linking protection and early recovery on the ground.

Conclusion: the way forward?

Timor-Leste is clearly far along the road from a humanitarian to a development context, and the Cluster System was brought in too late to have any substantive impact on the ground. There is a need for better understanding of protection issues among development actors in transitional contexts. It has been noted that the protection debate was often seen as IDP- and particularly humanitarian-related, and some actors seemed to feel that, with the closure of the camps, the government would not be open to discussion of humanitarian concerns. Nonetheless, and regardless of the existence or non-existence of the protection cluster, analysis of protection issues in Timor-Leste is not necessarily as politically sensitive as international organisations may believe.

More work, both internationally and on the ground, is needed to understand what role, if any, the protection cluster can play in early recovery and development contexts like Timor-Leste. The Cluster System was flawed, especially given the fact that there was little room for debate in the cluster context around broader human rights issues. Actors should have considered much earlier how to engage with national human rights bodies (including the government) and the development coordination mechanism (National Priorities). Actors in the protection cluster in Timor-Leste would have been better placed supporting existing Timorese-led human rights coordination mechanisms.

The protection cluster ultimately did not work well for a number of reasons, including poor timing and lack of focus, inadequate support from international actors and poor engagement with Timorese bodies. In terms of future recommendations, the cluster certainly needs to support government-led contingency planning and it is not too late for members to provide input to national development plans, but there is little real value in the cluster as a body meeting regularly. Remaining recovery issues, especially around durable solutions for previously displaced persons, do need coordination, but UNDP should lead this process, making sure that protection is mainstreamed throughout discussions, rather than existing as a separate cluster.

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3 See IDMC, 'IDPs have returned home'.
4 For the website on the protection cluster in Timor-Leste, see http://sites.google.com/site/clusterstimorleste/the-cluster-system/protection.

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HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION

International peacekeeping missions and civilian protection mandates: Oxfam's experiences

Nicki Bennett, OCHA

Since 1999, UN peacekeeping missions have been explicitly mandated to protect civilians under threat. On the ground, however, there remains a significant degree of confusion amongst soldiers and civilians working within peacekeeping missions about what exactly this civilian protection mandate entails. This article provides a brief summary of Oxfam's experiences of engaging with peacekeeping missions around their protection responsibilities in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad and Somalia. It argues that UN bodies and Member States must provide peacekeeping missions with better leadership and guidance to implement their protection mandate.

UN peacekeepers on patrol in eastern DRC, October 2008

Civilian protection within UN peacekeeping

Recent years have witnessed an almost unprecedented surge in the deployment of UN peacekeeping missions. There are currently more than 120,000 staff working for the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), deployed in 18 UN-led peacekeeping missions around the world, at an annual cost of more than $8 billion. Increasingly, these missions have begun to shift away from the traditional structure of peacekeeping (the monitoring of a negotiated agreement between two warring parties) and towards more complex 'multi-dimensional' missions, whose broad list of tasks might include anything from holding elections or building the capacity of state institutions to protecting civilians or outright war-fighting.

In September 1999 – in the wake of deliberations about the world's failure to prevent horrific violence in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia – the UN Security Council took its first step towards explicitly recognising the importance of protecting conflict-affected civilians through UN peacekeepers with the passing of Resolution 1265. The following month saw the deployment (in Sierra Leone) of the first UN peacekeeping mission with a clear protection mandate. Ten years later, very few new missions are deployed to volatile environments without an explicit mandate for protecting conflict-affected civilians. The Secretary-General has recently issued his seventh report on the protection of civilians, and the Security Council has issued more than a dozen resolutions and presidential statements on the issue.

Whilst there is no doubt that the international community's concern for protecting civilians has become increasingly entrenched in high-level rhetoric and political language, soldiers and civilians deployed in peacekeeping missions are confused about what exactly their mandate for protection involves. At the doctrinal level, the DPKO has increased overall levels of guidance, and acknowledges that the protection of civilians should form part of a mission's 'core business'. However, it still provides no instructions on how a civilian protection mandate translates into concrete tasks and activities.

> the UN Security Council has issued more than a dozen resolutions and presidential statements on civilian protection

In the absence of official guidance, some DPKO missions have taken the initiative to better define and implement their protection mandates. While some of these efforts (for example, the MONUC Force Commander's Directive on the protection of civilians, the MONUC protection handbook and UNMIS' strategy on the protection of civilians in Sudan) have demonstrated a degree of commitment and innovation in tackling a difficult problem, they have not benefited from the kind of leadership and institutional support that the issue requires. Faced with a need to retain host government consent, a risk-averse UN Secretariat and a widespread desire amongst some UN Member States (including many troop- and police-contributing countries)

to cling to the 'minimum use of force' principle (one of the bedrock tenets of peacekeeping, alongside impartiality and consent), missions have unsurprisingly found it difficult to define civilian protection, agree on the precise meaning of mandate caveats[1] and translate these concepts into comprehensive strategies and concrete action.

Oxfam's field experiences

Since 2004, Oxfam has carried out analysis on civilian protection and peacekeeping missions in at least five contexts: Darfur (AMIS and UNAMID), DRC (MONUC and EUFOR-DRC), South Sudan (UNMIS), Chad (EUFOR-Tchad/ RCA and MINURCAT) and Somalia (AMISOM and potential UN mission). Though not discussed here, Oxfam has also looked at multi-dimensional intervention missions (such as ISAF in Afghanistan). This work has produced consistent recommendations and advocacy points across the five contexts, focused primarily on strengthening missions' capacities and willingness to provide physical protection to civilians under threat. The nine most commonly identified themes that Oxfam staff in the five contexts have prioritised for engagement with peacekeeping missions are as follows:

- Mission leadership and overall mission protection strategies.
- Resources (military, police and other civilian) within the mission related to protecting.
- Humanitarian space within the context of Integrated Missions.
- Civil–military relations.
- The protection impact of specific military strategies and tactics.
- Speed of mission deployment and impact on protection (or the perception thereof).
- Conduct and discipline within missions.
- Broader political context and long-term political solutions.
- National governments' roles and responsibilities.

Drawing on these experiences, Oxfam has engaged in local, national, regional and global debates around the impact peacekeeping missions could have on civilian protection. This has included the publication of policy papers and press releases around specific processes (such as UN Security Council debates, mandate renewals and assessment/monitoring missions) or developing trends (such as fresh escalations of violence, the emergence of new threats or changes in the external environment).

On the basis of our field operations and analysis, Oxfam has committed itself to:

- Engaging with the UN Security Council, General Assembly and Secretariat to share experiences and lessons learnt on the implementation of protection mandates.
- Constructively engaging with UN peacekeeping missions, at appropriate levels and in a manner that does not

undermine Oxfam's independence and impartiality, on the implementation of their civilian protection mandate.
- Participating in relevant humanitarian fora, including general coordination meetings and protection clusters, to identify and analyse civilian protection threats and where appropriate work with others to bring these to the attention of UN peacekeeping missions.
- Supporting efforts to assess the performance of UN peacekeeping missions in protecting civilians, and wherever possible provide feedback on the perceptions of the mission amongst its beneficiary population.
- Supporting pre-deployment and mission-specific training on civilian protection for military, police and civilian staff, and where requested take part in or contribute to protection training.
- Conducting its operations in accordance with internationally accepted humanitarian principles and guidelines on interaction between humanitarian agencies and military forces.
- Opposing the use of Quick Impact Projects that are similar to the work undertaken by humanitarian agencies and may confuse the roles of humanitarian agencies and militaries in the minds of beneficiaries and others.

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across the UN, interest in peacekeeping reform has grown

Global policy developments in 2009

The unprecedented demand for UN peacekeepers in recent years, and the UN's apparent difficulties in supplying the required number of capable, well-equipped troops, police and civilian experts in a timely manner, appear to have sparked renewed interest in reform. Particularly over the past year, a number of UN bodies as well as individual Member States have returned to some of the issues raised in 2000 by the *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* (the Brahimi Report).

At the UN Secretariat, the DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) are reaching a critical point in assessing the performance of peacekeeping operations and making the necessary institutional improvements to meet future challenges. Under-Secretaries-General Alain Le Roy and Susana Malcorra have recently launched the 'New Horizons' reform process, which outlines eight key peacekeeping areas that require further attention and improvement. The fifth of these ('clarity and consensus on new tasks') proposes 'steps to build consensus on policy and requirements both for robust peacekeeping and for protection of civilians', which should provide an opportunity for much-needed policy development in this area. DPKO, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), has recently published an independent study[2] on the way its current peacekeeping operations have interpreted and implemented their protection mandates. This provides key recommendations

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1 Security Council resolutions often place limits on civilian protection mandates through caveats (e.g. whether troops are authorised to use 'all necessary means', whether protection threats are taking place in 'the areas of deployment' and are 'within capabilities', and whether the mission's actions are 'without prejudice to the national government').

2 *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges*, 2009, available online from Reliefweb.

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on how to make abstract concepts more concrete and actionable.

Across the UN, individual Member States have taken the opportunity to contribute to these reform debates. Within the Security Council, Member States have revived the previously dormant working group on peacekeeping and created a new informal group on the protection of civilians. Within the UN General Assembly, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping agreed to the inclusion of a sub-section on the protection of civilians in its annual report, reversing longstanding reluctance to address this matter. Major troop and police contributing countries to peacekeeping missions have expressed a clear interest in being included in peacekeeping discussions earlier and more frequently. In the field, DPKO-led missions – with their first-hand experience of the challenges and opportunities involved in implementing protection mandates – also have a crucial role to play in reform debates.

Seizing reform opportunities – what is needed

In light of the challenges that many actors (including Oxfam) continue to observe in the field, there is a clear need for all stakeholders to seize the opportunities arising from recent debates and the renewed global interest in peacekeeping reform to improve the way in which peacekeepers protect conflict-affected civilians. The successful implementation of a protection approach within peacekeeping operations requires political will and concerted action at various levels – from the UN Security Council to individual Member States, and from the UN Secretariat down to each individual field mission and regional organisations.

First, the Security Council must provide clear leadership in protecting civilians caught up in conflict by:

- Expressly acknowledging that national governments bear primary responsibility for protecting their people and publicly calling on them to fulfil these functions wherever possible.
- Engaging in more forceful and courageous diplomacy with national governments as well as, where possible and appropriate, non-state armed groups to prevent, mitigate the impacts of and help countries recover from violent conflict.
- Ensuring that peacekeeping missions deployed into situations where ceasefires or peace agreements are not fully implemented are either equipped with a clear mandate to accompany the political process or are working alongside an agreed and viable third-party mechanism that is empowered to work with warring parties to find sustainable political solutions.
- Ensuring that peacekeeping missions serve the interests of their intended beneficiaries by explicitly requesting them to work more directly and proactively with conflict-affected communities (see below).
- Publicly and systematically condemning all state or non-state actors evidently creating protection threats by breaching international humanitarian and human rights law, and investing in better international analysis and monitoring of such abuses (including through the

increased use of fact-finding missions, commissions of inquiry and deployments of independent human rights officers to conflict zones).
- Clearly conditioning support to national protection actors on actual adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law.
- Supporting regional actors and institutions to carry out diplomacy (to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict) and deploy peacekeeping missions that are capable of implementing their civilian protection mandates.
- Working more closely with troop- and police-contributing countries to ensure that civilian protection is integrated into national military doctrines and training materials.

The UN Secretariat, including the UN Secretary-General, DPKO and DFS, must better support their field missions in carrying out their mandated protection responsibilities by:

- Prioritising the protection of civilians within peace-keeping reform debates, and ensuring that long-standing weaknesses in resourcing, training and capacity for rapid deployments of qualified military, police and civilian staff are addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Providing peacekeeping missions with more guidance and day-to-day support on civilian protection responsibilities, at doctrinal as well as strategic and operational levels.
- Ensuring that guidance on civil–military relations and Quick Impact Projects corresponds to agreed Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines,[3] and that peacekeepers receive more systematic training on these issues.
- Making consultations with the intended beneficiaries of peacekeeping missions a requirement for all technical and strategic assessment missions.
- Requiring all peacekeeping missions to include conflict-affected communities in the monitoring and evaluation of their performance.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all staff working for DPKO missions in the field, in particular senior management functions (including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, his/her deputies, the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and Force/Police Commanders) must work together more closely on:

- Pressing national governments to assume their responsibilities for protecting civilians under threat, and where possible supporting national institutions (particularly army, police and justice officials) in their protection responsibilities through the provision of training, capacity-building and resources.
- Prioritising the protection of civilians within the mission implementation strategy and providing clear guidance and strategies to each mission section on what actions and activities are expected of them to contribute to civilian protection.

3 As outlined in key IASC documents, including the IASC Reference paper on *Civil–Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies* and *Guidelines on the Use Of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies* (the MCDA Guidelines).

