

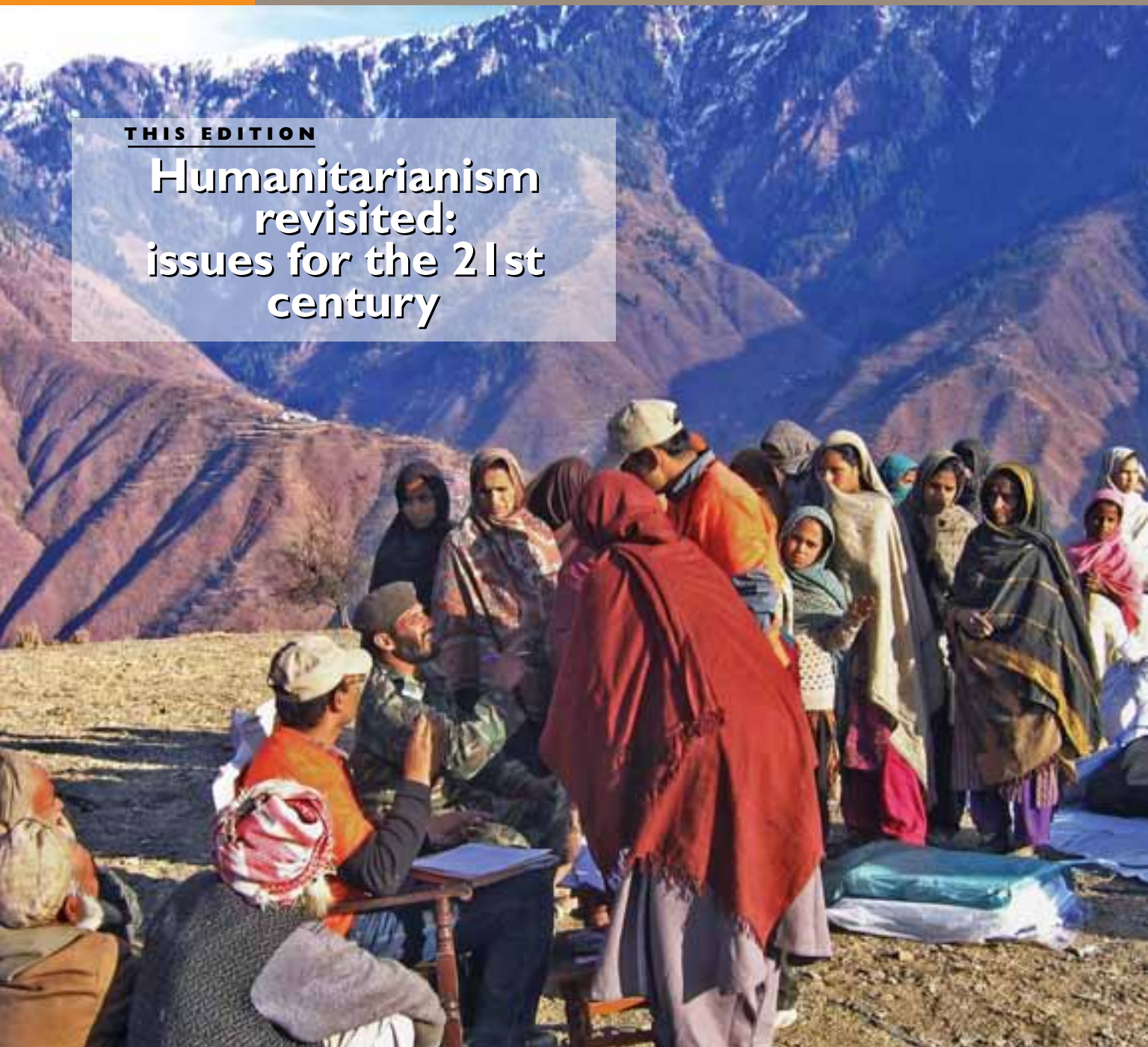
# Global Future

Number 2, 2006

A WORLD VISION JOURNAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## **THIS EDITION**

### **Humanitarianism revisited: issues for the 21st century**



## **FEATURING**

### **Jan Egeland**

United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs

### **Angelo Gnaedinger**

International Committee of the Red Cross

### **Adele Harmer**

Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute

### **Hugo Slim**

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

# contents

Number 2, 2006

- 1 Complex compassion**  
LARS GUSTAVSSON
- 2 Solidarity, not charity,  
to guide global response**  
JAN EGGLELAND
- 4 The limits of help**  
HUGO SLIM
- 6 Diversity in donorship: the changing  
landscape of humanitarian assistance**  
ADELE HARMER
- 8 Humanitarian action:  
World Vision's definition**  
RICHARD RUMSEY
- 10 Saving lives amid complex conflict:  
case study of Darfur**  
DAN TENG'O
- 12 Corporate-NGO partnership:  
lessons from the tsunami**  
OTTO FARKAS & ANDREW WARNES
- 14 Working with the military  
in quake-ravaged Pakistan**  
REBECCA LYMAN
- 16 Is IHL still relevant in a post-9/11 world?**  
ANGELO GNAEDINGER
- 18 The principles of protection and  
humanitarian performance**  
MARK BOWDEN
- 20 Putting humanitarian coordination  
in touch with reality**  
ED SCHENKENBERG VAN MIEROP
- 22 Ambiguity and change:  
humanitarian NGOs prepare for the future**  
MARK JANZ
- 24 The Back Pages**  
JOHN WEST

**Letter** from a reader  
Amboka Wameyo

## AN INFORMATIVE MIX

Congratulations on the last edition, on "Prioritising children in the global response to HIV and AIDS".

The mix of articles was very good. The first three articles were especially interesting, and I found myself memorising and highlighting new information. I learned some new things about the cost of drugs for children from Dr Toole's article. The articles by World Vision staff were also very informative. I particularly like the interviews with children – an ideal way to show the human side of the story.

The new green colour is very appropriate for the serious topics being discussed, and I like the mix between full colour and grey photos. The new additions, such as the "did you know?" box, are useful to readers. However, I found the new font too fine and difficult to read – especially for those of us who read aided by the relevant equipment (contact lenses or spectacles).

The message was very clear: more needs to be done for children in the face of this pandemic.

Amboka Wameyo  
Tanzania

## what next? in number 3, 2006

### Governance and civil society

*If the G8 delivers its promise on aid and debt, how close will we be to ending poverty?*

*There is now much debate about the important role that the structures of governance play in poverty eradication.*

*What measures can the international community take to address the "governance gap"? How could the multilateral institutions help set the standard for governance and how should they address their own governance gaps? And what is civil society's role in monitoring and engaging with the state for better governance? How can civil society secure the "space" to meaningfully participate in formulating and implementing policy in favour of the poor?*

**front cover image:** Following the earthquake of October 2005, women line up for distributions in Josach, Pakistan.  
**Photo:** Iris Manner / World Vision

**facing page image:** A mother of 12 children carries relief supplies received from World Vision, following months of drought in Brazil.  
**Photo:** Marco Dias / World Vision

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World Vision

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## COMPLEX COMPASSION

The world today faces an unprecedented number of natural and human-made disasters. At the same time, communities are becoming increasingly vulnerable, due to the impacts of HIV and AIDS, urban growth, trade practices, climate change, migration and other defining issues of our time. Thus, the number and complexity of emergency responses continues to grow.

Humanitarian aid has tripled in the past decade with NGOs now managing 60% of this aid; and some NGOs providing more aid than donor governments. Despite this, funding remains inconsistent: often too little too late; sometimes too much too soon. Critical long-term mitigation and preparedness work lacks support. Aid continues to be politicised, or determined by media interest (US\$7,100 was donated for every person affected by the 2004 tsunami; for the Bangladesh floods the same year it was just \$3 per person), yet every person on Earth has the right to life-saving assistance and protection of their basic human rights.



Constant change and innovation are pushing the humanitarian community to new levels of reform and ideology. A decade ago, agencies sought to deliver the five basics of water, shelter, food, health and nutrition. Now, rightly so, we are asked to undertake work around protection, the environment, livelihoods and gender; with sensitivity to social, economic and political contexts so as to ensure high-quality responses that are accountable and “do no harm”. Agencies now consider the root causes of crises, rather than just responding to the symptoms, and seek to help communities overcome their vulnerabilities and build their inherent capacities.

Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies continue to uphold the foundational principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Yet the right to assist is challenged by political, economic and commercial interests, and as the “humanitarian space” becomes more crowded with new participants and contributors – such as the military, corporations and the private sector – humanitarian principles are in some cases being eroded.

This edition of *Global Future* includes contributions from across the humanitarian sector, examining what agencies should aim to achieve and to what extent it is possible to uphold humanitarian principles in today's complex and challenging world. Gnaedinger's strong defence of International Humanitarian Law and neutrality in the evolving world of humanitarianism reminds us that being on the side of those who are suffering should suffice as a motive. Slim highlights the difficult decisions that agencies are forced to make on the limits of their assistance, and Rumsey lays out approaches that World Vision has taken to the increasing challenges. Our centre pages present real-life stories touching on some key issues.

World Vision's response to humanitarian emergencies, like that of many international NGOs, has grown exponentially, especially since the 1999 Kosovo crisis. We have greatly enhanced our capacity; diversified resources; developed strategy to equally support vulnerable communities before, during and after emergencies, while retaining our strong focus on the needs of children; and we have taken our place at the global table to promote coordination, accountability and quality in the humanitarian industry.

As we revisit humanitarianism in this edition, we must reflect on the many positives that have evolved in recent years: enhanced coordination among the largest NGOs, reform in the United Nations, peer accountability and greater levels of collaborative research. We believe all these will support us as we continue to transform suffering into well-being, while protecting people's rights, dignity and livelihoods. ■

**Mr Lars Gustavsson is World Vision's Vice-President for Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs.**





# SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY, TO GUIDE GLOBAL RESPONSE

*Jan Egeland argues that all nations have the responsibility to provide humanitarian aid, to save lives and to alleviate suffering. There is no time to delay and no excuse for inaction.*

Last year may well be remembered as "the year of disasters". From the hurricane-swept Americas, to the parched pastoral lands of Africa's Horn, to the killing fields of Darfur; the scale of suffering staggered the imagination. But alongside these immense human tragedies, there were signs of hope.

In 2005, we saw non-governmental organisations (NGOs), like World Vision, and the United Nations (UN) working more effectively than ever to save lives. We saw civic and religious groups across the globe rally for debt relief and an end to extreme poverty; the public opened their hearts and wallets to aid victims of disaster; and the UN launched a much-needed revitalisation of its work, including a major reform of the global humanitarian system. These initiatives will strengthen our ability to meet tomorrow's humanitarian challenges.

In fact, we have no time to lose. Last year there was an 18% increase in the number of large-scale disasters, including floods, windstorms and droughts, which affected 157 million people and killed 92,000. Scientists warn that more extreme weather may be on the way in the next few decades, with potentially enormous humanitarian consequences for hundreds of millions of people. As is always true in the cruel calculus of disasters, poor communities will be most at risk of – and least able to survive – nature's fury.

## TRANSCENDING BORDERS

Today's humanitarian threats – diseases, poverty and hunger; conflict, mass migration and weather-related disasters – transcend borders, and multiple humanitarian crises now occur simultaneously. They require a truly global response in which solidarity, not charity, guides our approach to assistance. We need a humanitarian system that is able to respond reliably, effectively and efficiently across the full range of emergencies. Now more than ever; humanitarian aid must be the responsibility of all nations and must benefit all nations.

This is why the UN has launched a comprehensive package of humanitarian reforms to strengthen our

ability, as a community, to save lives and alleviate suffering whenever and wherever crisis occurs.

Predictability and partnership are the hallmarks of this reform process. The word "predictable" here is key, for it illustrates one of the great paradoxes of humanitarian work: we come to the relief of some, but not others. This is unacceptable. Basic, life-saving assistance should not be a humanitarian lottery whereby some win, but others lose every day, every year.

