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**Feinstein  
International Center**

Strengthening the humanity and dignity of people in crisis through knowledge and practice



## **Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power, and Perceptions**

**Preliminary Report**

**Prepared by:**

**Antonio Donini, Larry Minear (Team Leaders), Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghadam, Greg Hansen, Tasneem Mowjee, Karina Purushotma, Ian Smillie, Elizabeth Stites, Xavier Zeebroek**



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# Feinstein InternationalCenter

Strengthening the humanity and dignity of people in crisis through knowledge and practice

The Feinstein International Center develops and promotes operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives and livelihoods of people living in crisis-affected and -marginalized communities. FIC works globally in partnership with national and international organizations to bring about institutional changes that enhance effective policy reform and promote best practice.

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**Cover image: Training session in Darfur. Photo: Helen Young.**

**Image opposite contents: Village elder, Syedabad district, Wardak province, Afghanistan. Photo: A. Donini.**

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## HA 2015 at a Glance

**This report** summarizes the findings of the first phase of a major research project on the challenges and compromises that are likely to affect humanitarian action in the next decade.

**The issues** are organized and analyzed around four interrelated “petals”: the *universality* of humanitarianism, the implications of *terrorism and counter-terrorism* for humanitarian action, the search for *coherence* between humanitarian and political agendas, and the *security* of humanitarian personnel and the beneficiaries of humanitarian action.

**Six case studies**—Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Liberia, northern Uganda and the Sudan—provide the basis for the analysis, conclusions and recommendations contained in this report. Additional case studies—Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Occupied Palestinian Territories—are planned as part of phase two of the research. A final report will be issued in 2007.

**The approach** is evidence-based. The focus is on local perceptions. Generic and country-specific findings are distilled through an inductive process involving interviews and focus group meetings at the community level aimed at eliciting perceptions of local people on the functioning of the humanitarian enterprise. Additional data was gathered through interviews with aid community staff and an electronic survey of headquarters personnel. Readers are encouraged to make their own assessments of the field data, which is available on the web.

**The findings** highlight the crisis of humanitarianism in the post-9/11 world. They show that action aimed at alleviating the suffering of the world’s most vulnerable has been for the most part incorporated into a northern political and security agenda.

- With respect to **universality**, humanitarian action is widely viewed as a northern enterprise that carries values and baggage sometimes at odds with those of civilians affected by conflict on the ground. Urgent steps are needed to make it more truly universal including recognizing the contribution of other humanitarian traditions and managing more effectively the tensions between “outsiders” and “insiders” so that the perceptions and needs of communities in crisis are given higher priority. Northern humanitarians also need to listen more, learning from the resourcefulness, resilience, and coping strategies of communities. Top-down, expatriate-driven approaches to humanitarianism need to give way to more inclusive, culturally-sensitive, and grounded approaches that are fully accountable to beneficiaries.

- **Terrorism and counter-terrorism** increase the need for humanitarian action to assist and protect vulnerable civilian populations. Yet governments and non-state actors use the concepts loosely and opportunistically, often frustrating the needs-based work of humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian actors need to be more discerning in understanding the political and military forces at work, more creative in finding ways to function in highly politicized circumstances, more assertive in advocating for policies that do not undermine the rights of civilians, and more professional in their approach to these challenges.

- The **political-humanitarian relationship** is far from a collaboration among equals. The data from our



research shows that the so-called coherence agenda is advanced at humanitarianism's peril, especially in high-profile crises where conflict is on-going or simmering. There is a recurrent danger that humanitarian and human rights priorities will be made subservient to political objectives. It is necessary to counter the orthodoxy of integrated missions and to continue to document instances of instrumentalization in order to be able to develop safeguards that can protect, to the extent possible, the independence of humanitarian (and human rights) work.

- Our data points to a disconnect between the **security** perceptions of affected communities and those of aid agencies. Understanding local perceptions of security is key both for the effectiveness of humanitarian action and the security of aid workers. Humanitarian staff, both national and international (and the former more than the latter) continue to pay a high price for their commitment to alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable. Humanitarian agencies should rethink the way in which they operate in extremely fraught and insecure contexts. In asymmetric wars, humanitarian action may itself be seen as skewed in favor of the more established military and political actors and thereby more vulnerable to attack by non-state groups, hence the need to better analyze local perceptions of security and to re-calibrate programs with these perceptions in mind.

Our findings in the four areas above confirm that the **humanitarian enterprise is vulnerable** to manipulation by powerful political forces far more than is widely understood. Its practitioners are more overextended and overmatched than most realize. Failure to address and reverse present trends will result in the demise of an international assistance and protection regime based on time-tested humanitarian principles. Moreover, if the disconnect between the perceived needs of intended beneficiaries and the assistance and protection actually provided continues to grow, humanitarianism as a compassionate endeavor to bring succor to people *in extremis* may become increasingly alien and suspect to those it purports to help.