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HUMANITARIAN **P**RACTICE **N**ETWORK

- Ensuring that all relevant military, police and civilian staff receive scenario-based pre-deployment and mission-specific training on their protection responsibilities.
- Working closely with military and police officers to prepare and design contextually appropriate responses to common protection threats (for example increased firewood/farm/market patrols, mobile operations to allow rapid response and deterrent presence around conflict hotspots to prevent looting and banditry).
- Ensuring that civilian units within the mission are fully empowered to carry out their specific protection responsibilities and use their analysis to inform the prevention and response activities of military and police officers.
- Regularly discussing the mission's mandate and capacities, communities' protection needs and protec-

tion threats, with conflict-affected communities.
- Directly involving conflict-affected communities in monitoring and evaluating the mission's performance and regularly measuring public perceptions of the mission.
- Consulting with others to improve the mission's analysis of existing protection threats and discuss appropriate responses with other mandated protection actors (OCHA and the protection cluster can offer an entry point for establishing communication with independent humanitarian actors).

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Protection through partnership: lessons learnt from Pakistan's displacement crisis

Helen Nic an Rí and Caitlin Brady, Trócaire

In May 2009, the government of Pakistan launched an offensive against the Taliban in Swat, prompting the world's fastest and largest displacement crisis in over a decade. Over 2.6 million people were uprooted in as little as three weeks. From the outset, it was clear that protection concerns would play a considerable role. Areas of conflict were inaccessible, most of those fleeing were women and children and the vast majority of the displaced stayed in informal camps or host community settings, rather than the purpose-built formal camps. Many IDPs, therefore, remained hidden, unable to access services, unaware of their rights and entitlements and vulnerable to abuse. While the international community struggled to adapt its response accordingly, gaps were many and large, and the resources of the host communities that provided the bulk of support were stretched and strained.

It was also clear from the outset that national NGOs and local communities would play a vital role in providing assistance and protection to IDPs. Given the difficult operating environment, they could reach IDPs that the international community could not. More importantly, certain national NGOs could offer a more comprehensive understanding of context, vulnerability and protection risks.

Initial assessments highlighted a range of protection needs in such areas as registration and identification, family reunification, the protection of children and women, psychosocial support, protection against forced displacement and security in camps and other accommodation settings. In mid-July, the government facilitated a returns process that posed a fresh set of protection concerns; while the government committed itself to safe, informed and voluntary returns, there were strong indications that the process failed to meet international standards.

This article gives an overview of Trócaire's protection response to Pakistan's displacement crisis, implemented in partnership with local organisations. Through conversations with national and international NGOs, we have looked at the practicalities of working in partnership on protection issues, the strengths and challenges of this approach and lessons learnt for future interventions.

Protection through partnership: how it worked on the ground

When the crisis occurred in Pakistan, Trócaire was already well established on the ground, with long-term programming on gender-based violence (GBV), in particular sexual and domestic violence against women and girls, and strong links with local organisations. Trócaire works through partnership in its humanitarian interventions, and in this case partnered with three national NGOs, two of which had protection experience, while a third had experience in mainstreaming protection. Trócaire's Protection Advisor was quickly deployed to Pakistan to support the agency's partners in their assessment of needs and vulnerable groups, in their analysis of protection concerns and in project design. Once agreements were signed, Trócaire maintained a rapid and flexible grant management approach.

Trócaire programme staff worked with partners to develop M&E systems, but found it difficult to provide the level of support required. Funding shortages meant that fundraising and communications objectives influenced the level and type of face-to-face interaction with partners; the partner with most to contribute from a communications perspective received the most visits, while others with greater capacity-building needs were neglected. As Trócaire required only monthly narrative reports, underspends were revealed only at the end of the project cycle, and no-cost extensions were required.

HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION

Children take shelter in Jalala Mardan, NWFP

©Kim Haughton

The government returns process created additional complications for Trócaire's partners, who had never undertaken returns monitoring. Collecting, analysing and sharing data and trends on the returns process for evidence-based advocacy proved challenging, and the learning curve for partners was steep. (In fact, most NGOs, be they national or international, struggled initially to provide the level of accurate information needed.) In response, Trócaire gave technical support to partners on monitoring, communicated frequently with them and represented their concerns in the Protection Cluster's advocacy task force. Trócaire also tried to share out responsibility for attending cluster meetings between partners to lessen the burden of cluster coordination falling on individual organisations.

A programme evaluation at the close of the first stage of the response helped highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, and a programme workshop brought out a number of innovative ideas, particularly around partners' strong interest in shared learning and capacity-building. The second stage of the response is currently ongoing, and the task now for Trócaire's country team is to implement some of the lessons learnt.

Protection through partnership: factors in success (and failure)

What caused partners to take up protection programming in the first place? What factors contributed to successful partnership? What challenges were experienced, and could they be overcome in future interventions? In discussion with local partners and other agencies familiar with protection and partnership in Pakistan, Trócaire assessed the international community's response and its own intervention to extract some learning.

Why did partners prioritise protection?

Firstly, Trócaire's partners are primarily developmental organisations whose mission statements reflect a strong commitment to justice and the defence of human rights. One organisation is wholly focused on gender-based violence. Organisations, therefore, brought their unique, rights-focused missions to the humanitarian programme. Secondly, partners had gained experience in humanitarian program-ming, including mainstreaming protection considerations, through previous responses (to the 2005 Kashmir earth-quake, the 2007 floods in Sindh and Baluchistan and the 2008 earthquake in Ziarat), and work with other funding partners such as Concern Worldwide, UNICEF and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Lastly, civil society organisations in Pakistan are key actors in advancing women's rights and equality issues in Pakistan, and thus brought to the analysis a concern for women's welfare, access and rights.

> national organisations usually have greater legitimacy in dealing with affected populations and advocating for social change

What strengths do national organisations bring to protection work?

Critically, national organisations usually have greater legitimacy in dealing with affected populations and advocating for social change, particularly if they are of the

same community and face the same cultural and societal constraints. They are less likely to be seen as imposing a Western agenda on local people and tend to have a greater understanding of local context and considerations than international actors do, particularly in sensitive areas like GBV. They also have greater potential influence with the government. In Pakistan, for example, there was agreement among heads of various international agencies that a well-organised coalition of national NGOs with a strong, clear message would be much more effective in advocating to the government than international NGOs could ever be, especially regarding issues of protection. National NGOs are familiar with national legal frameworks, represent a constituency and can mobilise local or national sentiment. At the same time, however, they seem to underestimate their power, and do not present a united viewpoint.

In terms of sustainability, partnership with national organisations contributes to national civil society development, such that leadership in all areas, the public, private and voluntary sectors included, can sit with nationals. Likewise, the longevity of their engagement and commitment to the area is much greater than with international NGOs.

In areas where access is most difficult, national organisations are virtually the only providers of humanitarian aid. Even though international NGOs are also staffed mainly by Pakistanis and move around in low-profile vehicles, their access is still restricted by government policies and by security protocols. While gaining increased access is seen as an advantage of working through partners, there are concerns that international NGOs are passing on security risks to their national partners, which have more limited risk management capacity. Training in this area is a high priority for Trócaire's partners, especially those working on sensitive protection issues such as GBV.

What challenges does partnership with national organisations pose in protection?

In Trócaire's experience, technical and management capacity are the most commonly cited challenges to partnership in Pakistan, particularly in the case of protection, a sector in which technical capacity tends to be more elusive (for many reasons, including the relative newness of the sector and the cultural sensitivity of the subject). National organisations generally pay staff less and have fewer senior technical staff to advise field teams than international NGOs. National NGOs generally have less awareness of international legal instruments and less institutional experience of managing protection programmes. While technical support was provided to all partners in Pakistan to the extent possible, gaps in the response were still evident, including in the consistent reporting of protection concerns to Trócaire and/or the Protection Cluster for use in programming and advocacy. Monitoring and reporting of abuse by partners ultimately fell short of expectations. Financial monitoring was another area of concern, and was not always strong enough to ensure expenditure within the project timeframe.

Discussions with national partners also revealed a lack of confidence and/or awareness of the international

response structure, including cluster and pooled funding mechanisms. Some partners felt that these systems were irrelevant to national NGOs, despite the impression of many international staff that these NGOs made positive contributions and received high levels of funding within the Protection Cluster. Partners communicated a number of constraints to participation in the cluster system, including location (national NGOs do not always have an office in the capital), language and, critically, the number of staff capable of effectively representing the NGO. Even very strong national NGOs may have only a few senior technical staff, with many responsibilities and little time to meet the demanding schedule of cluster meetings.

technical and management capacity are the most commonly cited challenges to partnership in Pakistan

What are the lessons for funding partners?

Unsurprisingly, many factors that contribute to successful partnership more generally are also critical to partnership in protection. Arguably the most important factor in any partnership is long-term engagement and investment from the funding partner, with a commitment to building technical and financial capacity. This includes funding adequate overheads and competitive salaries to enable national NGOs to hang onto their technical and operations staff. This is particularly the case in protection programming, as protection experience and capacity is more limited and perhaps harder to build than capacity in other sectors. Organisations with no protection experience will need to start small, with protection mainstreaming, to build technical capacity. With organisations that lack existing capacity in specialised areas such as GBV or child protection, it may never be appropriate to carry out stand-alone protection programming in these areas in emergencies. Through mainstreaming protection in their interventions, however, organisations may still have a role to play in preventing and/or responding to protection concerns.

Technical advice from the funding partner is important during all stages of implementation, but critically so during the assessment and planning stage, to ensure adequate protection analysis and coherent project design. While the principles of protection may be present in staff thinking, they need exposure to the range of protection responses, such that they can not only report on rights violations, but also support solutions. Sustained support in developing and implementing strong M&E systems is critical for accountability, and for partners to expand their institutional funding base, including accessing pooled funding.

Funding partners have an important role in linking national NGOs engaged in protection to international legal instruments and standards, including the Red Cross Code of Conduct, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and international humanitarian law, and can

best do this during humanitarian crises. Implementation is the best teacher, and small-scale training, as needed, for staff in critical areas during the project cycle will add value and increase technical acumen. It is also critical to build capacity and confidence in evidence-based advocacy, supporting national partners to monitor against the Guiding Principles (and other relevant standards) and properly analyse and present data for effective messaging. This may require long-term commitment, as the skills needed for developing advocacy strategies and messages are only acquired with time. Relationships with networks must also be developed, and again, this can take time. In the short term, however, funding partners can represent the messages and interests of their implementing partners in advocacy forums, such as the Protection Cluster. Working in this way, Trócaire and its partners in Pakistan were able to play a strong role and make a valuable contribution to cluster-based advocacy.

While local partners may resist some aspects of joint work or coordination among themselves, Trócaire found that encouraging coordination between partners from the outset (through informal communication, partner meetings and learning exchanges) had several positive benefits, sharing the burden of coordination with the cluster system, increasing learning and innovation and contributing to more efficient capacity-building. Other examples of good practice in partnership that bear mentioning here include support in operations (finance, logistics, administration and security), timely and flexible grant management and a harmony of interests. In particular, Trócaire found that closer financial oversight could have avoided a number of underspends.

Trócaire's experience of working with partners in protection during the displacement crisis in Pakistan has been a major learning opportunity, no less for Trócaire than for our partners. With this article, we have tried to communicate the successes and challenges we faced, and relate those to the more general experiences of agencies working in the same area. Our hope is that this will encourage other protection agencies to increase their partnership portfolio and work to improve the quality of partnerships. While sometimes challenging, there is real value in this approach.

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Self-protection and survival in south-east Burma

Ashley South, with Malin Perhult and Nils Carstensen

People living in conflict-affected areas of Karen State in south-eastern Burma rely on courageous and ingenious, but also often harmful, self-protection strategies. Protection stemming from international norms and agents is largely absent for this population. The 'Local to Global Protection' (L2GP) project explores how people living in areas affected by natural disaster and armed conflict understand 'protection' – what they value, how they go about protecting themselves, their families and their communities and how they view the roles of other stakeholders.

Since the Rwanda crisis in 1994, protection has increasingly been debated by aid agencies, which have sought to incorporate protection in their work (as illustrated by the recent drafting of protection indicators as part of the Sphere project). However, humanitarian organisations tend to have their own ideas about what constitutes 'protection' (usually based on the definition developed by the ICRC and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), focusing on international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law). In most cases, these notions are imported (or imposed), without examining the views or realities of local people. Although aid agencies may elicit local participation in implementing programmes, aims and objectives are usually designed to fit agency headquarters' and donors' requirements.