## STRENGTHENING RESPONSE

Four changes are necessary to improve our collective ability to save lives and alleviate suffering.

**First**, aid organisations must have the resources needed to respond in a predictable manner to emergencies. As any aid worker knows, resources are urgently needed at the outset of a crisis, not afterwards. But all too often, money is slow to arrive. For example, only 10% of the UN's humanitarian appeal typically is funded in the first quarter of the year. Late funding costs lives. It also costs donors more money.

We can, and we must, do better. To that end, UN member states approved the creation of a US\$500 million Central Response Emergency Fund (CERF), designed to jump-start relief operations within 72 hours of an emergency. Since March, more than 40 donors have pledged \$261 million to the CERF.

## We have an obligation to help all who suffer

In addition to improving the speed of funding, the CERF will help redress persistent inequities in humanitarian funding. One third of CERF resources are dedicated to supporting core, life-saving activities in chronically neglected crises. Need, not creed, politics or media attention should be our only criteria for providing assistance.

In reality, this is far from the case, far too often. On what grounds, for example, can we justify the fact that last year needy people in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) received about \$100 of relief assistance per person, while

tsunami survivors received more than ten times that amount? We must move away from lottery to predictability so that all who suffer receive assistance based on an impartial assessment of needs.

To date, nearly \$60 million in rapid response funding has been allocated from the CERF for seven emergencies, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Niger and the Horn of Africa. I have also approved another \$32 million in CERF monies for under-funded crises in the DRC and 11 other countries.

**Second,** aid workers need more predictable access and security to help all those in need. We have a right – and an obligation – to help all who suffer, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. Safe humanitarian access is the *sine qua non* of our work. Too often, however, our access is hindered by government authorities or armed groups who prevent us from doing our job.

In the southern Sudanese province of Equatoria, for example, key access roads are inaccessible to humanitarian workers without military escorts. Only minimal, life-saving activities can be carried out in many areas; in others, relief operations have been suspended entirely. We need better guarantees of safety for our humanitarian colleagues who are regularly on the front lines, armed with only their principles. We call on authorities at every level to make sure that aid workers have the safe access needed to put those principles into practice.

**Third,** we need stronger partnerships and better coordination structures for NGOs and UN agencies. Over the years, the number of NGOs has grown dramatically, as has their influence and capabilities.

NGOs deploy the majority of field workers around the world, and many serve as essential humanitarian partners for the UN. Thousands of courageous NGO staff – particularly local staff – serve on the front lines, assisting and protecting civilians despite safety risks. In today's complex operating environment, humanitarian coordination is not a luxury. With

resources stretched, multiple crises occurring simultaneously, and ever more NGOs and aid actors, coordination is a necessity.

### Humanitarian coordination is not a luxury, it is a necessity

In the tsunami crisis, for example, my office at the UN, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), worked with 90 donor nations, 35 militaries, 17 UN agencies, hundreds of NGOs and scores of private companies to ensure the right aid got to the right people at the right time. Working together, by and large we succeeded.

I hope we can build on this strong foundation, with both NGOs and UN actors committing to one overarching framework for coordination and information sharing under the new cluster system approach. Conceived as a partnership between UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international organisations, the cluster approach strengthens predictable coordination by identifying nine sectoral leaders who will see to it that significant gaps in assistance are filled, and that a comprehensive humanitarian response is reliably provided. OCHA will facilitate

the clusters while supporting the Humanitarian Coordinator in his/her overall responsibilities. I look forward to the constructive suggestions and active involvement of the NGO community – including local, national, and Southern-based NGOs – in this process. NGO participation is as vital as it is welcome.

**Fourth** and finally, we need to strengthen disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures across the board. There is no time to delay, and no excuse for inaction. As last year's hurricane season showed, disaster risk reduction is an investment no nation can afford to forgo. The writing is on the wall: in the last decade, the number of people affected by disasters was three times higher than in the 1970s. Climate variability, rapid and unplanned urbanisation, and short-sighted development practices mean that this trend will likely continue.

The need for a reformed, strengthened global humanitarian system has never been more apparent – or more necessary. Let's seize this opportunity. Lives depend on it. ■

**Mr Jan Egeland is the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.**

Food distribution to war-affected people in Nyabiondo, DRC  
**Photo:** Horeb Bulambo / World Vision

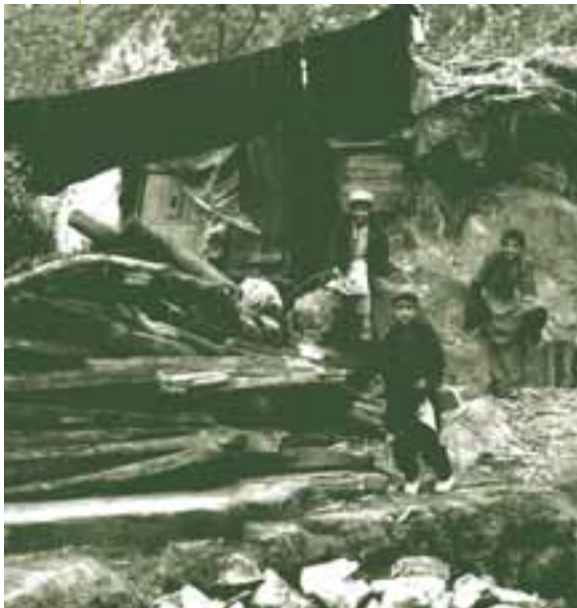




# THE LIMITS OF HELP

*How much is enough, and where can we draw the line, when helping others? Hugo Slim asks the difficult questions that all humanitarian agencies must consider.*

Children playing in the rubble of Peer Khel community, Pakistan  
Photo: World Vision



One of the most difficult moral problems about helping other people is working out when to stop. Every organisation engaged in humanitarian work has to make choices about the limits of its kindness. These choices are determined by resources, politics and sustainability.

Do we have enough money to repair every aspect of a community's life after this disaster or must we limit what we do? Will we be seen as dangerously political if we get involved in peace and justice work while this war is still going on? Can this community absorb all the aid we can give or will we overwhelm it and even de-motivate it if we give too much too soon? Where is the right balance between outside help and self-help to be found in a given situation?

These are difficult questions but they are the right ones for a humanitarian organisation. They are soon asked whenever we try to help others or need to be helped ourselves.

When the modern ideology of humanitarian work was developed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Geneva by the Red Cross Movement, it drew clear boundaries around humanitarian action, particularly in war.

What emerged was a doctrine of limited help. When people are suffering you can feed them, clothe them, cure them, visit them in prison and try to protect them from excessive force – actions remarkably similar, incidentally, to those enjoined by Jesus (Matthew 25:31–46 *et al*).

## A SORT OF INTERIM ETHICS

In Geneva thinking, the humanitarian moment is viewed as the fifth beatitude and seen primarily to be about mercy and kindness. Humanitarian help is a sort of interim ethic for particularly difficult times in which you might not be able to do much and in which it might be politically unwise to try.

Conditions might be too extreme to start building a new society and you might well be punished for doing so by those who disagree with the kind of ideal society you have in

mind. So, best to keep it as simple and unthreatening as possible.

Such a limited interim ethic of help makes sense if you feel sure that a time will come for the wider work of justice and peace and if you know that there are many other institutions that are mandated and capable of bringing them about when that time does come.

But here's the rub. Is it right for people to have to wait for those better times if you can help to bring them about sooner?

And, anyway, can you be so sure that those with power have the same good times in mind as you do?

Perhaps, in short, the good times have to be made. They don't just come. Maybe you have to try and do everything you can from the very start and so go way beyond a doctrine of limited help.

**Should people have to wait for future justice and peace, if you can help bring them about sooner?**

For Christian organisations and progressive secular agencies alike, war and disaster soon seem to demand more than mercy and life-saving aid. Other beatitudes quickly rise to the fore as time, killing and injustice marches on. What about the thirst for righteousness, justice and peace-making? Do not God, human rights and common sense demand a deeper involvement of some kind?

So-called "single-mandate" humanitarian organisations with a relief-only mission – like the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières – can ride this storm of conscience because they were created purely to apply the interim ethic of emergency mercy and restraint.

Even so, they still have dilemmas around the temptations of development and capacity-building. Is it morally acceptable to support emergency clinics for a couple of years and then to close them and walk away from endemic malaria and an HIV pandemic? Can you give out seeds and tools for a season and then abandon your partners

in an under-funded ministry of agriculture to their run-down fate?

## ULTIMATE ETHICS

If single-mandate agencies have development temptations, "multi-mandate" organisations have development compulsions. They simply must attend to a whole range of social needs beyond the interim ethic of humanitarian mercy.

Humanitarian action is only a small part of the mission of most faith-based organisations and their secular counterparts. Their mainstream work is concerned with deep and long-term actions designed to eradicate people's poverty and enhance their freedom.

Increasingly, they describe all this in the political language of rights: the right to food; the right to health; the right to education; the right to freedom of movement and expression. Often they bundle these rights into larger notions like human security, gender equity, protection and social justice. These then form something close to a vision of heaven on earth.

Added together, a longing for the fulfilment of all these personal, social, economic and political needs form a sort of long-range "ultimate ethics" which it is then the self-imposed or internationally mandated duty of these organisations to bring nearer every day.

This moral tension between an interim ethic of timely but temporary kindness and an ultimate ethic of the struggle for the good society creates hard programming choices in most multi-mandate agencies. How long can one operate on the short-term goals of humanitarian action's interim ethic without neglecting or compromising one's longer-term ethics?

First, there is the fishing rod problem. Is it morally negligent just to give a man a fish but not a fishing rod?

Then there is the culture problem. Is it enough to work to care for the victims of rape in war but not to challenge the sexual mores that tend to the mistreatment and exploitation of women in society? Then there is the war economy

problem. How good is it to invest in schools and clinics when the double effect is to increase the power base and legitimacy of an un-elected government with a vicious approach to war?

And then there is the advocacy problem. Is it better to speak out quietly or not at all in the face of murderous policies, so as not to be cast as political or troublesome and put one's core humanitarian work in danger?

In the face of all these tensions, the long-tested Red Cross approach to humanitarian action has been to limit goals by focusing on immediate needs and not the creation of the good society. But if we look around the world today, the humanitarian tendency is rather different.

The preferred option is now to collapse an interim ethic into an ultimate ethic. Gender is discussed as quickly as latrines. While project staff are healing wounds, advocacy colleagues are drawing up key messages for a just peace.

### **The tendency is to collapse interim ethics into an ultimate ethic; gender is discussed as quickly as latrines**

At one level, this is common sense. You will not get a good sanitation system unless women are involved. And people need to start thinking peace as soon as they can if pressure is to be exerted and opportunities are not to be missed. But it is not just careful and responsible programming.

At another level, there is political agenda here which goes beyond the original Red Cross vision of interim limited help. The gender agenda is about well-placed latrines but also about lasting social change. The peace agenda is usually liberal peace.

Multi-mandate agencies are in the business of transforming societies. And they find this wider mission hard to resist when they are in humanitarian mode.

But should they resist it? Jesus spoke of a minimum package of mercy as well as the much deeper

challenge of justice and peace. The world needs both.

The truth is that every agency must decide how much it wants to mix its interim and ultimate ethics in a given situation. There are only really three essential criteria they must fulfil when they decide on the mix in war and disaster: they must obey the humanitarian golden rule and be utterly impartial, they must be honest about any wider agenda that they have with people and power in a given situation, and then they must be sure that the mix is not so potent or so ill-judged that it brings others into danger or discredits the wider humanitarian effort. ■

**Dr Hugo Slim is Chief Scholar with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. <http://www.hdcentre.org/>**





# DIVERSITY IN DONORSHIP: THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

*As more and more donors become involved in humanitarian aid, new challenges emerge, reports Adele Harmer.*

An increasing number of governments are becoming involved in the response to complex crises and natural disasters. This growth in the number and diversity of official aid donors presents the humanitarian community with significant opportunities, not least in challenging perceptions that the rich industrialised world is the only provider of assistance to crisis-affected countries. However, it also presents important challenges to the way in which humanitarian principles are pursued and the way the international humanitarian system is managed and coordinated.