Destroyed and Rebuilt Village, Sudan. Photo: Michael Wadleigh



# 1. Introduction

This Preliminary Report and the research on which it is based are organized around four key issues that will continue to challenge the humanitarian enterprise during the next ten years. These are the avowed *universality* of humanitarianism, the implications of *terrorism and counter-terrorism* for humanitarian action, the search for *coherence* between humanitarian and political agendas, and the *security* of humanitarian personnel and the beneficiaries of humanitarian action. These four topics are approached as individual “petals” which, taken together, constitute a single “flower”. The research has been structured so as to examine each of the issues in detail and to explore their relationship to each other.

These four topics were identified in a broad sense at a workshop convened by the Feinstein International Center in Boston in October 2003<sup>1</sup> against the backdrop of the US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and of widespread concern among humanitarian organizations

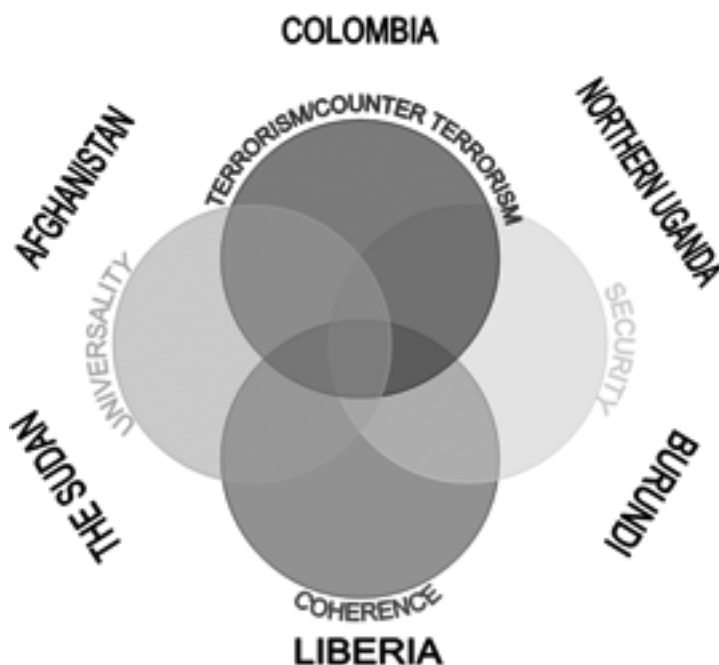
and donor governments about the implications of these crises for the humanitarian enterprise more broadly. More recently, the complexities of humanitarian action in post-invasion Iraq have reinforced questions about whether these two mega-crises are changing global perceptions of humanitarian action and undercutting the neutrality and independence of assistance and protection work. Views vary on the extent to which lines have been blurred and the humanitarian enterprise compromised by association in these crises. While there may well be disagreement on the nature of the bruises suffered by humanitarianism, there is no denying that the context in which humanitarian action takes place is evolving rapidly. In the wake of muscular approaches to “world ordering,” the very essence of humanitarianism may well be at stake.

In crises that do not involve the strategic interests of the Superpower and its allies—Burundi and Liberia come

to mind—humanitarian action in recent years has been allowed to function generally within its traditional parameters, even if, as we shall see, pressure for humanitarian action to “cohere” with the international community’s political or security objectives is, to one degree or another, always present. In the high-profile crises, prevailing Northern political and security interests—witness the global war on terror (GWOT)—trump humanitarian and human rights concerns. In such circumstances, our study shows, humanitarianism is directly and most dangerously under threat. And it is in these countries—Afghanistan and Iraq of course, but also Colombia and to some extent Sudan—that a malaise in the humanitarian community seems most palpable. In these fraught environments, independent and neutral humanitarian space is the first casualty of the pervasive “with-us-or-against-us” polarization.

Within the family of assistance and protection agencies, tensions between policy

**FIGURE 1.1 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF HUMANITARIAN AGENDA 2015 RESEARCH PETALS**



**TABLE 1.2 HA 2105 TIMELINE**

**10/05 11/05 12/05 1/06 2/06 3/06 4/06 5/06 6/06 7/06 8/06 9/06**

**Organize Research/Funding**

**Desk Study/Monitoring Developments**

**Assemble Team**

**Develop Methodology**

**Set Up Visits**

**Country Visits**

**Team Meets**

**Draft Country Reports**

**Draft Overall Report**

**Disseminate Report**

**Begin Phase 2**

choices are further complicated by divergent philosophies of humanitarianism. A range of positions are present, from actors who embrace or acquiesce in a support role in the margins of the GWOT, to those who seek to protect humanitarian action from the overpowering political pressures, even at the cost of rejecting donor funding. Generally, a feeling of powerlessness prevails among humanitarian agencies, reflecting the sheer complexity and intractability of some of the issues.