While this may be an operational necessity, opportunities exist to better understand and relate to at-risk people. Such local approaches to protection are particularly important in situations where international humanitarian actors have limited access, and where the state is one of the main agents threatening vulnerable populations. The L2GP project, which is implemented by a group of European aid agencies, is undertaking research in three such countries: a pilot study in Burma, and work in Sudan and Zimbabwe. This article summarises the key findings of the Burma study.

opportunities exist to better understand and relate to at-risk people

The Burmese context

Burma's long-running ethnic conflict began shortly after the country attained its independence from the UK in 1948. Millions have been affected, with at least 500,000 currently displaced in the south-east, plus about 150,000 more living in refugee camps in neighbouring Thailand. Another two to three million Burmese earn their living as migrant workers elsewhere in the region, often without documents and in a highly vulnerable position. Many of these people are members of ethnic minorities, including various Karen subgroups.

The L2GP project involved research on both sides of the 'frontline' in Karen-populated areas in south-east Burma:

in territory accessible to the Karen National Union (KNU), the main Karen armed opposition group and its affiliates, and in government- and ceasefire group-controlled zones (under the authority of armed Karen groups, which split from the KNU and agreed ceasefires with the government in the 1990s). This is new ground, as most research in this area focuses on IDPs who make themselves available to the KNU, whose experiences may not be representative of the larger Karen community. Much less is known about the situation of civilians living in areas controlled by the government, or under the control of allied Karen militias. Research was conducted by small teams of locals and internationals, working on both sides of the Burma–Thailand border, between mid-2009 and early 2010. As well as some 100 interviews with Karen civilians, discussions were also held with Burmese civil society, political, military and relief and development groups, as well as a wide range of international agencies.

civilians living in conflict-affected parts of south-east Burma understand clearly the threats they face

Findings

Civilians living in conflict-affected parts of south-east Burma understand clearly the threats they face, and the identities of perpetrators. They are subject to a range of abuses, by the state and its proxies and also sometimes by anti-government groups including the KNU. Vulnerable civilians often demonstrate great courage, tenacity and solidarity with their fellow countrymen and women. The strategies people employ to deal with difficult situations are often more effective than anything done by protection-mandated agencies or other outside actors. Indeed, except for armed state and non-state groups outside actors are largely absent.

Local survival strategies include behaviour which might not be considered 'positive' by external observers, such as paying off power-holders or acquiescing in their demands, including providing labour (or recruits) to armed groups. Karen community leaders are sometimes able to persuade power-holders to change their behaviour, or at least limit the extent of their abuses. Such activities include forms of complaint to the authorities, including direct appeals to Burmese army commanders, insurgent and ceasefire group officers to control their troops.

Local advocacy like this is not well-documented in the extensive literature on human rights issues in Burma. Many rights-oriented organisations document and denounce abuses occurring in the conflict-affected countryside. This approach has some value, not least because power-holders in Burma are sometimes reluctant to perpetrate abuses out of fear that their activities may be reported to public advocacy networks, causing them problems with their superiors. Furthermore, the documentation of human rights abuses plays an important role in maintaining public

> **Box 1: Local responses**
>
> When faced with a threat, villagers may choose to:
>
> - Contain or manage the threat (by complying with demands and attempting to limit damage, for instance by paying off power-holders or providing labour and/or recruits; turning for assistance to local authorities, including religious and community leaders, or appealing to the goodwill of power-holders; and 'making do' and staying quiet).
> - Avoid the threat (for instance by fleeing, either temporarily or as a more permanent migration).
> - Confront the threat (advocacy and/or active resistance).

interest, as well as fundraising for aid agencies. It may also be of some value in the future in the context of transitional justice. Nevertheless, greater attention should be paid to local 'behind-the-scenes' advocacy activities undertaken by community leaders.

The notional distinction between protecting 'human rights' and livelihoods does not seem particularly relevant for affected Karen communities in south-east Burma. Indeed, the rights of particular individuals are sometimes 'sacrificed' by their families or communities in order to safeguard the larger unit's well-being.

Often, individuals and families in south-east Burma have to balance the need for a livelihood and food security with the physical risks involved in (for example) farming their landmine-infested fields or migrating elsewhere. The strategies people adopt frequently expose them to new dangers. The decisions people take in terms of migration and other protection strategies depend upon their relationships and available resources. For some villagers (particularly Buddhists), who do not have money or contacts in the Christian-dominated KNU, access to refugee camps in Thailand is perceived as difficult. Such people are more likely to join the illegal migrant pool in Thailand. In contrast, for those associated with the insurgency it can be very dangerous to enter government- or ceasefire group-controlled areas. People with family

> **Box 2: Responses to displacement**
>
> When forcibly displaced, villagers may choose to:
>
> - Hide in or close to zones of ongoing conflict, in the hope of returning home soon (although people often remain mobile for years).
> - Move to a government- or ceasefire group-controlled relocation site (if one is available).
> - Enter a ceasefire area.
> - Move to more secure villages, towns or peri-urban areas, including 'behind the front lines' in war zones, in ceasefire zones and in government-controlled locations.
> - Cross an international border to seek refuge, either as a migrant worker or in a refugee camp.

in the KNU or friends and relatives in border regions are more likely to flee to insurgent-controlled areas, including refugee camps. Those without such contacts, or who enjoy non-threatening relations with government forces, may choose to enter official relocation sites.

For international agencies, protection is often conceived of as something which 'we' (the aid agency) attempt to do on behalf of 'them' (the vulnerable populations). For many Rangoon-based actors, local civil society actors are viewed instrumentally, as a means of gaining access to conflict-affected communities. Some Thailand-based agencies provide assistance and undertake advocacy activities in partnership with the welfare wings of armed ethnic groups. They are generally more sensitive to and supportive of local agency. Different armed groups position themselves as defenders of Karen populations, in terms of providing physical safety and secure livelihoods, as well as protecting elements of culture and national identity. Leaders of both the KNU and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (the DKBA, which is allied to the Burmese military) regard themselves as legitimate representatives and guardians of the Karen people. Ultimately, assessments of these different notions of protection depend on the legitimacy accorded to key actors. To the degree that the KNU (for example) is considered a legitimate military/political actor, its activities in the field of protection may be considered positive by some observers and donors. In contrast, if the DKBA is considered illegitimate its 'protection activities' are likely to be dismissed. In practice, however, Karen civilians view these organisations as both protectors and sources of threat, depending on the circumstances.

despite the rhetoric and lofty ambitions, protective interventions are largely absent in south-east Burma

Conclusions

Despite the rhetoric and lofty ambitions of international aid agencies and advocacy groups, protective interventions are largely absent in conflict-affected parts of south-east Burma. In this context, efforts to support the humanitarian wings of armed ethnic groups remain one of the only viable ways of reaching a highly vulnerable population. However, by working with parties to the armed conflict humanitarian assistance becomes part of the political economy of the war. This may or may not be an acceptable risk, but it is an issue which donors and humanitarian agencies have generally failed to address in a systematic manner. Meanwhile, civilians living in south-east Burma continue to suffer as a result of the ongoing armed conflict.

For many of those interviewed, the distinction between physical protection and aspects of livelihood security is irrelevant. In people's ongoing struggle to survive, protection and livelihood concerns are deeply interconnected. Often, people are faced with terrible dilemmas, in which physical safety is compromised in order to feed their families or provide healthcare or access to education. In choosing between the 'lesser of two evils', people are often exposed to new forms of danger – for instance, migration as a coping strategy may bring with it the dangers of trafficking. In such circumstances, it may not be appropriate to talk of 'coping' or even 'survival' mechanisms. The ways in which civilians in south-east Burma seek to contain, avoid and (sometimes) challenge the risks they face may best be described as 'self-protection'. Such practices can be far removed from the ideals of Western aid agencies.

Local civil society networks in Karen and other conflict-affected areas of Burma undertake important work, providing assistance and some degree of protection to civilian populations. However, they can be exposed to danger, and possible suppression by the authorities, through contact with highly visible international agencies. Therefore, international engagement with such actors should be undertaken extremely cautiously. It is important that humanitarian organisations and donors carefully assess the likely impacts of their interventions on the social, political, economic and conflict environments. At a minimum, external agencies must ensure that they do not inadvertently undermine communities' existing self-protection strategies (that is, that they 'do no harm').

While agencies based in Thailand and elsewhere overseas can be forthright in their advocacy activities, groups working inside the country must be more cautious. For those working inside Burma, advocacy is often undertaken in the mode of 'persuasion' (engaging behind-the-scenes with duty/power-holders, in order to modify or mitigate the impacts of their behaviour), and 'mobilisation' (quietly sharing information with mandated agencies and mobilising human rights-oriented actors and networks). As the information and advocacy activities of groups based in government-controlled areas have to remain low-profile, they tend to be under-appreciated.

Looking at the dire situation of most civilians in conflict-affected parts of Burma, it appears that years of public advocacy campaigns have had limited positive impact on the lives of the victims of abuse. The advocacy community may need to re-examine its efforts. Publicly documenting and denouncing abuses is important, but has a limited immediate positive impact. Can – and should – advocacy groups engage more with the every-day protection efforts of affected communities, often focussed on low-key 'persuasive' modes of engaging powerholders (usually behind-the-scenes), in order to change their behaviour, mitigate the impact of abuse, or at least gain humanitarian access?

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Building Haiti back better: health sector lessons from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami

Richard Garfield and Erin Chu

As a humanitarian crisis, the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 is comparable to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In Aceh in Indonesia, the most affected area, 230,000 people died and half a million were made homeless. By comparison in Haiti, roughly 200,000 people died and a million were made homeless. Indonesia had competent central government, but reconstruction in affected areas in Aceh was made more difficult by ongoing insurgencies there. While Haiti had no insurgency at the time of the earthquake, it suffered from weak governance, a near-total lack of governmental services and the inheritance of repeated insurgencies and dictatorships. After five years, recovery programmes for the tsunami recently ended, giving us many lessons towards planning for recovery in Haiti.

Earthquake damage in Port au Prince, 14 January 2010

©Reuters/Jorge Silva

A lot of the 'right' rhetoric is being heard in Haiti: that reconstruction must build back better and smarter, and that it must be led by Haitians. But these challenges may be greater in Haiti than they were in Aceh. There is less capacity overall in the Haitian state, fewer training institutions are available and there is less routine income with which the state can work. There are more NGOs (270 registered with the health cluster alone, as of 3 February – perhaps three times more in all), used to working with little coordination and expecting even less from the government. More Haitian doctors and nurses live outside the country than within it, and emigration will continue to draw away the skilled staff necessary to create a stable society and adequate health care system.

Recovery contributions
Aceh, with a population of four million, received more than $5 billion for reconstruction. Haiti – population nine million – has received initial reconstruction pledges of $1bn. Prior to the earthquake, extreme poverty in Haiti was greater than in Aceh, yet malnutrition was not. Global acute malnutrition in Haiti was around 5%, while in Aceh it was between 8% and 16%. Haitians used a variety of subsistence strategies, including pooling resources among families, using charity services and remittances (under normal conditions, a third of all Haitian income comes from remittances from family members outside the country).[1] These coping methods can be leveraged in reconstruction, using large-scale investment in agriculture to produce more food, and to engage community health workers to feed and monitor children. Recovery for Haiti must also attend to the needs of the country as a whole, rather than the capital alone. Five years on from the tsunami, the rural poor remain in Aceh remain at a health disadvantage.

> **more Haitian doctors and nurses live outside the country than within it**

Health data and monitoring
No reliable region-wide surveys were available for Aceh prior to the tsunami. By contrast in Haiti a national Demographic Health Survey (DHS) in 2008 provides good baseline data. An initial rapid assessment (IRA) was carried out within three weeks of the earthquake, and plans are being made for periodic recovery monitoring.

1 E. Gibbons and R. Garfield, 'The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Health and Human Rights in Haiti', *American Journal of Public Health*, 1999; 89(10): 1499–1504.

A DHS carried out in Aceh in 2008 showed that the prevalence of health problems among children remained higher in the province compared to the country overall, demonstrating continued problems in coverage and effectiveness several years after the tsunami. Over the last decade Haiti greatly reduced malaria, HIV and infant mortality levels. Still, overall mortality is more than 50% higher than in Nicaragua, the next-poorest Latin American country, or the neighbouring Dominican Republic. Haiti's injury-related deaths prior to the earthquake were nearly double those of these other two countries, while communicable, perinatal, maternal and nutrition-related diseases were three to five times more common.

Malnutrition, malaria and immunisation-preventable diseases in most tsunami-affected countries have declined, but the overall change is modest. Areas with social indicators that were already improving rapidly have returned to rapid improvement, while areas improving more slowly before the tsunami have recovered only enough to resume that slow improvement. Five years after the tsunami, in all areas, the major limitations to improvement in health are the same as they were before. While some agencies had personnel on the ground for years prior to the tsunami and understood these local conditions, that information was seldom applied to tsunami recovery programming. Indeed, much of the programming in years two to five looked more like extensions of programmes in the first emergency period, rather than transformative recovery programmes. Thus, health conditions today overall are much as they were prior to the tsunami – a far cry from the transformed system large-scale international funding might have provided.