In terms of the total volume of official aid, a small number of primarily Western governments provide the lion's share of international humanitarian assistance. These countries are represented on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. However, DAC donors have never enjoyed a monopoly on humanitarian action, and a diverse range of other countries has been engaged in international humanitarian response for many years. States from the Gulf, parts of Asia and Central Europe

have been particularly active; South Africa and some countries in Latin America are also developing growing aid programmes. These donor governments are referred to as "non-DAC" donors, albeit with the proviso that they do not constitute a homogenous group.

## DRIVERS FOR AID-GIVING

As is the case with DAC donors, a range of political, economic, strategic and religious factors underpin the origins of aid-giving among the non-DAC countries.

For many, aid donorship reflects wider political and ideological interests or concerns. For states such as China, India and the former Yugoslavia, the political origins of their aid programmes can be traced back to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the 1950s, and the principles of the NAM – in particular respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity – shaped the way many non-DAC donors conceived of their international support. For other states, such as Saudi Arabia and the countries of the former Soviet Union, international aid was driven by the ideological imperatives of alignment and the Cold War. Aid was designed, in part, either to spread or to contain communism.

In more recent times, economic growth has been a key determinant of growth in aid budgets. Volumes of lending and grant assistance from the Gulf States are closely linked to oil revenue, and the extension of aid programmes from China, India and South Korea over the past two decades reflects high levels of economic growth in these countries. Aid relationships have also been seen as a means of strengthening domestic economic growth by reinforcing trade and export ties.

## AID POLICY TRENDS

Very few non-DAC states have developed official policy frameworks for international aid. Like the DAC donors, most international assistance is closely related to foreign policy and security objectives, and humanitarian aid has often been allocated in accordance with these goals.

This is not to suggest that the relief of suffering is not a core objective for non-DAC donors. However, the

scope and nature of the activities that these states call "humanitarian" often seem to reflect a wider and more complex interpretation of the term. In the Gulf states, for example, support for Muslims to attend the pilgrimage to Mecca, or to celebrate Eid, the building of mosques and Islamic centres, and the printing and distribution of the Koran are all labelled "humanitarian".

## Non-DAC donors define "humanitarian" broadly

There is a substantial challenge involved in measuring and monitoring financing flows from non-DAC donors. "Official aid" is not consistently defined or differentiated, and budgets and management responsibilities tend to be spread across many different government departments. As a result, there are no comprehensive data sources.<sup>1</sup>

Analysis shows that non-DAC contributions have constituted between 1% and 12% of total global humanitarian assistance between 1999 and 2004. As Figure 1 shows, contributions peaked in 2001 at US\$732 million. This is largely explained by a large grant from Saudi Arabia to the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT); overall, aid has been significantly more modest. As a proportion of their national income, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia provided the largest volumes of humanitarian assistance amongst non-DAC donors in 2003, at 0.062% and 0.027% respectively. Some non-DAC donors provide more humanitarian aid than some of their DAC counterparts: Saudi Arabia, for example, gives more than Austria, Ireland or New Zealand, all of whom are members of the DAC.

Non-DAC donors have provided humanitarian assistance to a large number of countries both within their own regions and more widely. However, there is a significant concentration of assistance on one or two major crises in any given year. Figure 2 shows this pattern.

The concentration of non-DAC donor assistance in a few high-profile crises means that, while the combined total assistance from non-DAC donors is relatively small



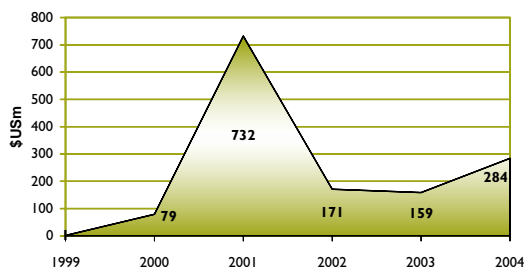


Figure 1: Total contributions from non-DAC donors, 1999–2004

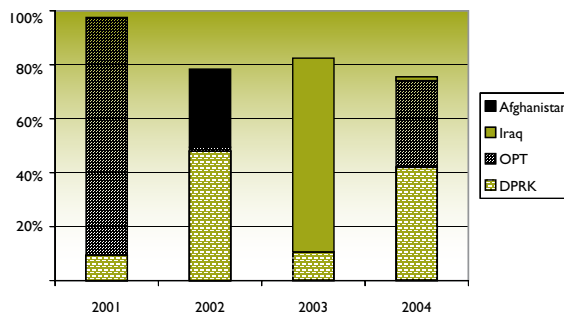


Figure 2: Recipients of non-DAC aid, 2000–2004

compared to the DAC, certain non-DAC donors can play a critical role in certain environments.

Natural disasters account for a minority of non-DAC assistance: 19% of total non-DAC contributions in 2004, for example. This is nonetheless against the general trend. Between 1999 and 2004, natural disasters accounted for only 8% of overall humanitarian aid. This may reflect the fact that many non-DAC donors have substantial domestic relief programmes for natural disasters.

Non-DAC donors often provide humanitarian assistance to countries with which they have a history of development cooperation, as an expression of solidarity. One consequence of this has been a continuing emphasis on bilateral assistance, with the majority of non-DAC humanitarian aid being channelled directly as government-to-government assistance, or through national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies. Non-DAC donors tend to defend this practice on the grounds that it forms part of a deeper, mutually-beneficial aid relationship, and adds to the visibility, speed and timeliness of response.

The share of non-DAC donor assistance channelled through United Nations (UN) multilateral mechanisms is relatively low, compared with bilateral channels. This is a clear challenge for the UN. There are, however, tentative signs that support for international organisations from the non-DAC donors may be increasing as a way of promoting the international visibility of their contributions. There is also a growing appreciation among the non-DAC donors of the strengths that the UN

and partner agencies can bring to a response, including gaining access to populations in conflict-affected areas. The World Food Programme (WFP) has received by far the largest share of non-DAC aid channelled through multilateral or international organisations, with contributions of around \$60 million in 2002 and 2003.

### Most non-DAC donor contributions from 2002 to 2004 were gifts-in-kind

Non-DAC donors have tended to provide a significant portion of their assistance in the form of gifts-in-kind, rather than cash. This includes food aid and other commodities, transport, logistics and technical support. Between 2002 and 2004, gifts-in-kind constituted approximately 60% of the total non-DAC donor contribution.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The increasing diversity of donorship reinforces the argument that humanitarianism is, and has always been, a universal pursuit, neither entirely dominated by Western states, nor biased exclusively towards Western interests. And while it still represents only a small share of official international humanitarian assistance, the political and cultural significance of this aid is far more important than its absolute value.

However, non-DAC donors prefer bilateral aid and the broader definitions of humanitarianism, and these aid programmes are no more immune from foreign policy and security influences than those of the DAC donors; agencies pursuing an impartial and independent response

cannot necessarily rely on non-DAC sources of funding for a more principled humanitarian response than that which they pursue through DAC donor governments. Overall, the humanitarian community needs to understand these political and security priorities better, to allow for more effective management of the tensions that continue to arise.

The international humanitarian enterprise is at an important juncture. It has always been difficult to gauge the exact impact of donor decision-making and resource allocation on humanitarian principles, and more particularly on humanitarian outcomes. But as more and more donors become involved, and more agencies rely on their support, this will have greater significance. ■

**Ms Adele Harmer is Research Fellow with the Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute. <http://www.odi.org.uk/>**

This article is drawn from Adele Harmer and Lin Cotterrell, *Diversity in Donorship: The changing landscape of official humanitarian aid*, HPG Report 20, September 2005.

<sup>1</sup> The analysis for the study is based primarily on data from OCHA's Financial Tracking System (FTS). It covers the period 1999–2004, and focuses on some 20 of the most important non-DAC donors. The data and analysis was drawn together by Judith Randel of Development Initiatives in a background paper for the Harmer and Cotterrell study, *Diversity in Donorship: The changing landscape of official humanitarian aid*.



WorldVision International (WVI)'s practice in humanitarian action has been shaped from a rich eclectic gathering of principles and practices over the past 50 years. In recent years, the "humanitarian space" in which international non-government organisations operate has become increasingly crowded and complex, leading WVI to a review of how and where we should carry out humanitarian action, and on what principles this should be based.

A number of factors influence this need to reconsider the scope of WVI's humanitarian action:

1. The increasingly complex nature of humanitarian crises and civil conflicts, where multiple hazards and political dimensions compound to create crises, requires a more holistic approach to disaster management and conflict analysis.
2. The growth of commercial companies and military actors engaging in the "humanitarian venture" has not only led to greater competition for the same pool of scarce resources but has also raised serious questions around the independence, accountability and impartiality of such humanitarian actors.
3. There are increased expectations by the humanitarian community at large for heightened levels of performance and accountability, and a desire to see more sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises that address the causes as well as the symptoms.
4. There is greater public scrutiny by the international media on the use of governmental and publicly raised funds for disaster response.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In light of these factors, WVI frames its own practice in humanitarian action with the following guiding principles:<sup>1</sup>

- As a faith-based humanitarian organisation, WVI refers to its Christian faith as the underpinning set of guiding principles upon which all humanitarian action and operations rest. Our accountability is therefore ultimately to God and the teachings of the Bible. This emphasises a

clear focus on meeting the needs of the poor and most vulnerable, and equally on advocating the rights of those vulnerable people who are being treated unjustly, as an integral part of the organisation's humanitarian preparedness and response.

- Building upon the foundations of the Christian faith are the various legal instruments, codes of conduct and standards<sup>2</sup> to which WVI refers in its Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs policy. These effectively act as a practical and legal framework in which to operate. This not only demonstrates congruence with the rest of the humanitarian community, but also emphasises WVI's pursuit of best practice and external accountability. To some extent, these instruments and standards go a long way to codify some of the core Christian principles of charity and justice.

#### Increasing complexity requires a more holistic approach to disaster management and conflict analysis

In summary, WVI pursues an approach to humanitarian action and disaster management that:

- responds to God's call for justice and assistance for the poor and dispossessed;
- puts people at the centre and respects the dignity of human life;
- pays particular attention to the needs and rights of children;
- aims to address short-term needs as well as reducing long-term risks and vulnerabilities;
- builds on the capabilities of poor people caught up in disasters;
- gives aid on the basis of need, regardless of race or creed;
- advocates for the rights to protection and assistance of poor people caught up in disasters;<sup>3</sup>
- reduces the potential for conflict (in line with the "do no harm" principle) and emphasises reconciliation and peace building;
- maintains independence and political neutrality;
- focuses on the needs yet is informed by political realities;

# HUMANITARIAN ACTION: WORLD VISION'S DEFINITION

*In an increasingly complex humanitarian landscape, Richard Rumsey explains World Vision International's guiding principles and the practicalities of disaster management.*

Reading books in Child-Friendly Space (CFS) activities in Lhok Nga, Aceh Besar, Indonesia, a safe space for children to learn and have fun. Photo: Maida Irawani / World Vision



- gets the job done in the most effective and efficient way; and
- learns from experience.

## OPERATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT



source: H.E.A. / World Vision

At a practical level, WVI is engaged in the practice of disaster management. This term describes the range of appropriate actions required to properly address humanitarian needs and the underlying vulnerabilities, in both natural and man-made emergencies. We see the disaster management cycle as including six phases:

**Early warning.** Early warning systems are designed to enable humanitarian organisations to prevent disasters when possible; to plan for disasters when they do strike; and to reduce the effect of disasters. Early warning activities are based on a thorough analysis of the political, economic, social, geographical and climatological factors affecting a community or country. Effective early warning is essential if mitigation and preparedness activities are to be undertaken and lives and livelihoods are to be protected.