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GWOT casts a large shadow on the ability of humanitarians to be faithful to core universalist principles. Growing efforts to instrumentalize humanitarian action in the service of counterterrorism and other non-humanitarian objectives is itself an ingredient in much more complex processes related to economic globalization, the privatization of the development aid regime, the weakening of nation states (at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum), the lifting of inhibitions on matters of sovereignty (whether for “ordering” interventions or in deference to the responsibility to protect), the flouting of international humanitarian law (Guantanamo, Chechnya, Lebanon), and the blurring of lines between the military, civilians, mercenaries, private contractors, and criminalized economic elements involved in internal conflict.

There is a variety of views in the humanitarian community on the implications of GWOT and the recent spate of world-ordering interventions. We as analysts believe that 9/11 has triggered a deleterious quantitative and qualitative shift in the inclusion of humanitarian action into Northern political agendas. Other analysts are more sanguine, recognizing a malaise but not seeing the forces at play as fundamentally different in nature to the political influences of the past. Humanitarians are over-reacting, they say, and there is no need to sound the death knell of humanitarianism. Moreover, they add, while the methods employed by international political-military coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan may give cause for concern, surely humanitarian organizations should recognize their own stake in the objectives—peace, democracy, and human

rights—that such coalitions claim to pursue.<sup>2</sup>

In the two years that elapsed between the 2003 workshop and the launching of the HA 2015 research, our research team has monitored developments on the global scene as they have affected humanitarianism and has refined its own objectives and methodologies. A study on *Mapping Perceptions of Security*<sup>3</sup> carried out in 2005 helped us fine-tune our HA 2015 work plan. Soliciting and analyzing the views of local communities, the Mapping Study confirmed a major disconnect at the level of perceptions between local understandings of security and those of international military and assistance agencies.

In the start-up phase of HA 2015, we also identified the countries that would serve as focal points for each topic: Afghanistan (universality), Colombia (terrorism), Burundi and Liberia (coherence), and Sudan (security). All four topics were explored in northern Uganda. While the lead researcher on each petal has had primary responsibility for the collection of data on that petal in the countries s/he has visited, researchers for the other petals have added input through secondary data collection in their own countries. This report builds on the six case studies and presents a set of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations. It is available both in hard copy and on our website at [fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu). The six country studies are also posted on the web, along with other illustrative, methodological, and bibliographical materials.

Phase 2 of HA 2015, launched in September 2006, includes, to the extent that funds are available, additional country studies. Iraq, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the DRC are under discussion. Phase 2 will also include an extensive series of debriefings on the findings and recommendations of this report in northern capitals as well as in the crisis countries themselves, along with some policy papers and journal articles.

## 2. The Approach

The format for our report—a printed set of conclusions and recommendations, with the country studies on which they are based available only on the web—poses challenges and opportunities for the reader. Each of the country studies follows roughly the same template and format, in the interest of promoting comparative analysis. Those interested in a given country crisis may proceed directly to the relevant case study, perhaps then reading the preliminary report to provide global context. Those interested in a particular issue such as coherence may go to the featured countries (in this case, Burundi and Liberia), reading the coherence sections in the other country studies and the preliminary conclusions and recommendations as well.

While the approaches taken in the country studies are comparable, we have made no attempt to ensure a common style, length, or level of detail among them. They have some consistent *leitmotifs* (e.g., the perceptions of

outside actors by local people), but each has a distinctive texture, representing the situation on the ground, the perspectives of those interviewed, and issues that struck the researcher as significant. This format has challenged us as researchers to explore synergies and cross-cutting realities; it also invites readers to engage in the process themselves. We welcome and solicit comments from readers.

As with earlier work conducted by the Center, the overall approach taken in this study is inductive rather than deductive. The core of the research is evidence-based and designed to shed light on issues affecting practitioner organizations in order to help them improve their effectiveness. Data derived from interviews in countries experiencing crises, or rebounding from them, has been supplemented by reviews of existing literature and international consultations with experts and practitioners. Given the sensitivity of the issues raised and the high



Women's community meeting, Old City, Kabul. Photo: A. Donini

degree of subjectivity associated with them, we have put a premium on soliciting and analyzing the perspectives of people in the field, both aid practitioners and local people themselves. This is an area often overlooked in research on humanitarian issues and a deliberate focus of our approach.

Data have been gathered locally through a combination of oral interviews, informal conversations, and focus group meetings and internationally through interviews in donor capitals and aid agency headquarters. All in all, more than 500 persons were interviewed either individually or in focus groups. In addition, an electronic questionnaire was circulated to the headquarters of selected humanitarian agencies which elicited some 100 responses.

In broad compass, the research is about local perceptions of key humanitarian issues, as well as of issues related to the contexts in which externally-funded aid efforts take place. It is thus in the first instance about “views” and “judgments” regarding the nature, appropriateness, and impact of externally-orchestrated aid efforts. It is about *meaning* rather than facts. By “aid” we mean first and foremost humanitarian assistance, which includes both assistance activities and the protection of basic human rights. Although our focus is on humanitarian action, we have also recorded views regarding other forms of assistance, including military and peacekeeping inputs. In the minds of local people, distinctions between humanitarian and other forms of aid (e.g., developmental, human rights, peace support), as well as distinctions regarding who provides such aid (e.g., the UN, international or local NGOs, the Red Cross movement, the military, private for-profit contractors) may or may not be particularly relevant.