Mental health
Health services developed in tsunami recovery provided well for the emergent physical needs of families, but were generally less prepared to address social and psychological needs, develop health policy or improve the supervision and productivity of health workers. Few programmes focused on the psycho-social needs of survivors, and those that did (mainly short-term training programmes) were not combined with major programmatic initiatives and have largely been forgotten. The tsunami also reinforced the importance of using existing resources to establish new services. For example, mental health programmes could be provided in primary care clinics, which are easily accessible and are less likely to stigmatise patients requiring mental health treatment. Not surprisingly, involving beneficiaries in the aid process helped them regain control of their lives and led to improvements in well-being.

Training
Training and systems development was almost entirely missing from the recovery programme in Aceh. Building on the enhanced investments in facilities and the training of primary level health care workers, this should have included training district and regional health system managers, continuing-education officers and epidemiologic analysts. Such higher-level training would have developed systems capacity to coordinate new health resources more effectively.

New maternal health workers were trained to take the place of those lost in the tsunami. However, when these new nurses and midwives began to graduate in large numbers in 2007 they had limited skills and experience; their training did not give them the confidence to perform key services, and was not tailored to the epidemiological conditions of the country. Midwifery graduates from cities were less willing to serve in the remote areas where they were needed, nurses left affected regions with newly salable skills and foreign doctors were sometimes employed at unsustainably high cost. Policies to train people from remote areas, to create systems of career advancement and to train and equip new health workers to address major local threats to health could have built back smarter, and better.

Health infrastructure
Donors in Aceh supported the building and equipping of a large network of primary care centres, including many focusing on child welfare and nutrition and the use of midwives as health promoters. Prior to the earthquake, there were similar plans in Haiti to strengthen the role of community health workers in villages and focus more strongly on a coordinated network of primary care facilities. Compared to Aceh, Haiti lost fewer doctors and midwives but more nurses in the earthquake. It lost far fewer health facilities, but many of these were the major institutions in the country, including the country's 11 largest hospitals. Without strong direction from the Haitian Ministry of Health, health reconstruction efforts are likely to be uncoordinated, yielding very unequal care, focused on diseases of lesser epidemiologic importance and preoccupied with running and maintaining hospitals to the detriment of preventive and primary health care.

After just three years of reconstruction, Aceh reached near-sufficient numbers of health workers and replaced 517 destroyed health facilities with 1,115 new structures.[2] Thus, many agencies literally built back better after the tsunami in the construction of health facilities, but were less successful at developing the capacity needed to use these improved facilities. International agencies and the government in Aceh in particular focused much of its attention on building new health facilities when greater efforts could have been made to develop capacity to organise and run health and nutrition programmes dealing with the region's major needs in nutrition, diarrhea and respiratory disease.

This happened, in part, because large-scale destruction of infrastructure forced humanitarian agencies to become building contractors. Building services could instead have been contracted out to companies with expertise in construction. At the same time, centres could have started with temporary one-room or rented facilities, growing depending on patterns of use and construction capacity. It is important in reconstruction that health programmes should not be entirely dependent upon physical structures.

2 The Executing Agency of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for Aceh and Nias- BRR, Book Series. Book C- Map. Spread of Efforts and Achievements, 2009.

Epidemics and disease outbreaks

While everyone was looking for a non-existent cholera epidemic in Aceh, tetanus peaked weeks after the tsunami with 107 reported cases from hospitals and health centres, with a case fatality rate of 19%.[3] A tetanus epidemic is now underway in Haiti, and measles, malaria and dengue epidemics may occur.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of acute respiratory infections (ARI) during the first months after the tsunami. Respiratory infections, in normal circumstances, are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in developing countries. High levels of respiratory and diarrheal diseases emerged within a week of the Haitian earthquake due to crowding in open urban areas, lack of sanitary facilities and low pre-earthquake immunisation levels.

Disease surveillance was reinitiated in Aceh by the second week of February, and an epidemic and alert response team, in collaboration with the Provincial Health Office, developed a surveillance system that included NGO, hospital and laboratory activities. A six-month activity plan for the rehabilitation of provincial and district health offices in Aceh was also established, to develop longer-term surveillance capacity.[4] A similar process is underway in Haiti.

Long-term planning

Many successful emergency actions in Aceh were not articulated with long-term development goals for the health system. Aid workers were more engaged in programmatic activity than in strengthening local planning and management capacity. In retrospect, it is clear that these actions worked to rapidly re-establish a minimal system of care. But inadequate attention to pre-existing weaknesses in the government's health and administrative systems has produced the same key constraints that existed prior to the tsunami. More attention to developing district- and provincial-level capacity for planning and administration would have helped to further advance programmes and integrate them into normal country programmes.

Poor governance in Aceh had much to do with the inefficient use of aid. This is why engagement and investment in Haiti must be done in consultation with Haitians, and in a way that builds administrative capacity and a national consensus to contribute more to Haiti's long-term development. Despite worsening economic conditions and unstable governance, Haitians have managed to send their children to primary school and get them immunised at ever-increasing rates since 1990. Improving the coverage and quality of these and other basic services can help transform collective despair into hope.

Lessons

- Strategic planning towards multi-year programming should replace emergency response approaches as soon as possible. Training of local staff for this needs to emphasise the articulation of facilities construction planning, training of personnel and the establishment of effective administrative systems.
- Assessment capacity and structures must be created to monitor priority indicators for the supervision and management of the health system. This is best implemented within existing organisational structures, rather than by creating new entities. Expanded monitoring is valuable only if capacity is strengthened in existing systems for routine monitoring, instead of special stand-alone systems.
- Agencies should not be distracted by physical building programmes, especially when construction can be contracted to more experienced sector specialists.
- Strengthening rural primary care with community health workers and auxiliary nurses will be the most effective means to improve health, while also providing the employment needed to help stabilise these communities. The tsunami events catalysed efforts to implement the Cluster Approach. This is a challenge for Haiti, where small agencies operate freely and the government has been a weak partner.
- In the transition from emergency relief to development, actors must recognise the need for multi-year strategic planning as early as possible.
- Use aid to support communities at the onset of disaster. Giving ownership to beneficiaries will make humanitarian actors accountable to affected communities, and improve the appropriateness of interventions. Furthermore, it can build capacity to deal with future vulnerabilities, which will outlast the commitment of short-term relief.

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3 D. Guha-Sapir and W. Panhuis, *The Andaman Nicobar Earthquake and Tsunami 2004: Impact on Diseases in Indonesia* (Brussels: Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), 2005).
4 *Ibid.*

The uses of adversity: humanitarian principles and reform in the Pakistan displacement crisis

Michael Young, IRC

In the span of a few months last spring, Pakistan witnessed one of the gravest internal displacement crises of the last two decades. Beginning in early May, each week hundreds of thousands of people streamed out of the districts of Swat, Buner and Dir into neighbouring lowland areas, driven from their homes by a sweeping military campaign against the Taliban. They joined over half a million already displaced in late 2008 by a similar campaign in the

northern tribal agencies of Bajaur and Mohmand. At the height of the crisis, nearly three million people sought shelter in host communities and camps – a movement on the scale of those in Rwanda or Bosnia-Herzegovina, but outpacing even these in terms of its dislocating speed.

Although most people quickly returned home, the crisis is far from over. As at January 2010 close to 1.3m remain displaced – principally from the tribal agencies (the mountainous strip of Pashtun tribal territories along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border), but also from Swat and elsewhere, who feel that return is neither safe nor sustainable. Fresh campaigns against the Taliban by the Pakistani armed forces in South Waziristan, Orakzai, Khyber and Bajaur have displaced close to half a million people in the last five months alone. Although Pakistan often defies prediction, instability and displacement are likely to continue for at least the rest of 2010.

The Pakistan IDP crisis has also thrown into sharp relief some of the most acute issues raised by the humanitarian reform agenda: coordination, funding and capacity. More fundamentally, it has challenged the ability of the wider humanitarian community to remain true to its core principles. This article offers a personal, on-the-ground perspective on these issues from inside one agency that has been engaged with the crisis since 2008.

Principle, pragmatism, complicity
The conduct of the crisis and the resultant relief operation have degraded the humanitarian community's adherence to principle. This has both been necessitated by, and resulted in, increasing restrictions on 'humanitarian space' – the neutral, impartial, civilian space in which NGOs are able to operate, even in the midst of conflict.

> the Pakistan IDP crisis has also thrown into sharp relief some of the most acute issues raised by the humanitarian reform agenda

The Pakistani armed forces not only decide where, when and how to conduct anti-Taliban operations, but also – primarily through the civil–military Special Support Group – largely dictate the terms of the humanitarian response. While the military undoubtedly has both institutional strength and logistical capacity, its primacy in both prosecuting conflict and providing assistance has obvious ramifications for the humanitarian community. At the most fundamental level, this has made it difficult for people to gain recognition as IDPs and access to humanitarian assistance. Although the government mobilised early to register and support IDPs (a positive step and signal of constructive humanitarian partnership), it subsequently developed restrictive registration criteria based on location rather than vulnerability. This is contrary to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and has meant that many families fled violence on their doorsteps only to

be denied services in exile because they came from the 'wrong' village. This effectively excluded several hundred thousand people (including whole tribes) from government cash assistance, and (until recently) from food assistance provided by WFP and non-food distributions by UNHCR.

Despite an agreement between the government and the humanitarian community setting out a framework for return that was informed, voluntary and safe, many returns to Malakand Division were coercive. Information on return or relocation options was not made widely available and key consent forms were only in English; camp authorities rushed or coerced IDPs into making decisions; and local authorities in some instances cut off utility supplies to camps to put further pressure on people to move on. Although the majority of the IDP population outside the camps largely returned voluntarily, lack of transparency and a clear effort from the government and military to close down camps for the sake of a political narrative of 'success' forced many IDPs to return prematurely to villages that were still insecure or which lacked basic infrastructure and services. This pattern of forced relocation continues. Meanwhile, access to households trapped within conflict zones has been severely limited. In the South Waziristan displacement, the military effectively banned humanitarian organisations from operating in nearby districts hosting IDPs for months, leaving thousands of families vulnerable.

This militarisation of humanitarian aid has meant that, in practice, principles like neutrality and impartiality have been either severely degraded or effectively rendered nugatory. As a result, independent humanitarian actors are viewed as supporting rival combatants within the conflict. It is now clear that the Taliban in Pakistan regard humanitarian agencies as partial actors and therefore legitimate targets. The space to pursue any impartial dialogue with insurgent groups, in order to open up humanitarian space to reach vulnerable people, has been closed off by national and international pressure, informed by a particular counter-insurgency agenda.

The humanitarian community, at the highest levels, has been ineffective at addressing these issues of principle. Despite the development of 'Basic Operating Rules' early in the crisis, which restated and enshrined the core principles of humanitarian action, these rules have been honoured in the breach rather than the observance. They are not widely known, even within the humanitarian community itself. Even the language of humanitarianism is problematic; there has, for example, been constant pressure from the government not to speak of 'internally displaced persons' or 'conflict', or even use the word 'humanitarian' in appeals and other communications by the humanitarian community. Instead, civilians are temporarily 'dislocated' by 'law enforcement operations' carried out by 'security forces'.

The community's ability to assert humanitarian principles is undermined by its own apparent acquiescence in the politicisation and militarisation of aid. When the UN Secretary-General's own Special Envoy is on public record

Displaced children queue for food at a camp in Swabi district, June 2009

chronically dysfunctional. The flaws identified are depressingly familiar: conflicts of interest inherent in treating the clusters as funding mechanisms rather than coordination fora; the tensions arising from 'double-hatting' cluster chairs as both UN lead agency representatives and 'honest broker' sector facilitators; special interest pleading around specific project proposals warping sector needs identification and resource allocation; large, unwieldy groups in which effective decision-making is sacrificed to incoherent inclusion; a lack of basic group and meeting facilitation skills among cluster lead personnel; and frequent changes in personnel.

strongly supporting the government's anti-Taliban military campaigns, it is difficult to maintain a neutral, impartial or even independent stance. Pragmatism over principle for the sake of the humanitarian imperative is in danger of becoming complicity in a political–military agenda in which the real imperatives are counter-insurgency and stabilisation. There are different views on how effective such approaches – in which development (for which read also humanitarian aid) is suborned to defence and diplomatic goals – really are, even in achieving their stated goals. The reality in Pakistan is that the latest flavour of counter-insurgency doctrine is proving toxic for the humanitarian community.