**Preparedness.** WVI is investing heavily in initiatives and infrastructure that enable the organisation and communities to respond effectively and quickly when disasters do strike. Preparedness initiatives include the pre-positioning of goods around the world, the development of specialist teams for rapid deployment at national, regional and global levels, disaster preparedness plans and teams at community level, and

development of evacuation shelters in disaster-prone communities.

**Mitigation.** Effective mitigation activities use the capacities of the community and look to support and promote positive traditional coping mechanisms, while providing support to enhance social, human, natural, financial and physical capital. Mitigation activities are necessarily cross-cutting in nature, and form an integral part of WVI's long-term community-based development activities. Effective mitigation can significantly reduce the impact of the disaster, and protect communities from losing their assets and becoming even more vulnerable.

**Response.** WVI's commitment to respond appropriately to all emergencies is embedded in the organisation's policies and mission statement. The primary purpose of response is to save lives; the secondary aim is to protect and promote livelihood security. Emergency response is frequently carried out with populations that are displaced either by conflict or natural disasters; as such, a third objective of emergency response is to enable the return of people to a stable home environment. In many of today's complex emergencies where the State is either ineffective, weak or complicit in the humanitarian crisis, WVI's role in humanitarian protection is becoming an area of increasing importance.

**Rehabilitation.** Post-disaster rehabilitation activities fully engage communities in assessment, design, implementation and monitoring, with the aim of placing communities at lower risk than before the crisis. Rehabilitation work seeks to rebuild social, physical, human, financial and natural capital.

**Transition.** Transition can occur from a relief context to a development context; from a development paradigm to relief at the onset of an emergency; or from an acute to a chronic relief context. It can also mean the closing of a programme or shifting responsibility to communities or partner organisations. Transition needs to be planned during the early warning stage, and those plans continuously reviewed throughout each element of the disaster management cycle to ensure that activities undertaken

are compatible with the proposed transition strategies.

## CONTINUED GROWTH

International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have evolved into a crucial pillar of the global humanitarian architecture over recent years. The size, scope and presence of many of the largest INGOs suggest the potential for considerable impact on the lives of people caught in humanitarian disasters. There is much to commend in the rapid professionalisation and growth of INGOs over the past decade, where common standards and greater accountability have characterised many initiatives adopted by the humanitarian community at large.

However, it should be noted that in a "post-9/11 world", where the average relief worker faces increasingly more danger; there is a great need for INGOs to continually scrutinise and refine their practices, and to think and act innovatively about the future humanitarian landscape. As such, WVI's holistic approach to disaster management will continue to mature as we learn more and as contexts change. ■

**Mr Richard Rumsey is Regional Humanitarian & Emergency Affairs Director for World Vision International's Asia Pacific Regional Office.**

<sup>1</sup> This list summarises a large body of policy and strategy papers, and is necessarily limited in scope for the purposes of this article.

<sup>2</sup> International Humanitarian Law (1949 Geneva Conventions and 1977 additional protocols), The Sphere Project *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, ICRC *Code of Conduct (Principles of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster response programmes)*, People in Aid *Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*, United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*

<sup>3</sup> The Humanitarian Charter, The Sphere Project



## Saving lives amid complex conflict

### CASE STUDY OF DARFUR

“World Vision has responded to the Darfur crisis since June 2004 with a range of humanitarian interventions that have saved and improved the lives of over 300,000 people in this arid region of western Sudan.

During those two years, we have succeeded in providing food aid, health and nutrition services, water and sanitation interventions, emergency education and community services, and agricultural support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and to war-affected populations in rural areas.

Our array of humanitarian programmes in Darfur have saved tens of thousands of children from death and given a new lease of life to thousands of women and men, unequivocally underscoring the vital role of humanitarian work in such war-torn areas.

At the end of June 2006, over 250,000 people affected by the Darfur conflict were benefiting from World Vision’s food aid programme, our primary intervention in the embattled region. But myriad issues revolving around the nature of humanitarianism today have come to the fore during these past two years of response.

#### NEED FOR ACCESS, SECURITY

Humanitarian access is salient among those issues. In Darfur, security has played a crucial role in determining the amount of humanitarian “space” available to agencies and has vastly affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Agencies have endlessly been denied access to sizeable swathes of Darfur owing to insecurity spawned by continued fighting between the various protagonists in the conflict – government forces, armed Arab militias (Janjawid) and two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Despite signing a string of ceasefire commitments and even a peace agreement in May 2006, the warring parties have continued to carry out military attacks, worsening the security situation each passing day. The situation is further complicated by incidents of banditry, cattle- and camel-rustling attacks by both SLA and Arab militia on each other’s areas, and cross-border raids by Chadian groups.

All these hostilities have precluded thousands of war-affected communities accessing critically-needed relief aid for months on end, leading to a sharp decline in the humanitarian situation, especially in Darfur’s hamlets, from where many have been displaced into numerous sprawling camps now dotting the region.

And in areas where humanitarian access has been scant, agencies including World Vision have suffered theft of their vehicles, satellite phones and other tools of trade, and attacks, hijackings, harassments and abductions of their staff. Both civilians and humanitarian staff need physical protection, which is often virtually non-existent. This has severely affected the smooth delivery of humanitarian assistance, as we have had to scale down activities or temporarily withdraw from certain pockets of South Darfur to minimise risk to staff.

#### Photos

*Below* – Kaltuma Idriss expresses her joy after receiving a blanket and clothing from World Vision in Otash IDP camp.

**Photo:** Dan Teng’o / World Vision

*Far right* – Newly displaced women wait to receive relief food and non-food items from World Vision at Dereig IDP camp, South Darfur.

**Photo:** Dan Teng’o / World Vision



Global

VOICES OF LIFE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Access problems have been compounded by bureaucratic restrictions, controls and procedures put in place by the Sudanese Government. Sadly, humanitarian space has shrunk over the past two years. Agencies have persistently lobbied the government for a simplified, streamlined visa and permit regime that will ensure free and unfettered access for NGOs in Darfur and enable them to reach far more populations in dire need of relief aid.

#### KEY CORNERSTONES

Despite these odds, we have successfully managed to satisfy the basic needs of so many hurting, war-scarred people in Darfur by observing the key cornerstones of humanitarianism – independence, neutrality, impartiality and “doing no harm” (seeking not to buy into nor exacerbate the conflict in any way).

This serves to illustrate the importance of adhering to these non-negotiable principles at all times, regardless of the context in which an organisation operates.

Owing to the strictures that agencies have to contend with in Darfur, due caution has to be exercised in approaching the broader aspects of humanitarianism revolving around promotion of human rights and justice issues. By and large, in such restricted contexts, speaking out equals risk.

*In restricted contexts,  
speaking out equals  
risk, but silence can  
connote compliance*

World Vision, alive to the restrictive environment in which we operate in Darfur, has adjusted its organisational behaviour to the wider political and socio-economic context of the region, and the country in general, so as to meet the needs of the war-affected population.

Yet we are aware that silence can connote compliance. Though independent in action and identity, World Vision is part of a coalition of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in Sudan, which dialogues with and engages the Sudanese Government of National Unity on wider humanitarianism issues that emerge in Darfur.

Neutrality should not be misconstrued to mean inaction or lack of participation. Through the in-country coalition and our support offices outside Sudan, we have contributed to major international advocacy fora concerning Darfur, speaking on the wider humanitarian issues without unnecessarily imperiling our life-saving operations in the war-torn region.

For instance, by dialoguing with the Sudanese government on the need for increased humanitarian space, among other germane



issues, INGOs operating in Darfur have seen the strength of their numbers pay off somewhat; the government has recently issued Darfur aid workers with travel permits covering a longer period (six months), thus slightly easing the bureaucratic pressure.

The same coalition of INGOs and United Nations agencies has partnered with other players to address human rights issues, with a considerable level of success. Human rights issues in Darfur have been brought into the international limelight and pressure has been brought to bear on the parties to the conflict to observe human rights and create an atmosphere free of violations.

Through forging a united, well-formulated, pro-active position, NGOs working in restricted contexts can take on “soft” and “hard” humanitarian issues and help to lay the foundations for future peace and security in today’s war-torn regions.

Key to such coalitions is the individual strength of each member. Humanitarian coalitions are strengthened when each agency directs its energies and resources to the areas of intervention in which it is most competent.

In South Darfur, World Vision is a leading provider of humanitarian assistance in five key sectors. Other organisations have taken vanguard responsibilities in camp coordination, management, human rights monitoring, advocacy against gender-based violence, and other roles. Pulling together, we are significantly improving the humanitarian situation in Darfur.” ■

Reported by Mr Dan Teng’o, Communications Officer for World Vision International in Northern Sudan



## Diverse actors

Since the end of the Cold War, military forces have increasingly engaged in disaster response, from peace-keeping and peace-enforcing to providing basic infrastructure to delivering of life-saving supplies and services. Corporations, also, are rapidly increasing their involvement in disaster response, often prompted by expectations of shareholders, employees, customers, governments and the public. More actors, the changing nature of conflicts, and the fact that humanitarian agencies, for-profit commercial companies, and military forces (even in peacekeeping) have fundamentally different missions, present significant challenges for humanitarian agencies, including:

- greater competition for the same pool of scarce resources
- need for all actors to uphold humanitarian standards e.g. codes of conduct; conventions and laws; principles like "do no harm" (aid not exacerbating conflicts), transparency and accountability.
- questions of independence, accountability and impartiality – for-profit contractors, military and political actors engaging in disaster response in complex humanitarian and conflict settings must work to uphold the neutrality of humanitarian aid, so as to minimise risk to humanitarian staff.
- blurred definitions of "military", "civilian" and "humanitarian" – in today's wars, all can be targets, and discerning "good" and "bad" actors in civil war is very difficult; hence the critical need to distance humanitarian aid from military presence. Many humanitarian NGOs cooperate with military forces only following natural disasters, in activities for protection and subsistence of civilians, and if the benefits to civilians outweigh the risks.
- coordination and communication between all actors is crucial for effective disaster response and minimising duplication. Unsolicited goods/services-in-kind can clog over-burdened supply chains, delaying urgent aid; usually the first need is cash, and any goods/services strategically pre-positioned.
- independence of NGO advocacy on behalf of poor people
- need to keep the bigger picture – wider and long-term issues include considering how corporations can help rebuild local economies; not diverting emergency donations from vital ongoing projects; and the need for much greater investment in prevention.

Yet if collaboration can leverage the various sectors' resources without compromising humanitarian standards, it can enhance the response's effectiveness. Humanitarian agencies can benefit from businesses' donations of cash, products, services and relevant professional competencies, and from critically-needed infrastructure and personnel that only the military have at their disposal. In turn, corporations and military forces can benefit from the humanitarian agencies' knowledge of principles and standards; ability to engage local networks and expertise; access to early warning systems (even for slow-onset crises) and focus on preparedness and pre-positioning; from their rapidly-deployable skilled relief professionals, emergency supplies and supply chains, and short-term emergency funds and fund-raising capacity; and from their holistic emphasis on disaster mitigation, prevention, and long-term development, reducing dependency on "hand-outs" and facilitating the transition to economic and livelihood recovery.

These next two articles present positive examples of cross-sector partnerships.