Serious methodological issues are inherent in research of this nature. They include obvious challenges regarding sampling methods and survey techniques, selection of case study countries and, within them, of interview sites, choice of interlocutors, selection and number of questions, and the highly varied nature of case study settings. In addition, because the research concerns perceptions of international presence and activities and probes issues of great political and cultural sensitivity, special attempts must be made to take into account the biases of western interviewers and their interviewees, the cultural filters through which data is interpreted, and the possibility that interviewers may be told what interviewees think they want to hear. The survey instruments were designed with such challenges in mind. A note on methodology is contained in Annex 2.

The research in Afghanistan was conducted by Antonio Donini in February 2006; valuable inputs from field interviews were also provided by Sippi Azarbaijani-

Moghaddam. Larry Minear was responsible for the case study on Colombia; his field work was also undertaken in February. Xavier Zeebroek visited Burundi and Liberia in February and April 2006, while Tasneem Mowjee conducted her fieldwork in Sudan in January and February 2006, and Elizabeth Stites traveled to northern Uganda in March and April 2006, supplemented by previous research in June 2005. The research team, which also included Ian Smillie and Karina Purushotma, met to review findings and recommendations in Andover, Mas-



**A town meeting in Zambrano, Bolivar Province, Colombia. Photo: Nils Dybvig**

sachusetts (USA), in April 2006. Greg Hansen took some preliminary soundings on Iraq in 2004 and 2005 and participated in the formulation of the team’s conclusions and recommendations. This report represents the collective wisdom of the team, although the actual scribes were Antonio Donini and Larry Minear.

## Acknowledgements

This major research undertaking was made possible by a generous grant received from the Ford Foundation as well as contributions from OCHA and the government of Canada, supplemented by the core budget of the Feinstein International Center. Many individuals in the field assisted the researchers who were working under tight deadlines and sometimes in difficult conditions. Their contribution is acknowledged in each individual case study but their collective support in making this research happen needs to be recorded here. In addition to the team members themselves, several colleagues and friends provided thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this report: Peter Walker, Norah Niland and Peter Smith.

### 3. Framing the Findings

Two points are worth making in introducing our conclusions and recommendations. First, we use the same conceptual framework as in our 2005 Mapping study in distinguishing between physical security and human security. We see physical security as protection from violence and abuse, as contrasted (but also contained within) the notion of human security, a much broader concept that also encompasses socio-economic well-being, achievement of human rights and cultural identity. Similarly, we distinguish between “negative peace”—the absence of war or armed conflict—and “positive peace,” which allows for sustainable reconstruction and development within a context of justice and stability.<sup>4</sup> Positive peace also connotes a situation in which the structural conditions that have given rise to the conflict are being addressed and citizens have a sense of empowerment, participation, and accountability.

Two of the countries studied (Liberia and Burundi) are making strides towards negative peace with progress being made in protecting individuals and communities from violence and abuse. Others, at the time of writing, were stagnant (northern Uganda, Sudan) or sliding backwards (Afghanistan). Colombia presents both positive and negative characteristics, linked in part to the presence of a strong functioning state and a vibrant civil society. From the positive peace angle, all six situations remain dire, with perhaps Afghanistan, Darfur, and northern Uganda sharing the greatest deficits in human security. Physical and structural violence affect the livelihoods of most of the population in these three areas, and the outlook there was, at the time of writing, generally bleak.

The second conceptual point relates to the tension between “outsiders” and “insiders”. There are “outsiders” at all levels of society. The government bureaucrat traveling from Kabul or Kampala to a provincial capital is often perceived by local communities as an outsider. Aid workers may be from the province or the district, but they may also be perceived as alien because they are promoting “outsider” values and behavior. And communities themselves have their own complex hierarchies and genealogies of power, inclusion, and exclusion. Complex chains of insider-outsider relationships link the periph-