Coordination, strategy, advocacy
Slippage on principle and closing of space have also been reflected in the performance of humanitarian coordination and funding mechanisms. Although the 2009 Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP) ended up being one of the better-funded appeals globally, funding was slow to ramp up. At the height of the crisis, key emergency donors were tardy in establishing a presence and dilatory in getting money out and working on the ground (with the exception of USAID's Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance, which has been the fastest-moving and most responsive donor). As the 2010 appeal finally launches, there is real danger of a critical funding gap – especially in the light of the demands the response to the Haiti earthquake is making on key donors. The performance of the core humanitarian coordination architecture has also been patchy. There was an initial improvement once the UN appointed a dedicated Humanitarian Coordinator and fielded a more robust OCHA presence; however, this short-term gain has not yet translated into a longer-term increase in performance capacity. An Inter-Cluster Diagnostic Mission in 2009, called in at the behest of the Humanitarian Coordinator to address obvious performance issues within the clusters, identified many of the same problems as did the evaluation carried out for the 2005 earthquake response. These problems persist; although some clusters work adequately, others are

One of the most corrosive aspects of this problem has been the use of clusters as project funding channels. This has been administratively dysfunctional, diverted clusters from their *raison d'être* and exacerbated the worst kind of negative competition between humanitarian actors. The establishment of a pooled funding mechanism – akin to an ERF – where funding decisions are made collectively, based on clear criteria and cluster needs mapping, would go a long way to solving this problem. It is therefore commendable that OCHA is currently leading the effort to develop an ERF for Pakistan; this initiative needs to be made operational as soon as possible.

> in Pakistan, fundamental questions of principle and practice are either abrogated or threatened

In addition, the Humanitarian Country Team, although representative of the wider community, has been unable to play an effective strategic role and remains focused on issues of process and operational detail. This focus on micro-management has further undermined its ability to act as an effective advocate for humanitarian principles. Critical issues of rights, access and space are neither forcefully nor frankly addressed in humanitarian–government coordination fora. A non-confrontational approach adds weight to the notion of acquiescence in a restrictive, overly politicised and militarised operating environment. These failures are, of course, the responsibility of the entire humanitarian community.

The sweeter uses of adversity?
The above paints a gloomy picture. The humanitarian community in Pakistan works in an environment where even the most fundamental questions of principle and

practice are either abrogated or threatened. Humanitarian space shrivels; humanitarian actors are targeted. On the ground, it is sometimes difficult to see a path towards rebuilding adherence to principle and restoring the space for impartial action.

More effort to restate humanitarian principles as embodied in the Basic Operating Rules is a first step. The focused attention of external influencers such as the UN Secretary General's Representative on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin, and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sir John Holmes, around issues of civilian protection and rights could help agencies advocate with the government. All actors need to recognise that humanitarian need remains great. Pakistan's civilian authorities for disaster management and recovery need sustained capacity-building so that their institutional strength in humanitarian response matches that of the military. Lastly, internal structural reforms to the Humanitarian Country Team and cluster system would improve the capacity of the Humanitarian Coordinator and

colleagues to act strategically, and collectively identify and move forward on issues of rights, policy and advocacy. The humanitarian community in Pakistan must rediscover the basics and regain its self-confidence.

Finally, one undeniable fact shines out from the Pakistan crisis, namely the response of ordinary Pakistanis themselves. Over 80% of those forced to flee from their homes found refuge, not in camps but with private families or in other communal spaces. Some households hosted up to 100 people; many thousands took in complete strangers and offered them shelter. This is a great tribute to Pakistani society. The crisis is also a lesson that the humanitarian imperative remains strongly understood and valued by people everywhere, even as it becomes progressively more difficult for humanitarian organisations to act impartially and independently on that most basic of human instincts.

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Hard lessons for humanitarian financing from Pakistan

Benedict Dempsey, Save the Children UK

The humanitarian funding system for the Pakistan emergency in the summer of 2009 did not work well. In the absence of an in-country pooled fund, many international donors gave their funding directly to UN agencies, to be distributed through a malfunctioning Cluster system. The decision to use UN agencies as proxy pooled funds sacrificed speed, effectiveness and transparency. NGOs with the capacity to deliver aid on the ground experienced long delays in receiving funds, with a serious knock-on effect on their ability to help affected people. The system also placed intolerable pressure on the Clusters themselves, making it difficult for them to act as objective coordinating bodies. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID), one of the biggest donors in Pakistan, chose to fund NGOs bilaterally when faced with delays, immediately increasing the speed of disbursal. This kind of flexibility should be applied in future emergencies. The Pakistan emergency also starkly illustrated the need to maintain the Clusters' intended coordination role, and not to expect them to act as direct conduits for funding.

Funding through UN agencies

In early May 2009, escalating conflict between the Pakistani military and insurgents in North-West Frontier Province caused over two million people to leave their homes. Humanitarian agencies mobilised to help them. No Emergency Response Fund (ERF) or other pooled fund was operating in Pakistan, so donors were faced with a choice. Either they could fund implementing agencies, including NGOs, bilaterally, or they could give the bulk of their funding to UN agencies, to be disbursed onwards

to implementing partners. Many donors, including DFID, chose the second option, giving funding mainly to UN agencies. In DFID's case, £12 million was earmarked for the UN, with £8m going to the Red Cross/Red Crescent.[1]

The stated aim of funding in this way was to ensure coordination. Funding UN agencies would allow monies to be allocated through the Cluster system, maximising coordination between agencies. In the absence of an in-country pooled fund, it also cut down on donors' transaction costs. However, with an estimated 80% of delivery capacity residing with NGOs, agencies like Save the Children voiced concern that funding through the UN would cause funding delays. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened.

As Tables 1 and 2 show, donor funding through the UN had a big effect on which projects received money. Although the appeal as a whole was underfunded, UN agencies in the first two months received more than 40% of the money they requested, and nearly half of UN projects received some funding. In contrast, only 13% of non-UN projects received any funding, amounting to less than 5% of the overall funding they required in the first two months of the response.

If the system had been functioning properly, the money received by UN agencies would quickly have made its way to NGOs, as they had the delivery capacity required. However, there is a lack of transparency in funding to UN agencies, so it is hard to know where funds were ultimately

1 DFID's stated funding for this emergency was £22m, but this includes £2m allocated in late 2008, some time before the emergency in question.

Table 1: Projects within the humanitarian response plan[2]

	No. of funded projects[3]	No. of unfunded projects	Total	% projects funded
UN agencies	23	26	49	47%
Non-UN agencies	10	65	75	13%
Total	33	91	124	27%

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service (as at 24 July 2009)[4]

Table 2: Funding amounts within the humanitarian response plan

	Funding requested (US$)	Funding received (US$)	% funding received
UN agencies	368,514,606	149,918,989	40.68%
Non-UN agencies	69,130,243	3,093,430	4.47%
Total	437,644,849	153,012,419	35%

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service (as at 24 July 2009)

spent and whether they were delivered to implementing agencies. This is a problem not just in Pakistan but globally. UN agencies are not required by donors to specify exactly how and when they have passed funding onwards to implementing partners such as NGOs. As a result, beyond broad sectoral allocations it is often unclear which specific projects are being funded. Even if UN funds are passed on to NGO partners for implementation, the process adds an extra layer of bureaucracy, cost and delay. Using UN agencies as disbursal bodies, therefore, not only slowed the transfer of funds to NGOs, but also made it difficult to determine whether funds were actually reaching the intended beneficiaries.

> only 13% of non-UN projects received any funding, amounting to less than 5% of the overall funding they required in the first two months of the response

Malfunctioning Clusters

The other reason for the breakdown of the funding system in Pakistan was that, generally, the Clusters did not function as they should have. The Cluster approach was originally devised in an attempt to ensure that humanitarian partners operate in an inclusive, consultative and transparent manner, with leadership and responsibilities established at a sectoral level. When functioning properly, Clusters play a crucial role in identifying needs during a humanitarian emergency, enabling donors to fund priority projects. Coordination and prioritisation provided by

properly functioning Clusters is extremely beneficial to humanitarian response.

For Clusters to work effectively, national NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies must operate on an equal and collaborative basis. In Pakistan, however, some Clusters were poorly run and coordination was weak. In most cases, the person designated by the UN to lead the Cluster was not dedicated to it full-time, having also to perform a pre-existing job for his or her UN agency. NGOs also often felt that some Cluster coordinators regarded Clusters as an extension of their parent agency. This resulted in some Cluster coordinators seeking funding for their own agencies before attempting to find an international NGO to implement a project. The way the Clusters functioned generally also meant that national organisations in Pakistan had limited or no access to the Clusters, and therefore were unable to access funding.

In this context, the deliberate channelling of funds through UN agencies only made matters worse. Many of the concerns with the way the Clusters were operating were confirmed by an Inter-Cluster Diagnostic Mission[5] to Pakistan, which took place in July. The mission returned with a number of conclusions, including:

- Disbursal of funds through Clusters resulted in a perceived lack of transparency in decision-making, delays in disbursement of funds, lack of objectivity in resource allocation and conflicts of interest between coordinators and their respective agencies.
- Cluster coordinators faced a conflict of interest from so-called 'double-hatting' (having to manage agency responsibilities and expectations while simultaneously managing the Cluster).
- Each Cluster requires dedicated full-time coordinators to meet the onerous workload of coordinating a Cluster and to help reduce the inter-agency rivalries that inevitably arise in a situation of conflicting loyalties.
- Direct financial disbursement through a Cluster under-mines the objective ethos of a coordinating body. Funds

2 Only projects categorised under 'Conflict' have been included; those for 'Conflict and Floods' or 'Floods' have not.
3 'Funded Projects' are taken to be projects that have received some funding; most of these projects are not fully funded.
4 OCHA, http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R33_A829_ __0907241100.pdf, 24 July 2009 (figures are from July accurately to reflect funding of the rapid response).

5 Inter-Cluster Diagnostic Mission to Pakistan, Islamabad and Peshawar, Pakistan, 13–17 July 2009.

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should be disbursed directly from donors to partners or through a common pooled funding mechanism.

Asking Clusters to manage funding poisoned coordination mechanisms, increased the perception of bias in funding allocation, exacerbated inter-agency rivalry and further delayed disbursement.

The DFID example

DFID was a major donor to the Pakistan emergency response, pledging funds early and in large amounts. However, the decision was made to divide these funds only between the Red Cross/Red Crescent and UN agencies. Save the Children met DFID on 11 May and maintained contact throughout May and June, expressing concern at the decision to channel most funds through UN agencies, and at the slow pace of disbursement. Throughout this period, DFID put pressure on UN agencies in an effort to hasten funding disbursal. Eventually, though, DFID decided a new approach was needed, and by early June it had indicated that it would begin to fund NGOs bilaterally, provided the proposed activities were part of the OCHA Flash Appeal. This involved an earmarking process by which DFID funds were allocated in Cluster meetings, but it still required NGOs to submit proposals through UN agencies as Cluster leads.

On 16 and 17 June, Save the Children was earmarked $500,000 of DFID funding in the Early Recovery Cluster and $400,000 in the Health Cluster. Save the Children duly submitted proposals to the Cluster lead agencies for submission to DFID. Over a week later, on 26 June, this funding had still not come through, so Save the Children contacted DFID directly. At this point, DFID recommended that Save the Children rewrite both proposals into a DFID format, combining them into one and submitting them directly to DFID, thereby circumventing Cluster lead agencies entirely. Having done this, final confirmation of $900,000 in funding for health and early recovery projects was received on 13 July.

Although the funding had been delayed, DFID's positive decisions when delays occurred increased the speed of disbursal, while maintaining the coordination function of the Clusters.

Consequences

The delays in funding had real consequences. Save the Children had to wait until 13 July, over two months after the initial escalation of the crisis, for formal approval of DFID funding. Ironically, Save the Children's projects, which were designed to assist IDPs in Pakistan, received funding approval on the same day that the government of Pakistan decreed that IDPs should return home. Bilateral funding from the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), in contrast, was received over a month earlier.

Projects that Save the Children was unable to implement in June and July because of the delays in DFID funding included ten mobile health clinics and ten mobile nutrition clinics. Each clinic would have reached 120 people per day, suggesting that, for several weeks, 2,400 people per day did not receive these important health and nutrition services. Once received, the funds were used for vital health

and early recovery projects, but operations could not be scaled up quickly enough when needs were greatest.

It is also worth noting that the heaviest burden of assisting IDPs in Pakistan fell on host communities, who made an enormous effort to support displaced people. Without such assistance, independent of the international emergency response, the consequences for those affected would have been even more serious. The support provided by host communities in Pakistan cannot be relied upon in other countries or other, future emergencies, because other communities may not have the same level of resources as was available in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The importance of coordination is not in doubt and the Cluster system must be supported. However, the Pakistan experience offers some key recommendations for how the system can work better.