## Corporate-NGO partnership

### LESSONS FROM THE TSUNAMI

*"After the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, Zenon Environmental, a global technology leader in water treatment systems, approached World Vision Canada (WVC) to offer assistance: in-kind donations of its Homespring™ filtration units, a self-contained system capable of removing bacteria, virus, turbidity and cysts from water. Although there were numerous offers from private companies during the emergency, WVC made a strategic choice to pursue the partnership with Zenon. In districts in Sri Lanka and India where the filtration systems were installed, the project was largely considered a long-term success. As in any new venture, there were challenges. From these experiences, both organisations learned how to better execute and manage cross-sector partnerships in an emergency context.*

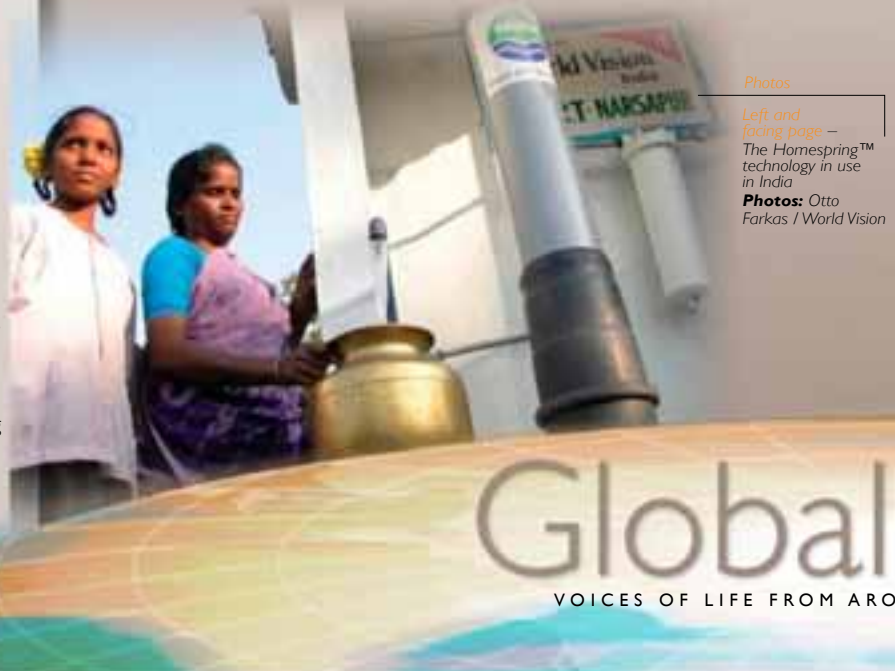
*World Vision shipped 54 Homespring™ ultrafiltration systems from Zenon to India and Sri Lanka, with the majority going to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. These units were used primarily in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and in institutions (such as schools and medical facilities) offering services to vulnerable populations. Ultimately, over 44,000 tsunami-affected individuals benefited from the supply of safe water delivered by World Vision's relief and recovery response in India. What have the two partners learnt from this project?*

### ZENON'S LESSONS

**First and foremost: plan ahead.** Relief efforts should be the result of calm and thorough planning and preparation long before a disaster occurs. Yet when there is a catastrophe, most manufacturers of water treatment technology quickly find they do not have the knowledge, infrastructure or staff required to set up a long-term project. A well-planned and comprehensive multi-sector partnership is required between manufacturers and government organisations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). By combining the technology and know-how of manufacturers with the capacity-building and training efforts of an established NGO well before disaster strikes, projects conceived out of compassion can save lives on the ground.

Photos

Left and facing page –  
The Homespring™  
technology in use  
in India  
Photos: Otto  
Farkas / World Vision



Global  
VOICES OF LIFE FROM AROUND



**Local technical support, training and maintenance are key.** Corporations cannot “give and forget”. Donors might be excused for believing that in a disaster everything is needed, but it is important to decipher what is truly needed and sustainable. Although the Homespring™ technology was excellent in providing quality water, there was low community-level awareness of how to use filtered water and how to maintain the systems. Such technology had never been seen before at any of the installation sites. Managing the equipment is only possible with specific training and follow-up, without which the long-term system is likely to fail.

**Location is critical.** People consistently relied upon and continued to use installations that were close to users (near camp sites, temporary shelters and schools). But installations that were far from the people being served and those installed on inappropriate sources (i.e. brackish water) were not used effectively.

**Participation is essential.** Communities that established local ownership of the systems, pre-negotiated the continuity of the water source, formed a local water committee and delegated responsibilities for water supplies to certain individuals had the highest rates of success. Zenon also found that projects are likely to fail without the involvement and consent of the local government.

World Vision compiled a list of factors that could benefit future efforts:

- presence and active involvement of water management committees in the IDP camps
- participation of the beneficiaries themselves
- establishment of ongoing funding systems for maintenance (for instance, money is collected from users of the filtered water at a rate of 50 paise, about one US cent, per pot of water; at the Kadampadi Camp in Nagapatinam, the collected funds are deposited into the local bank under the water management committee’s name, to maintain the filter for their purification system)
- good coordination and cooperation among community members
- appropriate locations (e.g. units have to be very close to settlements)
- ongoing availability of source water
- follow-up and ongoing access to maintenance by donating company via on-site staff.

Using these success factors, it is clear that donations of water treatment technology after a disaster must be followed by a comprehensive on-site programme to train and involve the local population. Through trial and error, Zenon learned that programmes like those crafted locally by World Vision are critical to bringing maximum long-term benefit to as many people as possible.

#### WORLD VISION’S LESSONS

**Base partnerships on competencies.** Humanitarian organisations stand to gain by creatively partnering with corporations. With guidance, the corporate sector can more effectively deploy

resources and provide innovative goods and services that would otherwise be unavailable to the world’s most needy populations. By fine-tuning the model of engagement between NGOs and corporations, from one based solely upon philanthropy to one based on core competencies, we can encourage a shift towards more committed efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

**Build local capacity.** A deciding factor for World Vision entering into this partnership was that the company was willing to deploy a technician from Canada to assist the installation and maintenance of the filtration units at sites in India and Sri Lanka. Technicians from Zenon’s local partner, Eureka Forbes (a leading Indian provider of water purification and other environmental technologies) would offer key support. Beyond the acquisition of cutting-edge technology, we recognised the potential for providing committed expertise and technical support on the ground.

**Be proactive.** The greatest challenges to the ad hoc partnership between World Vision and Zenon came not from the technology transfer per se, but from the inadequacies of an insufficiently proactive partnership. The growing pains of the partnership almost resulted in dissolution – jeopardising initial investments and expenditures. The relationship was maintained due to the perseverance of key individuals in each organisation who were willing to see beyond the short-term interests. As a result, a more strategic partnership has emerged that will expand the shared interest of finding innovative solutions for relief and development applications.

The application of Zenon’s Homespring™ ultrafiltration technology was a first for India and for World Vision. The knowledge gained has broadened staff expertise and offers potential solutions to meet future water sanitation needs in both development and relief contexts.

By fostering cross-sector collaboration during humanitarian and emergency responses, we have the opportunity to develop genuine partnerships that build on the capabilities and competencies of each sector towards a shared goal. With mutual understanding and respect for each other’s organisational objectives, a partnership agreement can grow beyond emergency response to encompass all dimensions of disaster management, including poverty reduction and sustainable development.” ■

Mr Andrew Warnes is Director, International Sales and Marketing, with the Zenon Consumer Products Division of General Electric Water and Process Technologies Business, Zenon Environmental Inc. [awarnes@zenon.com](mailto:awarnes@zenon.com). Mr Otto Farkas is Team Leader for Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Caribbean Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs with World Vision Canada, <http://www.worldvision.ca>

<sup>1</sup> Substantial portions of this article were excerpted from the March 2006 issue of *Water Conditioning & Purification Magazine* ©2006. Reprinted with permission.

<sup>2</sup> More information on Homespring water purification systems can be found at <http://www.homespring.com>

## Working with the military

### IN QUAKE-RAVAGED PAKISTAN

#### Photos

**Below** – World Vision distribution monitor Tahir Aziz registers recipients of World Food Programme food supplies, including wheat flour and salt.

**Photo:** Rebecca Lyman / World Vision

**Far right** – Wounded quake survivors are loaded onto a military helicopter for transportation to medical facilities.

**Photo:** Stefan Trappe / ADH

“The missions of humanitarian organisations and military forces, even in peacekeeping, are fundamentally different. Yet, as World Vision Pakistan staff report, the earthquake of 8 October 2005 forged a common aim for the Pakistani military and the relief effort: to save, protect and sustain lives.

The quake killed more than 73,000 people – over 19,000 of them children – and affected more than 3.5 million people in an area the size of Switzerland. And a bitter Himalayan winter was just around the corner...

#### EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

World Vision normally works independently of military groups, and any departure from this norm is considered carefully. In Pakistan, the military is responsible for coordinating disaster relief efforts, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) need to operate under the umbrella of the military and what was known as the Federal Relief Commission. Besides, after this devastating earthquake, restoring infrastructure and delivering relief supplies was beyond the capacity of civilian authorities and the local population.

*“They forgot their weapons and came to help the people”*

The sheer scale of the disaster and complex topography of the affected areas required exceptional resources, including air transportation, security, heavy machinery for road clearing, maps of affected areas and disciplined personnel to carry out a whole range of tasks including house-to-house assessments high up in the Himalayan foothills.

The civilian population here in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) has generally very positive perceptions of the military, stemming from the military’s reputation as being above corruption while dispensing justice, keeping the peace and enforcing taxation. The military has also traditionally led relief efforts in the disaster-prone province.

While World Vision and some other agencies were already operating in affected areas before the quake, all NGOs required 24–48 hours to mobilise resources and fly in relief goods. The military was better prepared to respond quickly.

**Sayed Mahmood**, World Vision Commodities Officer, said that the military also enabled World Vision to respond more quickly. While the Engineering battalion cleared roads in remote mountain areas, it gathered data on vulnerable people who had not received aid, which it then passed to humanitarian organisations. “Whatever we needed to effectively deliver aid – maps, household assessments, beneficiary lists and security – they gave it. They reached places where we couldn’t... They forgot their weapons and came to help the people,” said Mahmood. “They were so helpful and cooperated as much as possible,” something which staff also attribute to a good knowledge of English.

**Captain Dilawar** of the Baloch regiment said: “...two hours after the earthquake, the engineers were clearing away the landslides... our men are carrying food relief on their own





backs... Even the soldiers are giving money from their salaries. Men on leave came back demanding to be part of the relief." When affected people saw military personnel taking mules laden with food supplies up mountains and returning with the wounded, trust was soon established. **Mohammed Taslim**, a teacher from Jabouri, said: "The local politicians and land-owners left the area; we were on our own. But then the military and NGOs like World Vision were there to help."

**Gul-e-Afshan**, World Vision's Assistant Livelihoods Manager and former Distribution team leader, said that military personnel showed sympathy for the people, especially for children: "They had a tent set aside for biscuits and chocolates and things for the children." Another relief worker reported that an army officer in Balakot Army Camp established a public school that is still in operation at the time of writing.

**Mohammad Tahir**, World Vision's Community Mobiliser in Balakot Relief Camp, described how the military organised a puppet show for the children of the camp. But he added: "Military personnel... understood the need for tents and food, but not for child protection activities." He explained that some personnel were uncooperative, especially when we first established Child-Friendly Spaces, most likely due to an initial lack of understanding. **Mitra Sarraf**, former Child Protection Coordinator who conducted child protection training for military personnel in the camp, shared a very different experience: "The military personnel were very cooperative and took the training seriously."

#### COORDINATION

Soon after the quake, affected areas became inundated with supplies, some unwanted and inappropriate. A plethora of national and international NGOs arrived. Coordination was the biggest challenge and it soon became apparent that the military played a vital role in ensuring coordination between NGOs – it enforced coordination.

**Frank Lyman**, World Vision Operations Manager, said: "The military had a good overview of how much was being distributed and this helped a better flow of supplies." In Jabouri, the military mapped out affected areas where NGOs were operating. Relief staff were informed of pockets needing assistance, which helped avoid duplicating relief efforts. At one point, military personnel told World Vision there was a surplus of non-food items which needed to be fully distributed before more were trucked in.