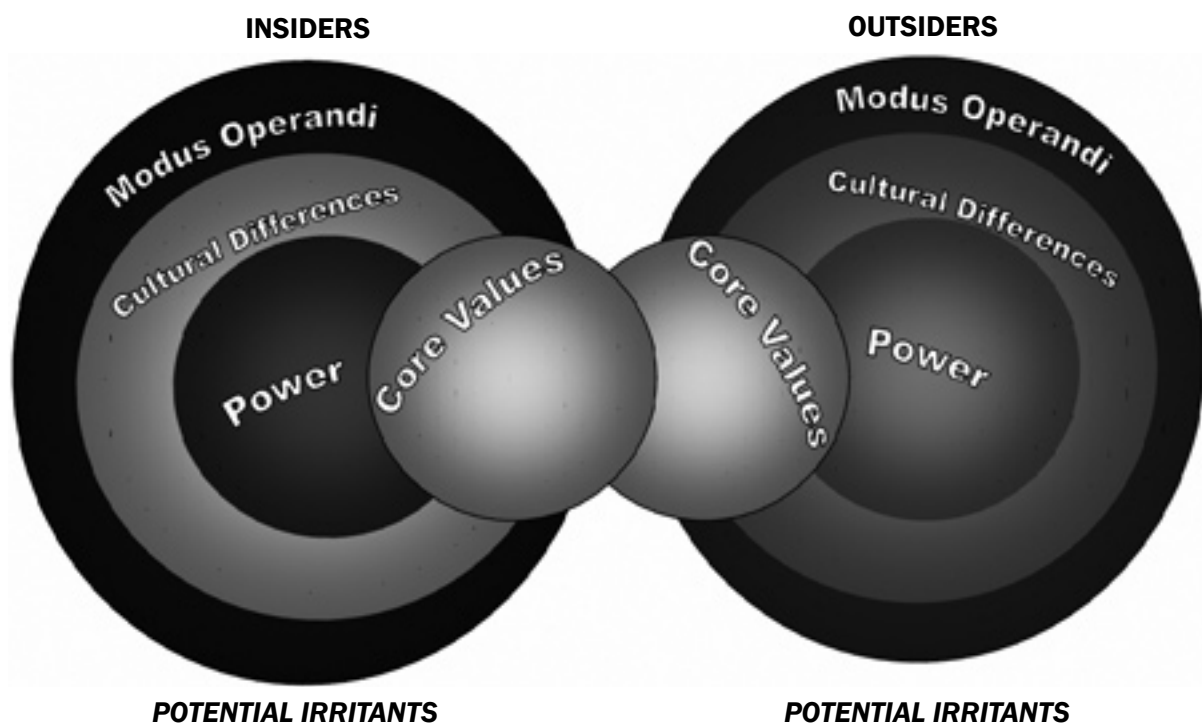
ery, where people *in extremis* struggle to survive or protect themselves from conflict and abuse, to the globalized centers of governance and power. The heralds of *Jihad*, *McWorld*, and *McAid* travel up and down these chains, as do people traffickers and those who benefit from the weapons and narco-economies. The processes of social transformation as well as the perceptions and meanings ascribed to change are all affected by the relationships of agency or dependency inherent in these chains. Outsider aid workers have, at best, a limited understanding of these processes; at worst they are ignorant of what goes on under the surface of a seemingly straightforward aid agency-beneficiary relationship.

Understanding the perception and meaning of what happens at the local level, including the perceptions and impact of the presence of external aid actors, is an area much neglected by the humanitarian and human rights communities—and by the social sciences as a whole. More pressing problems always seem to require priority attention.

Figure 3.1 below illustrates the challenges faced by insider civil society organizations in a dependency chain dominated by outsiders. It attempts a graphic representation of outsider-insider humanitarian relationships. It assumes a certain degree of congruence between the universalist values of the external agency and the local community (this might be the case in Colombia or Burundi, but less so in Afghanistan and Darfur). The cultural differences, power relationships, and modus operandi of the two sets of actors are, however, more problematic. The baggage that each actor carries can easily become an irritant, if not an obstacle in the relationship. In this scenario, the objective for aid agencies should be to bring the various circles closer together. A total overlap would neither be possible, nor desirable, but when the core values are farther apart, as in the case of Afghanistan, a meeting of minds and perceptions on fundamental as well as operational issues is likely to be a very tall order. We return to the issue of the insider-outsider relationship as it affects processes of social transformation in the concluding section of this report. Table 3.2 expands on the challenges faced by local civil society organizations in the context of the “insider-outsider” dynamic.



**FIGURE 3.1 TENSION BETWEEN INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS**



**Core values appear to be largely congruent but there are clashes because of secondary issues**

What emerges from the country studies is that while each setting is highly idiosyncratic, there is a clear sense that countries share common problems—and the agencies common challenges. The challenges of communities in Colombia who have to live with the combined threats of insurgency, a criminalized narco-economy, and international pressures echo those of Afghanistan, even if the latter is objectively situated, as the former is not, in the context of GWOT.

Similarly, a number of issues related to the coherence agenda and the pressures of politics on humanitarian action shape the environment in which aid agencies work, from Afghanistan to northern Uganda to Liberia and the Sudan. Such pressures have different characteristics: institutionally-driven in the case of UN-mandated integrated missions (Afghanistan, Liberia); more subtle where the integration is less pronounced (Burundi, Sudan), or largely absent (Colombia, northern Uganda). Nevertheless, a common thread—the dangers of instrumentalization of humanitarian action in the service of a wider political agenda—runs through our six country situations. The themes of universality and security also come together in those situations where the social contract that allows humanitarian actors to be accepted and operate is threatened or broken (Afghanistan, Darfur) and/or where the authorities deny access and space to

humanitarians (Colombia) or otherwise impede their work (Burundi).