First, country-based pooled funds should be used wherever possible, to allow Clusters to carry out their coordination function without the burden of acting as funding mechanisms. Second, donors need to maintain flexibility in the way they provide funding. If there is no established pooled fund, donors should fund NGOs bilaterally as necessary. They should not automatically entrust all their funds to Cluster lead agencies that are unsuited to the task of onward funding disbursal. This would enhance, not detract from, the coordination function of Clusters. When working properly, Clusters are extremely positive mechanisms for identifying areas of need and prioritising projects. But Clusters should remain coordination mechanisms. They should identify priorities to go into the UN Flash Appeal, but they should not be expected to act as direct conduits for funding. Third, the role of Cluster coordinator should be separate from the operational activities of Cluster agencies. Only then might Clusters be viewed as impartial mechanisms for earmarking funds. It is unreasonable to expect an individual to coordinate a Cluster and simultaneously represent his or her own agency. Until this changes, Clusters will generally continue to function poorly. Finally, donors should require greater transparency in the onward disbursal of funds. If funds are allocated through Clusters, lead agencies should indicate which Cluster member (including itself) has received funding, what that funding is for and when it was disbursed. Cluster coordinators should be able to publish details of onward disbursal of funding within three days of disbursement. Unless donors insist on full transparency it will remain difficult to be sure the funds are reaching beneficiaries as intended.

It is to be hoped that the flexible use of pooled funds and bilateral funding, together with the effective implementation of Clusters, can avoid some of the problems faced in Pakistan. Providing life-saving aid to crisis-affected people depends on it.

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Integration: recent developments and persistent misperceptions

Oliver Ulich

Integration remains one of the most controversial issues in debates among humanitarians and between them and their colleagues in the peacekeeping, political and development areas. But many of these debates do not reflect recent developments, particularly in the UN context; instead, they tend to perpetuate a number of myths and misperceptions. This article provides an overview of recent policy developments and addresses some of the more persistent sources of confusion. It explains that the UN's policy on integration is much less rigid than is generally assumed, and shows that some of the arguments still being made against integration have been overtaken by events, or are not always supported by convincing evidence.

Scope and purpose of integration in the UN context

Several of the most important recent developments at the policy level relate to a set of decisions the UN Secretary-General took in June 2008. Following wide-ranging consultations with the main parts of the UN, the Secretary-General reaffirmed integration as the guiding principle for all conflict and post-conflict situations. He also, for the first time, defined exactly which countries the principle should be applied in, namely wherever the UN has a 'country team' (consisting of the UN agencies, funds and programmes operating in that country) and a multi-dimensional peacekeeping operation or political mission/ office. On the other hand, the principle is not applied in countries with traditional peacekeeping missions whose mandates are limited to ceasefire monitoring or in conflict or post-conflict countries without a political UN presence.

The 2008 decisions also clarified that integration applies not only to missions that are 'structurally integrated' – that is, missions with a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) who is also the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). Instead, country-level arrangements can take different structural forms and should reflect the specific requirements and circumstances at hand (often referred to as 'form should follow function'[1]). At the time the decisions were made, there was a strong consensus that the UN needed to refocus on the main purpose of integration, rather than equate integration with structural arrangements at the field level. There was also general agreement that far too much time and energy had been spent since the late 1990s arguing over these structural arrangements, with too little attention being paid to what actually makes integration work (or not work) in practice.

However, the perception that integration always means structural integration and 'integrated missions' is still widespread. Moreover, some humanitarians believe that one of the main purposes of integration is to subordinate humanitarian actors to the political leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). For them, integration means political command and control of all UN entities on the ground, and therefore – by definition – poses a grave threat to humanitarian space and principles. Again, the June 2008 decisions should allay these concerns: the main purpose of integration is to maximise the individual and collective impact of the UN's response, concentrating on those activities required to consolidate peace. This focus on peace consolidation means that many humanitarian activities fall outside the scope of integration efforts.

Key elements of integration at the country level

The decisions also spell out how integration should be achieved at the country level. Generally speaking, there should be an effective *strategic partnership* between the UN mission/office and the Country Team, under the leadership of the SRSG. While the exact arrangements should reflect specific requirements and circumstances, the decisions establish some requirements that should be in place in all cases, including (i) a shared vision of the UN's strategic objectives; (ii) closely aligned or integrated planning; and (iii) a set of agreed results, timelines and responsibilities for the delivery of tasks critical to consolidating peace. The emphasis is on integration at the strategic and planning levels, as well as accountability for the delivery of critical peace consolidation tasks. Coherence is seen as a means to an end (maximising the individual and collective impact of the UN's response), not an end in itself. And there is a clear recognition that the relationship between the mission and the Country Team has to be a partnership, rather than one of subordination or even absorption.

> the level of integration increases as the level of active conflict declines

In practice, integration arrangements adapt to circumstances on the ground. The general rule of thumb has been that the level of integration increases as the level of active conflict declines, with the most integrated structures emerging in the later post-conflict phases. In Sierra Leone and Burundi, for example, the UN has created the position of Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG), merging the functions of RC, political representative and head of the integrated office. Where active conflict prevails, the UN has decided in several cases to retain a separate RC/HC instead of merging this role with that of a Deputy SRSG. This has been the case in Somalia, Chad and Darfur.[2] In Afghanistan,

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1 That form should follow function was the main argument made in the independent study on integration commissioned by the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (Espen Barh Eide et al., *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*, May 2005).

2 The RC/HC for all of Sudan, including Darfur, is the DSRSG of UNMIS.

there is a DSRSG/RC/HC, but a separate OCHA office has been re-established. There is now a separate OCHA office or presence in every country with significant ongoing conflict, and which has a UN mission or political office. Most of these offices are also physically separate from the missions.

Specific humanitarian arrangements and concerns

Integration is often blamed for a number of threats to humanitarian space and principles, especially increased attacks against humanitarian workers and reduced access to beneficiaries. One of the main arguments is that attacks could be reduced and access increased if humanitarian actors distanced themselves from all those engaged in political and military activities, including UN missions with peacekeeping or political mandates. The success of the ICRC in reaffirming its neutral identity is seen as a model for other humanitarian actors.

There are a number of problems with these arguments. Most importantly, there is little or no empirical evidence to support the assertion that UN integration as such generally increases risks to humanitarian staff or reduces access. Second, to the extent that we know the reasons for increased attacks on humanitarians and reduced access, they often have little or nothing to do with UN integration arrangements. In many of the most dangerous countries, humanitarian space has been shrinking for other reasons, such as strong political pressure, close collaboration between humanitarian agencies and government military forces or a diffusion of and increase in violence. This includes several countries with no UN political or peacekeeping presence. Third, the vast majority of humanitarian actors, particularly UN agencies but also many NGOs, will not be able to adopt the ICRC model. Most have dual mandates covering both humanitarian and development assistance. UN agencies will always be accountable to member states through their governing boards and as donors, making them inherently political entities in a way the ICRC (or MSF) is not. As UN entities, they are inevitably linked to the political organs of the UN, especially the Security Council, and most attempts to differentiate between the UN's different roles on the ground have met with little success.[3] The level of independence the major NGOs enjoy from their donors and host governments also varies greatly.

Security

With regard to the alleged connection between integration and violence against aid workers, a study conducted by HPG in 2006 concluded that integrated missions had 'no statistically significant impact on aid worker violence'.[4] The April 2009 update of the study showed a sharp increase in

attacks against aid workers since 2006, but concluded that aid organisations 'are being attacked not because they are perceived to be cooperating with Western political actors, but because they are seen as wholly a part of the Western agenda'. In countries like Afghanistan and Somalia, the 'undeniably Western nature and orientation of much of the international aid community is at the root of the insecurity aid workers face'. Put more starkly, in these environments 'the provision of aid itself justifies attack'.[5]

Others see the association of humanitarian actors with belligerents as the main cause of attacks, particularly in Afghanistan. One of the leading critics of integration, Antonio Donini, recently urged the humanitarian community in Afghanistan to revert 'to time-tested humanitarian approaches' to increase their chances of saving and protecting larger numbers of lives.[6] But even in Donini's analysis, the precise configuration of the UN in Afghanistan is clearly not the predominant factor driving local perceptions, particularly for NGOs. While he welcomes the establishment of a separate OCHA office and calls for the appointment of a separate HC, Donini mostly attributes the shrinking of humanitarian space in Afghanistan to other factors, including the environment in which aid actors have to operate, donor pressure (and the fact that most donors are also belligerents) and the absence of a critical mass of traditional humanitarian players. The quarterly reports issued by the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) generally make no reference to the UN or the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as a factor influencing the perception of NGOs. Instead, a recent report concluded that 'NGOs were generally attacked for being perceived as intrinsic to the military and political objectives of the international military forces and related foreign Governments'.[7]

Access

With regard to humanitarian access issues, others have pointed out that there are currently no objective or robust means to assess claims that overall access is in fact declining.[8] Nevertheless, several arguments tend to be made in support of the link between access and integration. Supposedly, the leadership of missions prevents humanitarian actors from engaging with certain armed groups for political reasons. However, there are currently no examples where this is actually the case, and plenty of cases where UN agencies engage for humanitarian purposes with groups that are considered terrorist by a number of member states, including major donors. These include Gaza, Somalia and Afghanistan, all areas where the principle of integration applies. In several instances, it has been mainly donors that have put pressure on UN agencies to limit or suspend their interaction with certain groups.

A related argument is that SRSGs or their representatives sometimes exercise direct control over access negotiations

3 A recent UNHCR study on humanitarian space concluded that '[p]erceptions of UNHCR are … first and foremost shaped by the fact that the agency is part of the UN system. The positions taken by one part of the system, and in particular the most visible and powerful components, thus have a major impact on how the UN as a whole is perceived'. See Vicky Tennant, Bernie Doyle and Raouf Mazou, *Safeguarding Humanitarian Space: A Review of Key Challenges for UNHCR*, UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, February 2010.
4 Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Katherine Haver, *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations*, HPG Report 23, 2006.

5 Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Victoria DiDomenico, *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Violence against Aid Workers and the Operational Response (2009 Update)*, HPG Policy Brief 34, 2009.
6 Antonio Donini, *Afghanistan: Humanitarianism under Threat*, Feinstein International Center, Briefing Paper, March 2009.
7 ANSO Quarterly Data Report, Fourth Quarter 2008.
8 Stoddard et al., *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments (2009 Update)*.

and interfere with humanitarian operations, particularly in areas that are not controlled by the government. Again, there seem to be very few if any actual examples that support this argument, and most anecdotes told in this context are many years old. The argument also underestimates the high degree of operational autonomy UN agencies enjoy, even in the most integrated settings, and does not take into account that the DSRSG/RC/HCs are responsible for the planning and coordination of humanitarian operations, under the SRSGs' overall strategic direction. While there may be some exceptions, most SRSGs leave day-to-day humanitarian coordination tasks to the HCs and OCHA. Compared to a few years ago, there is also generally much greater recognition among colleagues in the political and peacekeeping departments and in missions that protecting humanitarian space matters, and that an effective and impartial humanitarian response is in the interest of the missions and the UN as a whole.

Conclusion

Many other issues would need to be covered as part of a more comprehensive assessment of the interface between integration and humanitarian issues, including how integration relates to the protection of civilians, the impact of integration on humanitarian advocacy, and the role of UN missions in the UN's security management system. Most humanitarian concerns in these areas – and in the areas discussed in this article – are not only legitimate, but have also helped shape the UN's policy in significant ways. In some circles, there also seems to be a growing recognition of the benefits for humanitarian operations that can result from effective and well-calibrated integration arrangements, such as increased access, logistical support and direct influence on planning and operational decision-making by UN political and peacekeeping actors.

The fundamental tensions at the heart of the humanitarian integration debate will remain. But it would be helpful if discussions were based on the current state of UN policy, a better understanding of the factual evidence instead of isolated anecdotes and a more differentiated analysis of the various threats to 'humanitarian space'. This would also help the humanitarian community to focus on the many serious challenges it confronts, with UN missions as natural allies instead of antagonists.

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Capacity-building and partnership in Northern Uganda

Ellen Martin, HPG

In recent years, developing national capacity and building effective partnerships with national and local actors have moved up the humanitarian policy agenda. Yet the rhetoric around sustainability and local ownership rarely reflects operational practice on the ground, making it difficult to identify not only the obstacles to such initiatives, but also the factors that enable their progress. Protracted emergencies raise a particular set of issues about how best to support national and local priorities in the transition from international to national and local aid coordination structures. Drawing on HPG research carried out in Gulu and Pader districts in Northern Uganda in 2009, this article explores these issues from the perspective of district authorities, local organisations and international humanitarian actors in Northern Uganda, with a particular focus on their participation in the cluster approach.