#### SECURITY

The devastation, displacement and chaos inflicted by the quake created the ideal conditions for looting, theft, child trafficking and other crime.

"Military personnel were invaluable at distribution points where disorder easily reigned," said Mahmood. "People wouldn't listen to NGOs but they listened to the army." World Vision staff testify to the important role of the military in ensuring security – not only for NGOs to operate effectively, but also for vulnerable people living in relief camps or beside their ruined homes. In one incident, the military reportedly stopped a truck carrying precious cargo – 90 children – out of the Kaghan valley.

On the other hand, "enforced" military escorts, rather than increasing a sense of security, sometimes created unease and placed NGOs in a difficult position: wanting to be seen to be apart from the military while working under its coordination. It is crucial for aid workers to be able to say: "We are not political, we are not military."

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

The military conducted house-to-house needs assessments after the quake, distributing public lists of affected individuals and households. They clearly listed especially vulnerable groups, including widows and female-/child-headed households. These lists were then verified by our staff. "The military assessments matched up 90% of the time with World Vision assessments," said Mahmood. The military also produced a "relief card" for affected individuals who were required to insert their thumbprint each time they received food or other supplies from NGOs. This simple system worked well and assisted World Vision staff.

Relief workers were recruited across the quake zone, ideally from affected communities. Sometimes this meant that they could be easily pulled according to the needs of their home village. Military personnel, coming from across the country, were less susceptible to the threat of bribes. During the weeks after the quake, the government tried to distribute compensation cheques through the local Nazims (leaders) but political agendas and influences could not ensure adequate accountability. "In the presence of the army, there was little political influence," said Gul-e-Afshan.

World Vision plans to work in the disaster-prone north-west of Pakistan over the next three years, focusing on children, livelihoods and humanitarian emergency assistance. Assuming the military will retain its mandate to respond to disasters, NGOs may explore ways of building capacity of select military personnel from a humanitarian perspective, and better understanding the military's relief capabilities so as to build our own capacity and improve coordination for future disasters. This would require careful consideration and a shift in thinking, but as one relief worker commented, "Without the military, our operation would have been impossible." ■

Reported by Mrs Rebecca Lyman, World Vision Pakistan Communications Manager, and World Vision Pakistan staff





# Is IHL STILL RELEVANT IN A POST-9/11 WORLD?

*Angelo Gnaedinger explains how the rules of International Humanitarian Law apply in today's conflicts, and the importance of humanitarian neutrality.*

*World Vision Lebanon and the Lebanese Red Cross distribute aid to about 300 internally displaced persons sheltered in the Madame Aoun public school in the Ain el Remaneh, Lebanon.*  
**Photo:** Kevin Cook / World Vision



There is much talk today of a post-9/11 world that is profoundly different from the world we knew before that dreadful day. In the view of those who insist that there was a paradigm shift, this "new world" is witnessing "new conflicts" to which the old rules cannot fully apply. These new conflicts are also portrayed as "asymmetric conflicts" of which the so-called "Global War on Terror" is the most prominent example. The advocates of the "new conflicts – new rules" view argue that international law, in particular international humanitarian law (IHL), is not an adequate tool for dealing with that "Global War on Terror".

## WHAT IS IHL?

IHL is the body of rules that regulates the conduct of hostilities and the protection of persons during an armed conflict. It is important to understand that it does not regulate the use of force; that is regulated by the Charter of the United Nations. It is also crucial to understand that IHL regulates hostilities only during armed conflict. Armed conflict involves the use of armed force by one State against another, or hostilities between government armed forces and organised armed groups, or between such groups within a State. In other situations, such as terrorist attacks on railroads in Madrid or the subway in London, there is no armed conflict, i.e. IHL does not apply. Human rights and various national legislations, however, do apply.

The "global war" itself is a misnomer. Not everything that is undertaken under that designation today amounts to an armed conflict in the sense of IHL. The fight against terrorism encompasses a series of measures – diplomatic, political, financial, etc. – and can in some cases include armed conflict. Thus, the hostilities that started in Afghanistan in October 2001 or in Iraq in March 2003 are armed conflicts. If there is an armed conflict, whatever the cause, whatever the aim, whatever the name, it is regulated by IHL.

It has been argued that respect for the rules of humanitarian law would weaken States' ability to adequately respond to current security challenges. Taking a closer look

at the basic tenets of IHL we will discover that the balance between State security and the preservation of human life, health and dignity is at the very core of the laws of war. These rules were precisely designed to address the very exceptional situations of armed conflict when some other laws may be put on hold.

## IHL an obstacle to justice? Nothing is further from the truth

Another criticism that has repeatedly been levelled at IHL is that its provisions constitute an obstacle to justice. Indeed, nothing is further from the truth. It is well known that persons who take a direct part in hostilities during an armed conflict without being authorised to do so lose protection from attack during such participation and may be prosecuted under domestic law for taking up arms. Moreover, the treaties of IHL encourage States to bring perpetrators of war crimes to justice and, in case grave breaches are committed, they demand it, including by means of the exercise of universal jurisdiction. Of course, they also require that due process of law be applied.

The 1990s saw the emergence of conflicts occurring in "failed states" which, it was argued, were a consequence of the end of the Cold War. These wars are marked by the partial, and sometimes even total, breakdown of State structures. In such situations, armed groups take advantage of the political vacuum in an attempt to grab power. A specific feature of such conflicts is a weak chain of command within armed groups, often run by war lords whose political ambitions are outweighed by the personal enrichment they anticipate. Their aim is thus to keep an armed conflict going, not necessarily to win it. In this context, even mutual support between the adversaries becomes possible (e.g. arms trading).

However, it is not because State structures have been weakened or are non-existent that there is a legal vacuum with regard to international law. On the contrary, these are precisely the circumstances in which humanitarian law governs. Article 3 common to the Geneva

Conventions requires all armed groups to respect individuals who have laid down their arms and those, such as civilians, who do not take part in the hostilities, whatever the term used to describe the conflict. Customary law rules regulating the conduct of hostilities also remain in force.

Admittedly, humanitarian rules are hard to enforce in this type of conflict, as is the case in "asymmetric" conflicts, characterised by disparity in military strength of the adversaries. The lack of discipline among belligerents and the increasingly blurred distinction between fighters and civilians often cause confrontations to take a brutal turn, in which there is seemingly little place for the rules of law.

It must be stressed, however, that in such circumstances it is not the rules that are at fault, but the political will of the parties – and of the international community – to enforce them.

### WITH ALL WHO SUFFER

Beyond IHL, it has been argued that neutrality, one of the fundamental principles guiding the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is outdated – and even immoral – in a post-9/11 world. Various State representatives have called on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), publicly or privately, to abandon neutrality as a remnant of a world gone by. Well-meaning advocates are demanding that we take sides, choose between "good" and "evil". How is it possible to be neutral between "terrorists" and "innocent civilians", they ask?

**We do not ascribe fault, nor do we support any justification for a war; we take the conflict as a fact**

It is rare in any controversy of a political nature to find that one party is completely right and the other completely wrong. More importantly, individual civilians and the civilian population at large suffer terribly in all armed conflicts, regardless of which side is "right" or "wrong". Given that our primary aim is to assist and protect the victims of armed conflict, we do

not and cannot approach the protagonists as "good" or "bad"; we do not side with one party against the other. We do not ascribe fault to a party for having started a conflict, nor do we support any kind of justification for a war. We take the conflict as a fact.

Jean Pictet<sup>1</sup> wrote in 1959 that: "certain schools of thought maintain that everything, in the existence of a nation or even of an individual, is subordinate to political or ideological requirements... The Red Cross is not exempt from this pressure, and more and more demands are made upon it to enter the sphere of politics." ... "If anyone presents the Red Cross with the well-known and destructive dilemma embodied in the phrase, 'whoever is not with me is against me', may it always reply, 'I am with all those who suffer, and that is sufficient'." It sounds as true today as it did in 1959, in the midst of the Cold War.

Pictet knew that those who take sides or interfere may "estrangle or deceive one side or the other, push them away and lose their confidence". No belligerent would consent to our presence if they could not trust the organisation or if they felt it was being used as a Trojan horse to promote its adversaries' broader political agenda.

The term "neutrality" is used only to characterise our attitude toward any ideology, doctrine, or societal project. It pertains to the reasons invoked by the parties for going to war and to the question of whether the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement should become involved in defending or promoting a cause (e.g. capitalism versus communism or democracy versus theocracy). Neutrality is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is a tool to keep channels open for better and more effective humanitarian action. ■

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<http://www.icrc.org/>

<sup>1</sup> The late Dr Jean Pictet was a prominent Swiss legal expert and senior leader of the ICRC.

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# THE PRINCIPLES OF PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN PERFORMANCE

*Mark Bowden discusses the complex nature and crucial importance of protection in humanitarianism.*

*While other children are at school, this young girl braves the heat to sell mangoes. Northern Uganda's extremely high prevalence of child labour is largely due to 20 years of conflict.*  
**Photo:** World Vision



Since the Second World War, and especially since the end of the Cold War, more civilians have died **from**, than **in**, war – from deprivation and the consequences of collapsed support services, rather than from direct physical violence. Most people who die during times of armed conflict do so because of the hunger, disease and exhaustion that war forces upon them through impoverishment, displacement and destitution.

Among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society today, protection is viewed as something broad, encompassing more than a defence against political and physical violence; full and free expression of political rights and the absence of physical violence only go so far in the face of war and conflict.

## **More civilians have died from the consequences of war than from the direct violence**

Protection includes many interconnected activities, including efforts to improve physical security, provide humanitarian assistance, support human rights, extend the rule of law and nurture a transitional justice.

Indeed, the most widely held definition of protection – refined through a series of workshops led by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) involving more than 50 organisations – described protection as “all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law”.

Protection will generally entail:

- ensuring that harm does not occur;
- ameliorating or repairing the damage of past violence or deprivation;
- mitigating the worst consequences of continuing violations;
- contributing to the prevention of further violations; and
- ensuring traditional and social redress for past abuses.

## **REDEFINING PROTECTION**

This broader view of protection has prompted many humanitarian agencies to explicitly reconceive and redesign their entire range of programmes, as a means of helping individuals attain certain human rights. This is most frequently referred to as the “rights-based approach”.

While this approach is actively championed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and Save the Children, among others, more work is being undertaken to see how a rights-based approach can be applied to programming in emergencies.

For other agencies, the broad review of protection has prompted the launch of more powerful advocacy campaigns alongside their existing material assistance efforts. In addition to building health facilities and water points, for example, these agencies will also advocate that local authorities invest more in basic social services and will refer to governments’ obligations under international law.

For still other humanitarian organisations, the review of protection has meant increased efforts to “do no harm” – to consider the potential impacts of their material assistance programmes on protection. For example, a poorly designed camp for internally displaced persons can put children and women at increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse; often, militias may be interspersed with the camp population, thereby increasing risk and protection needs, as has been the case in northern Uganda.

The broader definition of protection that is now more generally adopted has had a considerable impact on the way humanitarian organisations work. In many cases, taking the broader protection view should lead to better and more effective humanitarian assistance.

In situations such as Darfur, meeting protection needs is a critical element of ensuring the effective delivery of material assistance; in particular, it was only when the African Union force actively secured and patrolled the routes used by women and



children to collect supplies that the health and physical status of the population in camps improved.

### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

At the same time, a broader view of protection introduces new humanitarian challenges that may increase the risks for personnel and organisations, and introduce tensions within the humanitarian community.

One such challenge is how best to convert this broader vision of protection into practical actions that complement humanitarian action. An aspect of this challenge can be seen in the major debate that has taken place between the United Nations (UN) and other parts of the humanitarian community over "integrated missions". Put simply, integrated UN missions are where UN humanitarian organisations work alongside peacekeepers within one overall planning and mission structure.