Thus, security for humanitarian workers reflects a number of variables: the resonance between the ethos of communities experiencing crisis and the values of international actors; the degree of scapegoating and politicization between local authorities and outside agencies; and the extent to which humanitarian action can be insulated from the prevailing political framework. Clearly, security can never be reduced to a formula nor will the approach taken in one crisis necessarily be helpful in the next. Problems are not isolated from one another. As Table 3.3 suggests with reference to a single day's coverage by a single newspaper, the four “petals” interact with each other in dynamic and surprising ways.

Our conclusions and recommendations give a first approximation of the key challenges for humanitarian action in the coming decade. Phase 2 of this study will expand on the number of countries, building a wider data base which may then reflect a broader and more nuanced set of conclusions and recommendations.

**TABLE 3.2 CIVIL SOCIETY, GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES**

In recent years, civil society has been posited as a key element of good governance. The idea of civil society is not new, having been explored in various ways by de Tocqueville, Hegel, Gramsci and others over the years. During the 1990s and more recently, however, “civil society” has become a catch-phrase, covering a broad swathe of ideas, concepts, and hopes relating to both service delivery and governance.

At its most basic, the idea of civil society—a broad collection of organizations located between state and market—is one of influence. A strong civil society will act as a brake on the state, as a watchdog, as a series of pressure groups that can leaven inappropriate political behavior, and in some cases act as a substitute, as an alternative, or as a complement to government. Civil society, therefore, serves a political as well as a service function. An organization working for the welfare of the mentally handicapped, for example, may serve primarily as a service organization, but it will also work to protect the rights of its beneficiaries. Organizations working with children or on environmental issues will similarly have advocacy as well as service functions.

In many of the countries beset by the most violent and protracted emergencies over the past two decades, civil society is essentially in a formative stage. There may be a large number of organizations that fall under the civil society rubric—community-based organizations, NGOs, trade unions, professional bodies—but many are young and fragile, with little experience of either advocacy or service provision. And while many outsiders understand the broad importance of civil society, there is an urgency in emergency situations that causes international humanitarian agencies to seek out and privilege local bodies that can take on some of their delivery of services.

This makes sense up to a point. Local organizations, if they have the capacity to “deliver,” can do so at much lower cost than internationals. They speak the language, know the culture and can often get things done much more quickly and efficiently. The problem in many emergencies, however, is that local organizations, weak at the outset, are often dropped as quickly as they are engaged—abandoned once their particular skills are no longer required. The “capacity” of greatest interest to the internationals is their ability to take on the “truck and chuck” role that international agencies now increasingly eschew for themselves. “Capacity building” is too often structured around specifics required by the internationals—food delivery, feeding, camp management—having little to do with the priorities of local organizations. Too often it does nothing to help them to develop a voice in areas related to the creation and sustenance of genuine humanitarian space—a key aspect of good governance.

Local organizations can thus be “instrumentalized” by international humanitarian organizations just as international humanitarian organizations claim to be instrumentalized themselves by donor governments for political purposes.

Responsible and accountable post-conflict governments that respect international humanitarian norms can only be promoted from the outside, and by outsiders, up to a point. The promotion of vibrant local civil society organizations is in the long-term interests of international humanitarian organizations, and it is essential to recovery and sustainable peace.

**Ian Smilie**



### TABLE 3.3 ISSUES IN PLAY

During the first quarter of 2006 when most of the field research for this study was conducted, the four issues under review evolved in dynamic and high-profile fashion. The interactive nature of developments is evident from dispatches in *The New York Times* on a single day, February 8, 2006.

The *universality* issue was front and center by virtue of the publication in Denmark and other European countries of cartoons deemed insulting to the Prophet Mohammed and his followers. “West Coming to Grasp Wide Islamic Protests as Sign of Deep Gulf” headlined a *Times* dispatch from London. “The cartoons have set off a profound debate about freedom of expression and supposed double standards,” wrote reporter Alan Cowell, “and the spreading protest signified a hardening of extremes that left little room for moderation.” He quoted Professor Tabish Khar of Aarhus University in Denmark as saying, “The moderate Muslim has again been effectively silenced.”

The *Times* reporter observed that “The catalog of Islamic terrorism—from the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States to the March 2004 bombing in Madrid and the July 2005 attacks in London—has challenged societies to distinguish between moderates and extremists. . .” A joint statement by the Secretaries General of the UN and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the EU’s foreign policy representative sought to strengthen the position of moderates.

Highlighting the issue of coherence and political frameworks, a *Times* dispatch from Kabul announced that “3 Afghan Demonstrators Die in Clash with NATO troops.” The deaths occurred in demonstrations against the publication of the cartoons in the European press. This was “the first time NATO troops, who are in Afghanistan under a United Nations mandate as the International Security Assistance Force to establish and assist reconstruction, had been attacked at their base [in this instance, in the northern city of Maimana] by an angry crowd.” Hitherto ISAF’s multilateral political framework had buffered it from the active opposition that had been directed at the bilateral US military presence. Demonstrations had taken place earlier in the week at the US military base at Bagram.