The cluster approach in transition

The cluster approach was formally implemented in January 2006 in recognition of the need to expand the humanitarian response in Northern Uganda. Beginning in 1996, the large-scale forcible displacement of the population into camps close to towns and military garrisons became an integral part of government counter-insurgency tactics against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Overcrowded conditions, poor sanitation and limited access to water meant that mortality rates in the camps were significantly in excess of emergency threshold levels.[1]

1 Republic of Uganda, *Health and Mortality Survey among Internally Displaced People in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda* (Kampala: Ministry of Health, 2005).

> ## no sooner had the cluster approach been implemented than the humanitarian context started to change

No sooner had the cluster approach been implemented than the humanitarian context started to change. In August 2006, the LRA and the Ugandan government signed a cease-fire. Peace negotiations followed, and improvements in security have allowed people to leave the camps and start rebuilding their lives and livelihoods. In 2007 the government launched a three-year Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP). Humanitarian assistance to LRA-affected regions has decreased significantly, and cluster coordination structures are preparing to transition into government-led sector working groups and national mechanisms as part of the PRDP. However, the fragility of the recovery process has become increasingly evident, with continued high levels of vulnerability, particularly food insecurity, and the return process has been accompanied by increasing conflict over land and renewed instability. This has raised questions over whether the conditions are in place for recovery-oriented programming without the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Like many other 'post-conflict' contexts, the recovery process has been hampered by the prevailing assumption, particularly among donors, that transition is linear. Relief

is rapidly being phased out and replaced by development funding, which has been slow to materialise. There are also concerns that the PRDP has neglected peace-building and reconciliation. The PRDP has a strong focus on large-scale infrastructure and economic development, to be implemented mainly through central and district government structures, though there are fears that the capacity of the district government in the North has been over-estimated.

In the absence of any significant recovery activities, the cluster approach adopted a transition strategy, the 'Parish Approach'. The aim was to ensure that basic services were provided to the population on the basis of geographical area, rather than site-specific assistance. Priorities included basic health and water needs, education, livelihoods support and road construction, as well as capacity-building support towards district structures in civil administration and rule of law. Donors were, however, less supportive of this idea, seeing it as going beyond the humanitarian mandate. Financial support was limited, and at the mid-year review most of these projects were removed from the Consolidated Appeal. The cluster approach nonetheless has had an important role to play in coordinating the transition from relief to recovery, particularly through the involvement of local organisations and district authorities.

In Uganda, clusters were merged with existing government sectoral coordination structures at the district level, called District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs). The majority of clusters are co-chaired by a humanitarian agency representative and a district office representative. In interviews with district officials and local organisations, the cluster approach was viewed positively overall. While there was initial confusion around the concept amongst government officials and international agencies, it was seen as an effective coordination platform for information-sharing, reducing duplication and filling gaps in response, and a vehicle for strengthening accountability through the monitoring of funding flows. Local organisations have also participated in the CAP, and several respondents gave credit to OCHA for facilitating their involvement.

As humanitarian relief is being phased out, similar structures are being established to coordinate activities under the PRDP. In Pader, the NGO forum has organised meetings with local government officials and community groups to work on developing similar coordination structures. In Gulu, the district NGO forum will be taking over responsibility for the coordination of national and international NGOs. Interviewees noted the need to ensure a coordinated approach to recovery assistance, capitalising on efforts through the cluster approach to develop linkages between the clusters and development actors at the district and national levels. However, district officials and local organisations both remarked on the failure of international humanitarian agencies to align with local priorities.

Coordination with district government and local organisations

The clusters have been transferring coordination responsibilities back to district government structures, and a strategic priority for humanitarian assistance in 2010 is to strengthen district government emergency preparedness and response capacity. A more pressing issue for district authorities is that soliciting information from international NGOs around their planned recovery and development activities has proved a challenge. District authorities are charged with integrating all work plans and budgets into their District Development Plans, yet have found that not all INGOs are willing to submit this information. At a district budget meeting in 2009, only two agencies were present, when 50 had been invited.

District officials are, understandably, frustrated with this situation. During the conflict government structures were destroyed and replaced by camp commandants. With the influx of humanitarian assistance, the North has become a relief-dominated economy, while the district authorities have very few resources at their disposal. Some see the reluctance of agencies to coordinate as part of a deliberate strategy to sustain their presence in the North. The drastic reduction in humanitarian activities has contributed to the sense among some local authorities that they are being excluded from the transition process.

In turn, some agencies do not see value in coordinating with a government which they perceive to be weak. Agencies which do engage complain that local officials frequently ask to be paid a 'sitting allowance' for their participation in cluster meetings or workshops. The dilemma facing district government was summarised by one actor, who noted that 'at the one end of the scale district government want to take control of the recovery process; they are tired of seeing agencies driving around in their nice cars when they are on their bikes. At the other end is the fact that we're here to do their job, so there is no point in them doing their part, they know that we will fill the gap' (HPG interviews, 2009).

Coordination with central government and development actors

A second gap identified by local organisations concerns monitoring and access to resources. They are mindful of previous experiences of recovery programmes implemented through local government structures, such as the World Bank-funded Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, which was beset with massive corruption, and insist on close monitoring of the funds to be channelled through the PDRP at the district level. They would also like to see greater support on the part of international actors to increase their own capacity to participate in this process. Meanwhile, the government's commitment to supporting recovery is in doubt, and there are concerns that resources will not reach the intended beneficiaries. Local organisations have also been critical of the stated objective in the PRDP of consolidating state authority, arguing instead that the key to a sustainable peace lies in building communities' trust in the authorities. Humanitarian agencies were seen as reluctant to address these questions. As one local organisation put it: 'humanitarian actors support us but don't want to be counted as us. Most if not all organisations stop at advocacy'.

One factor arguably influencing this is the shift from relief to recovery approaches within multi-mandated agencies. The UN Country Team has devised a new UN Peace Building and Recovery Assistance Plan for Northern Uganda (UNPRAP),

aimed at supporting the PRDP through human rights, justice, reconciliation, local governance, social services and livelihoods and social protection programmes. All sectors place a strong emphasis on supporting a government-led recovery process. Within the cluster approach, the Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods cluster, co-led by WFP and FAO, was the first to develop a transition strategy that specifically linked its activities within the CAP to those planned under the PRDP. This strategy in turn is based on the analysis of recovery needs undertaken by the government in the PRDP. WFP's new country programme will also involve recovery plans aimed at supporting the government's priority areas for agricultural growth and the strengthening and diversification of livelihoods. At the same time, the 2010 Consolidated Appeal warns that, if the humanitarian needs of the population are not met in the absence of adequate service delivery and governance structures, there is the risk that the transition from a humanitarian to a recovery phase may be reversed.

Conclusion

Humanitarian agencies often forget the essential role that local organisations play in reconciliation, peace-building

2 Ian Christoplos, 'Institutional Capacity Building and Humanitarian Action', *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004*, ALNAP, 2004.

and reconstruction, and are happy to leave the responsibility for capacity-building in these areas to peacebuilding or development specialists.[2] In contexts of long-standing humanitarian engagement in particular, greater attention needs to be paid to how humanitarian agencies can support or undermine such efforts, issues that go beyond strengthening local capacity for humanitarian response. A number of local organisations in Northern Uganda are working specifically on governance issues. Initiatives include projects designed to enhance the capacity of the population to participate in planning and monitoring district government resource allocations. One agency has created fora at the Parish level to create a space for communities to debate issues of concern and bring these to the attention of local government representatives.

Humanitarian actors must recognise that, while it was unfortunate that they bypassed government structures during the emergency, this does not necessarily mean that they do not have a role to play in lobbying to ensure that subsequent assistance efforts are tailored in the most appropriate way.

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Cash For Work: lessons from northern Afghanistan

Nicolas Lamade, Dr. Hannelore Börgel and Paul Harvey

Cash has rapidly become an effective part of the humanitarian toolbox. Debates about its use now focus less on the pros and cons, and more on the complexities and challenges of implementation. In part, this stems from a recognition that fears about corrupt or unintended use have not been borne out in practice, and that the relative risks of cash versus in-kind alternatives need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, to determine when, where and how cash programmes might be appropriate. Cash transfers are simpler to implement in situations where robust markets and cash delivery systems are already in place (i.e. banks, remittance services), infrastructure is intact and a degree of security can be guaranteed.

Cash For Work projects in northern Afghanistan

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) has been implementing emergency and transition assistance (DETA) programmes in Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces in northern Afghanistan since 2002. Cash For Work (CFW) activities started in 2004, and gained momentum in 2006. The DETA programme was extended to two provinces in south-eastern Afghanistan (Khost and Phaktia) in 2007, and to six other provinces in the north (Baghlan, Balkh, Samangan, Sar-e-Pul, Jowzjan and Faryab), where CFW projects have also started, albeit on a smaller scale. There are plans to extend CFW coverage in the north as part of a new programme, 'Basic Infrastructure and

Income Generation', reflecting Germany's commitment to supporting CFW activities on a large scale.

DETA programmes are financed by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). As short- to medium-term responses, the overall goal is to ensure that public services are delivered during and immediately following emergencies, while simultaneously promoting self-help capacity at all levels of society and the state. Since 2006, DETA programmes have adopted a people-centred approach, which aims to increase the sustainability of poor people's livelihoods in north-eastern Afghanistan.

Initially, investments were concentrated on two selected districts in Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, in what are known as 'backbone projects'. These comprise large, mostly infrastructural, projects, such as road or bridge construction, with significant CFW components. Within the districts selected, the majority of interventions target specific communities based on food insecurity or livelihood criteria. Cash rather than in-kind aid is the main delivery instrument. Cash was preferred over Food for Work for various reasons, including the chronic character of the crisis (this is not an acute emergency), and the fact that cash is logistically easier and cheaper than food deliveries in mountainous northern Afghanistan. The preference for cash also reflects German government policy regarding the shift towards cash-based approaches.

Projects are implemented by target groups and Afghan partners. Technical know-how and supervision, as well as monitoring, are supported by GTZ-employed Afghan staff, mainly construction and agricultural engineers and community workers, assisted by a few international staff. The entire approach, from project conception to final implementation, is bottom-up and oriented towards Afghan ownership. Apart from road-building, which is the main activity, projects cover a wide range of construction and rehabilitation work, such as bridges, culverts, school buildings, flood protection, wells and drinking water supplies.

GTZ's CFW activities have guaranteed roughly 15,000 workers access to cash over the last three years, benefiting more than 100,000 Afghans annually. In Badakhshan province alone, 150,000 work days were provided every year. On average, CFW beneficiaries have participated in CFW schemes for 15 days, and roughly 10,000 skilled and unskilled workers have participated annually, benefiting over 80,000 poor people in Badakhshan alone (the average family is estimated to comprise eight people in Badakhshan province and five in Takhar).

Evaluation and analysis

The main objectives of the CFW schemes were:

- To improve food security in vulnerable districts.
- To increase economic opportunities and social services for the rural population.
- To improve access and travel facilities.
- To provide work and income opportunities during the lean season, when other income opportunities are not available.
- To build capacity within Community Development Councils (CDCs).

Almost all of these objectives have been attained, albeit to different degrees according to local conditions. Projects had substantial positive impacts on economic conditions, local markets and social amenities. In most cases, projects yielded very positive short- and medium-term results and laid the foundation for longer-term structural impacts. In particular, road construction projects contributed to solving transport problems, especially in winter and spring. For the first time buses, cars and trucks were able to reach some remote areas. Shops opened up along the roads, and villages were able to take sick people to hospitals for medical treatment. Roads connecting rural areas with main town centres and bazaars acted as a starting-point for further investment in infrastructure in district centres.

Overall, GTZ's CFW schemes contributed to reconstruction in what is a very challenging environment, where there are large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers but investors are reluctant to risk capital and create employment possibilities. CFW was seen as a valid rapid response tool, and potentially an effective mechanism for triggering longer-term changes in traditional Afghan communities. Aside from the positive direct impacts on households of the cash received, the infrastructure projects carried out – roads, bridges, wells, drinking water, school buildings and flood protection – proved to be beneficial for local livelihoods. However, whether cash transfers are appropriate as a replacement for or complement

to in-kind support can only be decided on a case-by-case basis, within specific contexts.

GTZ's experience with CFW projects in northern Afghanistan shows that cash transfers can be successful on a large scale. Improvements to the road system in particular dramatically increased the volume of goods transported to and from local markets, accompanied by a sharp drop in transport costs. Thus, the project promoted local markets and facilitated trade in affected areas. Mortality rates in pregnancy and childbirth, as well as from serious illness, were reduced as patients could be transported from remote villages to health centres in time for treatment. These improvements triggered some motivational and social changes, as the CFW initiative has persuaded labourers and villagers to maintain the small feeder roads built to connect their villages to the larger 'backbone' project roads, thereby possibly encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility for road upkeep. Finally, with 100,000 people benefiting annually, the GTZ project has demonstrated that cash can be successful at scale, and for a long period.