Critics of integrated missions fear that these structures will erode the independence and the civilian nature of humanitarian action by placing it under political direction. It is also felt that close association with military peacekeepers will damage the perception of humanitarian neutrality. While these fears may not be unfounded, they also reflect a fundamental dilemma for humanitarian organisations: how to deal with the threat of physical violence and when physical force should be used to protect civilian populations. Many humanitarian organisations are influenced in their thinking by failures and poor use of military force to provide civilian protection (as was the case in Srebrenica), or by the abuse of physical force in "humanitarian intervention" (as was perceived to be the case in Somalia).

Nevertheless, situations arise where physical protection requires the use of force. The humanitarian community has so far responded with a degree of ambivalence. Many humanitarian organisations have been advocates for strong and forceful intervention in situations such as the Great Lakes or Darfur. However, when confronted by the practical consequences on the ground, many organisations have expressed concern over the impact of these

measures on humanitarian operations. One very recent example of this occurred in Côte d'Ivoire, where the humanitarian community was concerned that UN peacekeepers had jeopardised operations and the security of staff by the measures they took to protect civilians and humanitarian organisations.

### **No training in protection is available, as no doctrine exists**

This issue of "physical protection and the use of force" must be properly addressed with some urgency. Much more needs to be done by peacekeepers, the Security Council and humanitarian organisations. At the moment, peacekeepers are given very broad mandates and instructions on their protection role. As a result, peacekeeping forces are ill-equipped to deal with protection issues, have no guidance on how they undertake protection and may not have the authority to address key protection concerns. Peacekeeping forces are composed primarily of infantry battalions with no understanding or knowledge of the skills required in protection; no training is available as no doctrine exists.

Increasing the police components of peacekeeping missions would make a considerable improvement. However, establishing a protection doctrine for peacekeepers is also necessary to provide the proper basis for enhanced training and command guidance. A recent Security Council debate on the protection of civilians recognised that the Council needs to develop better and more effective mandates which address and contextualise specific protection concerns.

However, for this to work the humanitarian community must also be better able to analyse and assess protection issues, as well as to identify the respective roles that it can play, and what responses are feasible and desirable for peacekeepers.

Two years ago, the peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a poor reputation with the humanitarian community. It was seen as ineffective and as seeking to gain credibility by duplicating the actions of the

humanitarian community. This last year has seen a major reversal. The protection of civilians has become one of the core objectives of the peacekeeping operation, with the military elements entering into a new dialogue with humanitarian organisations.

There is now a genuine respect for each other's roles, the competition for "hearts and minds" has vanished and, slowly, more effective humanitarian and protection strategies are developing that have an impact on one of the most deeply troubled areas of the world. Such actions require a major shift in thinking for both humanitarian organisations and peacekeepers; but where this takes place, the results can be dramatic. ■

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## **Do you know?**



- ▶ *In the last decade, the number of people affected by disasters was three times higher than in the 1970s. In 2005 alone there was an 18% increase in the number of large-scale disasters, including floods, windstorms and droughts, affecting 157 million people and killing 92,000.*
- ▶ *NGOs deploy the majority of field workers around the world and claim US\$6 billion (or more) of the total \$10 billion in annual global humanitarian spending.*
- ▶ *Only 10% of the UN's Humanitarian Appeal typically is funded in the first quarter of the year.*
- ▶ *Since March 2006, more than 40 donors have pledged US\$261 million to the UN's Central Response Emergency Fund, designed to jump-start relief operations within 72 hours of an emergency.*
- ▶ *The modern ideology of humanitarian work was developed in 19th and 20th Century Geneva by the Red Cross Movement.*
- ▶ *Since World War II, more civilians have died from the effects of war, than from direct conflict.*
- ▶ *The Charter of the United Nations regulates the use of force. International Humanitarian Law regulates hostilities only during armed conflict.*



# PUTTING HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION IN TOUCH WITH REALITY

*Humanitarian coordination is problematic, yet essential. What can be done to cure perceptions of ineffectiveness? asks Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop.*

*A resident of Novosela commune, Albania, receives aid. World Vision, the Albanian Army, Agriculture and Food Department, Albanian Red Cross, Albanian Government and Vlore Health Department were amongst organisations distributing relief supplies after devastating floods in December 2005.*  
**Photo:** Arunee Raisuwanakul / World Vision



Coordination is often seen as a bottleneck in effective humanitarian response. Problems include large numbers of agencies profiling themselves and their programmatic niche, the duplication of needs assessments, and a waste of local resources. To add to this tarnished image, experienced field workers can list many situations in which the United Nations (UN) did a poor job in facilitating a coordination process.

## A CENTRALISED SOLUTION?

Humanitarian coordination cannot be done through a centralised control panel that regulates the flow of aid agencies, but there is a need for leadership. Humanitarian action is a voluntary act based on the principles of independence and proportionality (which is part of the impartiality principle). Humanitarian agencies are ethically and morally bound to respond where they believe the needs are the highest and their presence is relevant. Clearly, factors such as the availability of financial and human resources, and the presence of other actors, are critical elements in making operational decisions.

A process of coordination can help agencies make such decisions. Humanitarian coordination is not rocket science. It should be a process aimed at ensuring that gaps are filled (i.e. that all needs are met) and that resources and staff are optimally deployed. Such a process involves looking at available data on needs, sharing needs assessments, reviewing coverage (in terms of agencies' presence and activities), and understanding the context and reasons behind the humanitarian needs. This should produce an analysis of the impact of collective efforts *vis-à-vis* the existing needs. Leadership is required to facilitate this voluntary process.

Why is it, then, that coordination of humanitarian action is so widely perceived as problematic? And what, if anything, can be done about it?

Up until now, humanitarian coordination has largely been an unbalanced, UN-centric process in which those who participate do not have an equal say. Since the end of 2004, major efforts

have been made to dramatically overhaul this process.

## A UN-CENTRIC AFFAIR

At the global level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the major body for humanitarian coordination. Established at the end of 1991, it gave the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), a senior UN position created at the same time, a mechanism for bringing together the UN system, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (hereafter: RC/C), and some non-governmental organisation (NGO) consortia. The IASC's main tasks are to develop system-wide humanitarian policies, to allocate responsibilities among agencies in humanitarian programmes, and to identify gaps in mandates or operational capacity.

## Until now, the coordination process has been unbalanced

The relevance of the IASC actually has been in forging relationships and building networks, and promoting field-based coordination systems. An external review of the IASC concluded that the body has not inadequately identified or resolved mandate and capacity gaps, or tackled "system-wide problems".<sup>1</sup>

Two reasons are at the heart of these shortcomings. First, the IASC is not a body for management or oversight of the humanitarian community; its decisions are non-binding. The IASC can never be a centralised system for commanding and controlling humanitarian response. It is a mechanism for dialogue – to help UN and non-UN agencies, including NGOs, better understand how they relate to each other and how their actions can be mutually reinforcing.

Second, the IASC's membership does not reflect the operational capacity on the ground. The IASC is made up of some 11 UN bodies or agencies, or UN-styled agencies<sup>2</sup> that have an engagement in humanitarian action, sometimes remotely. Then there are five non-UN seats: two for the RC/C (ICRC and IFRC), and three for the NGO Consortia (ICVA, InterAction and the SCHR).<sup>3</sup> This domination

by UN agencies has made the IASC – and humanitarian coordination at the global level – a UN-centric affair. Yet, as the ERC, Jan Egeland, has pointed out, the smaller, non-UN side represents up to 80% of the operational response capacity.

On the ground, the state of play is not much different. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is expected to facilitate the coordination process, a function relevant for all involved in humanitarian action, whether or not one is part of the UN. In nearly every situation, however, the HC is also the UN's Resident Coordinator (RC); the RC role is development-focused, and few RCs have a humanitarian background or experience outside the UN system. Often, the HC responsibilities have been added to the ordinary duties of the RC, regardless of expertise or experience. The appointment, by ERC in consultation with the IASC, has mostly been seen as a "rubber-stamping" exercise, especially for those outside the UN system.

The reason the HC function has been treated as an after-thought is simple: development assistance, which is longer-term, is more politically correct. Official development assistance is perceived as less intrusive as it is channelled through the government. By contrast, humanitarian assistance is usually given directly to the population. While humanitarian agencies, particularly NGOs, will work with governments, they avoid working through governments.

### **This coordination process is out of touch with the field reality**

The coordination framework for the HC/RC is the UN Country Team, a grouping of UN agencies involved in the UN's development efforts. For a few years now, this grouping has been extended to include a few NGOs in some countries, creating an IASC-styled country team at the field level. But with the imbalance in the numbers on the country team and the focus on development frameworks, the coordination process is often out of touch with the field reality. A familiar picture in humanitarian emergencies is that the "UN agencies sit in the

capital, while the NGOs are doing the work out in the field". And many NGO staff know all too well the problem of too many coordination meetings that are a waste of time; unfortunately, it has become an exception for these meetings to go beyond information-sharing and/or reporting on activities.

### **MORE IN TOUCH**

Since the end of 2004, the strengthening of the HC function has been one of the priorities in reforming the humanitarian system. In September 2005, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) prepared a paper that has been the basis for the discussion in the IASC.<sup>4</sup> An inter-agency grouping, made up of representatives from the UN, RC/C and NGOs, has selected a pool of potential HCs with the requisite qualifications (including people with an NGO background). While the position has been in place for more than a decade, an HC job profile only became available in June 2006.<sup>5</sup> A training and mentoring process is also under development to ensure that the person potentially filling the HC role understands the other actors in the humanitarian community: a person with a UN background should spend time within NGOs; a person with a non-UN background should do some internships with UN agencies.

Further to making the HC function a less UN-centric job, a group of UN and non-UN agencies have engaged in a process, at the global level, to better understand each other in order to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action. In mid-July 2006, these agencies met at the most senior level to discuss their relationships. The meeting agreed that humanitarian coordination should become less UN-centric and that coordination structures, both at the global and at the field level, should see equal numbers of UN agencies, the RC/C, and NGOs as participants. This structure will be tried out in a few field-level situations in the coming year.

A number of other problems regarding coordination need further attention, including accountability and local capacity building. Also, for NGOs and the RC/C, maintaining

close relations with the UN in a coordination process will be difficult when the UN is pursuing an agenda other than a humanitarian one. This may occur in situations involving a UN "integrated mission", in which humanitarian coordination is not sufficiently kept outside its political and military structure. Another problem is the lack of the participation of local and national NGOs in humanitarian coordination; coordination meetings are often held in English, using a lot of jargon in the terminology.

The last 18 months have seen some significant steps in putting humanitarian coordination more in touch with realities on the ground. It is critical that these efforts are pursued and that other problems, as noted above, are addressed. As with the humanitarian reforms to date, the input of NGOs will be essential in driving this process forward. ■

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<sup>1</sup> See, Bruce Jones and Abby Stoddard, *External Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Summary of key findings and recommendations*, New York, 20 October 2003, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

<sup>2</sup> The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank could be seen as such.

<sup>3</sup> IFRC: International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross; ICVA: International Council of Voluntary Agencies; SCHR: Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response.

<sup>4</sup> *The Humanitarian Coordinator System: Issues for discussion*, Informal Paper prepared by ICVA Secretariat, IASC WG, 4 September 2005.

<sup>5</sup> The job profile, which lists the competencies and the qualifications needed to be an HC, was adopted by the IASC Working Group in June 2006.





# AMBIGUITY AND CHANGE: HUMANITARIAN NGOs PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

Mark Janz summarises the key findings of research commissioned to help humanitarian NGOs plan more strategically for future challenges.



Rainstorms and floods attacked several southern provinces in China in June 2006, causing about 100 deaths. This family was delighted to receive rice.

Photo: Bonnie Tsai / World Vision

When looking at the trends of current risks, are NGOs ready to respond to future humanitarian emergencies? What do we need to be aware of?