The implications of these developments for the security of humanitarian operations was also immediate and profound. “Chechnya Expels Danish Aid Agency,” read a *Times* news item from Moscow. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), a coalition of 30 NGOs that had provided humanitarian assistance there since 1997, had been expelled, with the authorities in the republic threatening other similar actions. For their part, DRC staff “struggled to impress upon critics that it was a private charity with no connection to the cartoons that have inflamed much of the Muslim world.” On the same day, our researchers in the Sudan reported an attack on the DRC office in West Darfur, apparently motivated by outrage against the cartoons.

The day’s events sent tremors through humanitarian institutions around the world. They raise questions about the viability and sustainability of a humanitarian enterprise that, in a perceived “clash of civilizations,” is indelibly associated with the non-Muslim West. Are humanitarian activities contingent not simply upon secure environments but on a political consensus that embraces moderation and rejects extremism? Absent such a climate, can nuanced distinctions—for example, between multilateral and bilateral political frameworks or between assistance organizations and the countries from which they come—be made and sustained? Do such distinctions make any difference or must the entire humanitarian enterprise be rethought and reconstructed?

## 4. The Four Petals

### (a) Universality

One of the points made at our Boston meeting in October 2003 was that the Iraq crisis, on the heels of the intervention in Afghanistan, had led to a deepening “us-versus-them” divide, jeopardizing the very universality of the humanitarian endeavor. A number of factors contribute to this perception:

- A widespread feeling that the global war on terror has resulted in an erosion of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL). US detentions in Guantanamo, the reported increase in secret renditions and undisclosed detention facilities, and Russian heavy-handedness in Chechnya are cited as examples.

- The disparity in funding patterns reflects the reality that high-profile crises attract disproportionate resources (which do not necessarily result in effective programs), while forgotten, and often more deadly, emergencies such as the DRC or HIV/AIDS, continue to fester. A serious lack of proportionality in resource allocations calls the very idea of a universal humanitarian regime into question.

- The failure of humanitarian emblems to command respect underscores the vulnerability of humanitarian action but also the perception that it is seen as partisan by militants and the communities that tolerate or support them. The acceptability of humanitarian action, once a cornerstone of the humanitarian relationship, can no longer be taken for granted in the new asymmetric GWOT-related conflicts.

- Perhaps more fundamentally, Iraq and Afghanistan have brought home the reality that humanitarian action is “of the North” and is largely perceived as such in the South. The web of linkages between Northern politics, economics, values and behavior, on the one side, and the posture and processes of humanitarian action on the other, are not altogether new, but the polarization resulting from Iraq and Afghanistan has brought these linkages into much starker view.

- The fact that traditional humanitarian action is

largely funded by a small club of Western donors is also problematic in terms of universality. Equally problematic is the slighting of contributions from non-traditional sources falling outside standard ODA definitions: contributions made by families, communities, and organizations in affected countries; diaspora remittances; and contributions from governments and other donors in the Islamic world. The contributions from this parallel universe, while substantial, remain unrecognized and largely unrecorded.

### Universal Ethos, Western Apparatus?

With the above in mind, our starting point was the following: given the new levels of polarization and manipulation to which it is subjected, is there anything truly universal about what we call humanitarian action? In other words, does the predominantly Western nature of the humanitarian apparatus clash with the universalist values that it purports to convey? Does the fact that humanitarianism is “of the North” compromise the ability of humanitarian agencies to function and to be seen as neutral impartial and independent?

Attacks against NGOs, the UN and even the ICRC—the paragon of humanitarian principle—in Afghanistan and Iraq underline a newly perceived reality: the so-called universality of humanitarian values is *not* universally accepted or understood. It may be actively contested only by a small and violent minority, but questions about the values and *modus operandi* of the humanitarian enterprise are more widespread. This gap in values and understanding is difficult to measure for two conflicting reasons. On the one hand, it appears to be linked to poverty and the quality of life, to processes of globalization, and to the increasing gap between those who live in extreme comfort and those who struggle to survive *in extremis*. On the other hand, “humanitarianism” remains a dominant discourse. Northern leaders, thinkers, aid agencies, and donor institutions shape, fund and manage what is generally termed humanitarian action. In setting the terms of the debate, they may pay lip service to the importance of “other” traditions of humanitarianism and other perspectives on universality, but non-western and discordant voices seldom get a serious hearing.

In a world increasingly polarized by GWOT, it is far from certain that humanitarianism as a philosophy, as a movement, as a profession, or even as a compassionate endeavor to save and protect lives in crisis settings will survive in its present form. Humanitarianism's credentials may ring more and more hollow in large swaths of the South, and it may become increasingly difficult to maintain the notion that it is a shared value with truly global reach. In the coming years, the Northern monopoly on humanitarian discourse and action could be further challenged or negated by pressures on both sides of the North-South divide for more open politicization and instrumentalization.