Concerns that cash may be misused for anti-social purposes have proved unfounded, as the money was largely spent to meet basic needs. Evidence from programme monitoring shows that cash has been spent on what beneficiaries most needed, namely food. Another common criticism of CFW programmes, that cash could be more vulnerable to looting or misuse than food aid, and therefore that cash transfers should only be considered in secure situations, has also not been substantiated. Rather, the results in Afghanistan suggest that cash-based programming can be successful in insecure environments. Cash may also have positive side-effects for conflict prevention or mitigation; labourers that were previously combatants worked side by side with local farmers and community members for the first time, acting jointly to improve livelihoods in peace.

Nor was there any evidence that the cash transfers disadvantaged women. Men and women in northern Afghanistan frequently make joint decisions on how to spend money most appropriately, and women often have access to their husbands' cash deposit and participate in economic activities that fall within their responsibilities. Men were the recipients of cash in most of the activities and women's participation was limited. In a very traditional and patriarchal culture there are clearly huge barriers to encouraging the greater participation of women in CFW projects, and GTZ has at least managed to get some women to participate. In order to promote greater involvement, project proposals from women's associations and NGOs were favourably weighted and supported for approval. The numbers of women affected, however, have remained relatively small, and more attention could perhaps be given to ways to broaden participation, both in terms of numbers involved and the range of activities. Another criticism of cash programmes has been that they do not necessarily target the most vulnerable. Given that workers were selected in cooperation with village councils (the *shuras*), elected CDCs and project staff, the poorest and most food-insecure people represented the bulk of the unskilled labour force employed by GTZ. In addition, keeping the daily wage below the local level for unskilled labour may have provided an 'in-built' self-targeting mechanism.

One unresolved problem has been that many workers were only permitted to join the unskilled labour force for a few weeks due to high demand for the limited work available. This restricted the income that each household received and meant that the wages made a relatively small contribution to household food security. It was also felt that the cash disbursed was not sufficient to have major price impacts on food markets or labour migration. However, it is possible that CFW wages had a minor short-term impact on local markets and on the prices of essential goods during paydays. Another important lesson is the need for mechanisms allowing for cash remunerations to be adapted regularly to seasonal variations in the labour market and food prices. Better coordination is also needed, with greater information-sharing between agencies on general policies as well as practical operational aspects, such as daily rates and work standards. The large number of agencies engaged in CFW programmes in Afghanistan makes coordination and the exchange of experience particularly important. The existence of an effective monitoring system to provide data and information would be useful in supporting joint decision-making processes.

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Preparing humanitarian workers for disaster response: a Red Cross/Red Crescent field training model

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Over the past decade, humanitarian operations have become increasingly complex, with multiple actors, new roles for the military, new and evolving standards and guidelines, new terminologies, new products, a variety of coordination platforms, changing donor roles, challenges in accessing populations in need and chronic conflicts and anomalous climate patterns leaving communities more vulnerable than ever. These developments have generally not been matched by sufficient practical training to equip those engaged in delivering humanitarian relief and assistance with the skills they need to do their jobs. Projected future challenges may well create fresh new complexities.[1]

A field school assessment team in Garsen, Kenya, November 2009

The skills needed for disaster response

Teams deployed in emergencies are required to initiate rapid assessments and implement appropriate interventions within days of a disaster. Coupled with the need for a rapid response in conditions of extreme physical and mental stress, aid workers must adapt to and deal with unfamiliar demographics, cultures, political environments and climates. This further complicates the task of implementing relief activities that are relevant, timely and well-targeted.

The skills sufficient 15 or 20 years ago are no longer enough to succeed in today's complex humanitarian environment. A new approach to training and skills development is needed, not least to respond to the greater demands of donors and stricter professional accountability measures.[2] This must be matched with a complementary level of institutional commitment and financial investment, aimed at improving the efficiency of humanitarian operations.

1 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), *World Disaster Report 2009: Focus on Early Warning, Early Action; Humanitarian Response Review*, An independent report commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, 2005.

2 'The Effectiveness of Disaster Training for Health Care Workers: A Systematic Review', *Ann Emerg Med.* 2008. 52(3):211-22, 222.e1-2.

The ability to rapidly adapt to changes in culture, working and living conditions, language and professional practice and standards is a fundamental prerequisite for aid workers. For many this can be very unsettling. The most successful tend to be those who have had relevant prior experience. Aid workers must be able to coordinate, build and work in teams and interact with communities across sectors (health, water, sanitation, shelter, nutrition, security, gender, the environment). This is essential during the early post-disaster phase. Aid workers need to understand the links between sectors, and how these links impact upon overall health and wellbeing. Finally, effective disaster response in emergency public health requires the ability to communicate effectively with many stakeholders: a mother, a deputy health minister, a local nurse and field officers, often through interpreters.

The need to modify training methods

Much humanitarian intervention training is classroom-based, coupled with role-playing and table-top simulations. The background of many participants (highly specialised, lacking cross-cultural experience and effective communication skills, lacking practice in community entrance techniques and basic household interview skills) can leave them overwhelmed and barely able to cope in real deployments. Completing a classroom training course does not necessarily qualify people for complex humanitarian operations.[3]

In 2007, the Norwegian Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) developed a field-based training model focusing on humanitarian response in disasters. Five Field Schools were conducted (in Kenya in July 2007 and November 2009, Belize in May 2008, Cambodia in December 2008 and Fiji in June 2009). A total of 140 people were trained, and each training mission was overseen by on average 15 facilitators. The settings selected for the field training missions were all remote rural communities with high rates of morbidity and mortality resulting from poverty and disasters. The thematic focus throughout the training has been on public health in emergencies, using a holistic approach encompassing water, sanitation, emergency shelter, nutrition and psychosocial support.

The Field School training concept

The Field School is a unique form of training, consisting of total immersion in a mission environment. The Field School has a focus on 'learning by doing', while participants are mentored by experienced facilitators on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis. A practical two-week modular curriculum mirroring Red Cross/Red Crescent disaster response forms the basis of the approach. The mission places participants in conditions of physical and psychological stress similar to those they are likely to experience in the early stages of deployment to major disasters. Male and female participants, representing a diverse mix of international, regional and national Red Cross/Red Crescent staff, are chosen against specific selection criteria, and are required to complete a pre-course paper outlining their expectations, aims and objectives. Participants are also required to complete pre-course reading aimed at providing theoretical knowledge across response sectors.

Field School facilitators have extensive humanitarian field experience, as well as the proven ability to coach, mentor and support personnel in working environments. The facilitators promote continuous active learning and demonstration, coupled with a culture and ethic of true community participation. Facilitators are constantly challenged to sharpen their own pedagogical skills, and to be flexible, responsive and creative in meeting the learning objectives of participants.

Preparation for the training

In the planning phase for the Field School, an assessment team undertakes a scoping mission with the host National Society of the country in which the training is to take place. A recent external review has emphasised the importance of thorough preparation and site selection criteria to guide this process.[4] Community meetings take place with the authorities and the target population to inform them of the aims and expected outcomes of the Field School. Once common understanding and acceptance have been achieved community contacts are followed up by the local Red Cross Branch to further clarify any outstanding concerns. This also contributes to addressing community expectations, and planning for what the Field School will 'leave behind' as a contribution to these communities.

The training

Learning objectives are articulated in a defined but flexible curriculum. Participants are divided into small teams of five to seven people, and are required to engage with communities in a 'real' disaster response. No classroom presentations are used.

The participants assess, plan, train local volunteers and implement short-term interventions, which have included disease prevention and health awareness activities. This work takes place in close partnership with local branches, volunteers and communities, thus simultaneously building local capacity. Improving communication skills and learning how to build trust with local counterparts are integral components of the curriculum. Participants set up a secure operational base including infrastructure – water, sanitation, telecommunications, shelter and logistical arrangements – and deal with day-to-day problems. From this base, and with real-time mentoring, teams are required to undertake community meetings and engage in focus group discussions to identify priority needs. The Field School offers a unique chance to coach participants and practice communications with a variety of counterparts, often through interpreters and under stressful conditions.

While engaged in the mission, the field teams manage budgets and work to tight deadlines. They also use existing disaster response tools, guidelines, manuals and templates, including communicating with simulated task forces and the media. Security awareness and simulations are also included in the curriculum. Where possible, the Field School links with ongoing activities in the area managed by the authorities, local Red Cross branches, the Ministry of Health and NGOs. These have included food or relief item distributions, health services and coordination meetings.

3 Aidan J. Byrne et al., 'Review of Comparative Studies of Clinical Skills Training', *BEME Rapid Review*, 30:764–767, 2008.

4 C. Brunnström C, 'Field School: External review', Document posted on Disaster Management Information System Web, DMIS. Contact authors for copies.

Active coordination with other actors in a community is key to a successful intervention, and one of the hardest tasks for teams under time pressures and stress.

An additional component pioneered in all four training courses has been the field-testing of various relief and medical products, including rapid malaria tests, inflatable rafts, solar cells, rapid set-up latrines, shower tents and water purification systems. This component is seen as a vetting process to enable better decision-making in selecting appropriate technology for the field.

Training outcomes

The impact of the training on participants is monitored closely throughout the mission by the mentors, as well as through formal written evaluations. These help facilitators to fine-tune the training as it progresses. Results to date, confirmed through post-training follow-up and a review of the Field School concept, indicate that, while participants acknowledge some of the difficult personal and professional challenges of the training mission, they have been able to incorporate the skills they have acquired into their work in subsequent missions. The three most highly rated aspects of the training are the 'how to' skills acquired, multi-disciplinary learning and working with local volunteers in the communities. In addition, the mix of international, regional and local participants with diverse backgrounds was cited as contributing to learning through the exchange of experience and the opportunity to see different perspectives. Most participants also cited teamwork as a key enhanced skill, including greater appreciation for non-mission-related activities that improve productivity and team cohesiveness.

Benefits to the communities

Communities are encouraged to highlight concerns and challenges in their daily lives. All assessment findings and plans of action developed for training purposes are provided to the local Red Cross/Red Crescent Branch, to guide ongoing activities and possible future programming. Based on the data gathered from the assessments and presented to the host National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, and in some cases the Ministry of Health, inputs have been provided to the community following the training. In Belize, for example, community water tanks – highlighted as a priority need – were installed to help with water storage in the dry season. In Cambodia, a building was renovated as the Red Cross Branch office in the district where the assessments took place, and over 70 volunteers were trained in disease prevention and health promotion. The plans of action developed by the Field School participants were later presented to the Australian Red Cross, which subsequently supported a Cambodian Red Cross water and sanitation project in the district where the Field School was run.

Ethical issues

The involvement of poorer communities in learning processes has posed ethical challenges to all the Field Schools. The training mission by definition entails elements of trial and error, and raised expectations are also a factor. The recent review of the Field School emphasises the need to be ethically correct towards the communities involved, i.e. to be aware that foreign presence always creates expectations. The needs of the community must never be ignored, not even in a training situation.

Although the facilitators offer close guidance to ensure safe practice and control for errors, ethical dilemmas remain a daily agenda item during the training. Some ethical issues were addressed by providing a field equivalent of informed consent. Such measures will vary by country and district, and need to be prioritised throughout the planning and implementation phases. Consideration of future potential Field School locations needs to include and be synchronised with post-training follow-up projects in these locations.

Conclusions

Those engaged in the delivery of aid need not accept that they can only learn the skills they require during actual operations, possibly at the expense of delivering optimal services to stricken communities. The recent external review confirms the benefits of the Field School concept. The Field School has demonstrated that it can build upon classroom-based training, adding a practical layer through total immersion in disaster operations: a form of internship for humanitarian workers. Participants learn to apply combined theory and skills, use appropriate tools and communicate effectively with communities and among themselves. This holistic multi-disciplinary approach is uniquely possible in the type of mission environment the Field School provides.

The methodology can be applied to other sector training as well, through the development and adaptation of existing classroom-based training modules and coaching by facilitators. The modular curricula can be modified to address longer-term community-based disaster preparedness and development. The Field School concept could expand and become more effective through partnerships with other humanitarian organisations, applied research groups and academic institutions. It can also be used to field-test new concepts, devices, products and approaches before deploying them in actual emergencies.

The Field School is an appropriate and successful training medium for developing the field skills of disaster response workers to an adequate and effective level. An improved response to disasters requires more coordination and collaboration among humanitarian organisations and academic institutions to further validate such approaches and gather further evidence. Mainstream tools can then be developed and adopted to improve disaster response outcomes overall.

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PRACTICE AND POLICY NOTES

Humanitarian Practice Network

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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.

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