World Vision, together with a group of large NGOs including CARE USA, Save the Children US, Oxfam GB and USA, Mercy Corps, International Rescue Committee and Catholic Relief Service, engaged the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University to research and project the potential future of humanitarianism. The findings, set out in the publication *Ambiguity and Change*, help us consider actual and potential challenges facing the industry, as well as to plan more strategically for that future.<sup>1</sup>

World Vision, along with the rest of the humanitarian sector, found during the 1990s that increasingly we were able to predict the development of humanitarian emergencies. In slow-onset emergencies, more sophisticated early warning mechanisms could identify a developing emergency – often a year or more ahead. This was also true for complex emergencies such as those in Indonesia (in the political and economic meltdown) or East Timor (in the violent transition to independence), as well as for droughts in southern and east Africa and in the Sahel. With sudden-onset emergencies, such as volcanos, hurricanes and earthquakes, we know well where these occur in at-risk locations.

With our deepened understanding of risks comes the need for preparedness, mitigation and pre-positioning of humanitarian assets and personnel in all these high-risk zones.

*Ambiguity and Change* lays out three "landscapes" (global hazards, political policies and NGOs); contextualises conceptual and political new developments; discusses what humanitarianism may look like in the future; and challenges the universality of humanitarian action.

## GLOBAL HAZARDS LANDSCAPE

**The environment** is an increased risk factor for community well-being, as more evidence emerges

on global warming leading to increased frequency of droughts, large hurricanes, typhoons and tornados. The number of weather-related disasters has increased by around 50% since 1980 (p 13). This report describes the "mega" event risk (such as tsunamis, earthquakes and landslides) and the chronic crisis brought on by degradation of natural resources threatening poor communities.

**Growing urban population** in poor nations presents a serious challenge, with inadequate hygiene, water and sanitation and the risk of epidemics and diseases. In Africa, where most humanitarian emergencies occur, urbanisation is predicted to exceed 50% of the population by 2025, and 72% of Africa's urban populations currently live in slums (p 20). Few organisations have the experience to provide critical services for displaced persons and refugees in large urban areas – especially in slums whose entire populations live on the edge.

**Global migration** is another major trend. Many migrants are "economic refugees" from fragile states where income continues to fall and social services and opportunity do not exist. Others are fleeing violence, or lack of security and human rights. Flows of skilled migrants from the less-developed to the richer world exacerbate the lack of qualified personnel in poorer countries. Social, racial and class tensions are a potent cocktail pointing to future humanitarian needs. What is the role of humanitarian agencies in this sphere?

**The HIV crisis** is currently in a growth phase, and there are multiple versions of what the future will hold. The devastating impact of HIV and AIDS on livelihoods, mortality and morbidity should itself be viewed as a crisis worthy of an emergency response (p 36). Are humanitarian agencies prepared to address the growing risk of this emergency during human-made or natural disasters?

## INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Chapter 2 of the report asks some critical questions: Are humanitarian principles being corrupted by increasingly close links with States'

foreign policies? How are the independence and neutrality of humanitarian action affected? This challenge creates a much more dangerous world for NGOs as outsiders have difficulty distinguishing between politically motivated and independent humanitarian action.

One area of increasing emphasis is the “responsibility to protect”, with more rapid engagement of the United Nations (UN) where the population is at risk. Protection continues to challenge the humanitarian industry in conflict settings.

### Can we “humanitarianise politics without politicising humanitarianism”?

Another is the relationship between humanitarian action and human rights work, which remains a fundamental and unresolved issue (p 58). Can we in our advocacy “humanitarianise politics without politicising humanitarianism” (p 54)? Will humanitarian actors work in repressive locations without addressing human rights, or are human rights fundamental to addressing these contexts effectively? Some NGOs have labelled themselves “rights-based”: what challenges does this mandate carry?

### THE NGO LANDSCAPE

Chapter 3 highlights that NGOs currently claim US\$6 billion or more of the \$10 billion in annual global humanitarian spending (p 61). They also programmed about one third of all bilateral humanitarian aid and up to half of all humanitarian funds managed by the UN (p 62). As a result, donors are more concerned about NGOs demonstrating measurable outputs, upholding standards and codes of conduct and monitoring their work (p 64). There is increased emphasis in NGOs on accountability, advocacy, and reflection and learning. Even donors have engaged in a Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, which will have increasing pertinence as it is implemented – including the NGOs that are significant donors.

As complex emergencies challenge the traditional NGO engagement, new models for working through

partners such as indigenous NGOs will be necessary. Are today's large NGOs ready for these types of partnership?

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

If “three decades of promoting prevention and preparedness has resulted in much rhetoric and little action” (p 96), are NGOs prepared for potential future scenarios? The findings of this research suggest the need for increased sophistication and intentional planning, trend analysis and scenario-building. But this does not mean all sizes of NGOs need specialised planning departments: inter-agency collaboration can provide support.

Capacity in information technology for information and decision-making will be crucial to a much more decentralised management model with key components spread across the globe. More NGOs will integrate humanitarian work with community development due to increased risk and vulnerability in poor communities affected by more and larger emergencies. More time and effort will be spent on advocacy than today, particularly focusing on global vulnerability, centre–periphery asymmetries, and emergency prevention and preparedness (p 95).

### RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

In view of the ambiguity of the future and the evidence-based trends, are NGOs investing in preparations for the challenges of tomorrow? “While traditional responses may be comfortable and attractive, the challenges are such as to merit ‘outside the box’ thinking about ways to fulfil agency mandates and missions or perhaps even to recast or modify them” (p 11). Are NGOs ready to consider this level of change?

Since the report was produced two years ago, a number of steps have been taken by the agencies to respond to its call. These include the findings being used in strategy development, the funding of a two-year grant for the seven agencies to undertake research and development on staff capacity, impact and accountability, risk reduction and information, communication, technology, enhanced coordination

and joint learning and evaluations being undertaken.

*Ambiguity and Change* does not attempt to predict the future but describes evidence-based potential risks and challenges for NGOs to consider in a robust way. Asking the right questions about relief response is important. How we respond to the dynamic, changing context will define our success or failure. ■

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*Ambiguity and Change: Humanitarian NGOs prepare for the future*, The Alan Shawn Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, August 2004. [http://nutrition.tufts.edu/pdf/research/famine/ambiguity\\_and\\_change.pdf](http://nutrition.tufts.edu/pdf/research/famine/ambiguity_and_change.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> The research effort took place during the first 6 months of 2004, led by Dr. Peter Walker at Feinstein Famine Center and assisted by experts from Columbia University, Brown University, Kings College and the London School of Economics.

# the Back Pages

...spiritually speaking

## IS GOD A HUMANITARIAN?

*A reflection on our understanding of humanity and God, and how this relates to humanitarianism today*

The question begs other questions. Who is God? What is a humanitarian? What is a human, for that matter? And what difference do these questions make to the humanitarian community anyway?

We could fill this space by listing all the titles and descriptions of God. We may even be able to draw some deep academic or theological conclusions from our list. But would we know God? There is a world of difference between *knowing about* someone and *knowing* someone. Knowing anyone is based on a relationship of trust, understanding and listening. So, how does a human being living in a three-dimensional world get to "know" an infinitely dimensional God? How do we get to really know a God who is beyond a concept?

The answer is in God's own nature. And in this answer we get a glimpse into human nature and the heart of humanitarianism.

God chooses to communicate aspects of God's own being. Theologians call these the "communicable attributes of God". There are aspects of God that cannot be imparted to humans, though we benefit from them: aspects like omniscience (knowing all things), omnipresence (being in all places at the same time) or omnipotence (being all-powerful). But there are aspects of God that we do share. In fact, they are the very things that define our humanity and mark us out as humans – different from the rest of the animal world.

Whatever we believe about the beginning of human existence, something marks the human as different to the rest of the known universe. To people of faith, the human being is different from other animals because breathed into us is something of God's own being, nature and personhood. "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.'" (Genesis 1:26)

God is not contained by physical form. So, what does God's image or likeness look like? In what way are we like God? In Genesis 2:7 we read: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." We could explore a number of attributes of God that come through this creative breath. But four of them help us see how this works in practice: God is love. God is creator. God is sovereign. God is truth/light.

### Love

God is a social being, who discusses among the persons of God: "Let us make man in our image." God saw that it was not good

that the man be alone. Alone, humans do not reflect the social and loving nature of God. God is love (1 John 4:7–21) and breathed into humans the nature to love, not only those who love in return, but also the outsider, the widow, the orphan and the oppressed.

To be truly human is to love and be loved. We are persons, designed to relate to other persons. We know the stories of children (and adults) deprived of love... what it does to their personhood and sense of meaning and value. Without love we are dysfunctional beings – less than fully human.

### Creativity

The Bible says that one of the first human tasks was to name the animals. Genesis 2:19: "God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called the living creature, that was its name."

God is creative and has given us something of this creative spirit. The ability to find new solutions to old problems; develop new and more meaningful ways of seeing things around us; or even to see things we have not seen before. We are designed to be creative. Human creativity is God-breathed.

### Sovereignty and responsibility

The first humans were charged to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living creature that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28). We are not charged to be dictators over the earth, to destroy as we wish, but rather to work with God in bringing it under the rule of harmony... to set it in order.

God is sovereign and breathed something of this sovereign nature into humans. We are designed to be in charge of our own destiny, not victims of others' whims and fancies or even our own frailties. As Victor Frankl's classic *Man's Search for Meaning* explores, even in the Nazi prison camps there were those who psychologically and spiritually allowed themselves to become victims of the oppressors, destroying their very essence. And there were those who chose not to be victimised, and somehow rose above the dehumanising oppression.

It is in our nature to harmonise with God in continuing the work of creation. We have been granted sovereignty over both our own lives and the world in which we live... to bring it under divine order. Too often, we destroy it, and ourselves.



### **Truth/light**

Man and woman were placed in an open and transparent relationship with God and with each other. There was no defensiveness or furtiveness because there was nothing to hide. Then they were seduced by the lie that they themselves were god, and thus separated themselves from God's true nature and stepped into darkness and shame. Humans are meant to live in truth and light. Instead, we distort the truth to fit our own comfort zones, destroy trust in each other and seek position and power; rather than transparency and truth.

We are only truly human when we are being loving, creative, responsible and truthful. The more of God's grace we accept, the more fully we are created in the image of God, the more human we are.

### **What does this mean for humanitarians?**

Here we find both a driver and a framework for humanitarian endeavour. Our success in saving and building lives and livelihoods is ultimately measured by what of God has been breathed into our programmes, policies, partnerships and more particularly the communities we seek to support.

We can do three things with this framework:

- Apply it to our own self-discipline and thought. "Am I becoming more or less loving? more or less creative? more or less in charge of my own destiny? and more or less able to manage the truth?"
- Apply it to the way we relate to others.
- Apply similar questions to the impacts of our programmes and policies: Are these people becoming more loving (towards themselves, each other, other communities)? Are they becoming more in charge of their own destiny (less dependent; more able to move their assets and circumstances from chaos to order)? Are they more creative now than before we partnered with them? Are they able to manage truth (more realistic about their own vulnerability and environment and capacity)? Such questions could be built into a design, monitoring and evaluation framework that's as practical as it is evocative.

So, is God a humanitarian?

God, of course, cannot be reduced to the label "humanitarian". Yet if our humanitarian endeavour is established and guided by love, creativity, responsibility and truth, then our chance of successfully partnering with God and with each other to breathe again the "image of God" is great. If it isn't, we risk dehumanising ourselves, our partners and those we seek to serve. ■

**Mr John West is Associate Director for Capacity Building in World Vision's Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs division.**

<sup>1</sup> All Bible passages are quoted from the New American Standard Bible, 1977 edition

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**World Vision** is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. As followers of Jesus, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people.

World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty.

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**back cover image:**

In post-tsunami Banda Aceh, Indonesia, excited children crowd around new books, delivered to them by World Vision's mobile library.

**photographer:**

Maida Irawani / World Vision



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