Our research aimed to provide a reality check on these issues. Our working hypothesis was that the concepts and ideology of humanitarianism may still have a certain universal meaning but that the practice of these values has drifted away from its universalist moorings. Hence the importance of evidence-based research to identify whether there still exists a broad consensus in the world's different cultures around the fundamental values that we call "humanitarianism," or whether this matter, of importance for humanitarian agencies and policy-makers, is one of relative indifference for the provision of assistance and beneficiaries themselves.

## The Findings

Our main finding is that the universality issue underscores a real and sometimes damaging clash between the value systems of "locals" and "outsiders". The humanitarian enterprise views itself as universal in mandate and scope. It affirms that the core values of humanitarianism have universal resonance, but this is not the same as saying that such values have universal articulation and application. Our case studies document many instances of friction at an operational level, reflecting general cultural insensitivity, poor accountability, and bad technique among humanitarian agencies. Cultural insensitivity affects the humanitarian relationship on both sides, though the onus for dealing with complex and delicate cultural issues in an appropriate manner falls primarily on aid workers and their organizations. The other two negatives—poor accountability to beneficiaries and bad programming or technique—are the sole preserve of aid workers. The consequence is that the "otherness" of the humanitarian enterprise—its fundamentally one-sided "universal" vision and apparatus—undermines the effectiveness of assistance and protection activities.

This major finding has encouraging and discouraging aspects. Our researchers did not find widespread rejection of humanitarian values. We did not encounter many naysayers, and certainly their voices did not dominate debate on this issue. Our findings were doubtless influenced by

difficulties, for security reasons, in accessing certain areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan, where more negative views are held in some Islamist circles.

In Afghanistan, those in the aid community who have tried to engage Taliban insurgents on this issue have noted a shift in view: from "We attack you because you are part of the western conspiracy against Islam" to a more subtle "We will not attack you as long as you work for the well-being of the Afghan people." The veracity of this shift seems to be borne out by an apparent decrease in politically-motivated attacks against aid agencies (while criminal and opportunistic attacks continue to grow in numbers). The shift may also indicate an incipient appreciation, on the part of otherwise vocal critics, of the services that humanitarian agencies can provide in asymmetrical conflicts.

While the values promoted by humanitarian organizations do not seem problematic *per se*, they are often neither widely understood nor explained to communities. In instances where humanitarian principles and values were actually discussed with community leaders, the "otherness" of the assistance machinery was more problematic than its inherent values. The alignment on issues of principle or rights in general—and the rights of women in Afghanistan and the Sudan in particular—was far from perfect, however. As Table 3.1 above tries to show, clarification of perceptions will continue to be required. Little evidence was found, however, of a fundamental conceptual contradiction between Western and other traditions of humanitarianism.

It is encouraging that outright rejection of humanitarian activity is not apparent in the countries visited and that stepped-up efforts to convey humanitarian essentials can make a positive difference in the breadth of acceptance. Nevertheless, the prevalence of questions about the motivation, agenda, *modus operandi*, and cultural baggage of Western aid agencies is clearly troubling and presents major challenges.

Being an outsider, however, is not always a negative. Often, expatriate aid workers are more appreciated than locals, or they can be more effective in articulating sensitive issues such as access or rights with the local authorities. Depending on the situation and the nature of the activity, expatriates can be seen as more neutral and impartial or, on the contrary, as one-sided if not in the service of foreign interests. In some extreme cases, as in southern Afghanistan, however, the simple perception that a community or its leaders are associated with a foreign aid agency can put the community at risk. This argues for more intentionality and rigor in the articulation of the relationship with communities: the blurring of lines and the mixing of agendas have a habit of coming back

to haunt. Clearer definitions of the mandates, objectives, and profiles of humanitarian agencies, both individually and as a community would seem to be an important ingredient in any strategy aimed at re-burnishing the credentials of humanitarianism in contested environments. This includes a clearer distinction between humanitarian agencies, on the one hand, and, on the other, the military, for-profit entities or aid agencies with mixed or non-humanitarian mandates.

Afghanistan and Sudan stand out as situations in which the issue of universality and related questions of prin-

anism as it fosters the copying of exogenous processes rather than the development of distinctive but perhaps complementary domestic approaches to humanitarianism. In “copy-cat” humanitarianism, the dictation by outsiders of the terms of discourse results not only in a dominant-dominated humanitarian dialectic. It also obfuscates the coping mechanisms of local communities and of the mostly invisible networks of solidarity (tribal, religious) that allow people to survive in times of crisis. At the February 2006 London meeting that launched the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, participation of Afghan civil society was limited to organizations and individuals who could speak the language of the foreigners, i.e., English.

***Donor practices and other dynamics push indigenous NGOs, many struggling to survive, to mimic the structures and behavior of their Northern counterparts. This undermines the universality of humanitarianism as it fosters the copying of exogenous processes rather than the development of distinctive but perhaps complementary domestic approaches to humanitarianism.***

ciple are most pertinent. The issue also arises, somewhat obliquely, in northern Uganda. In Colombia, Burundi, and Liberia, respect for humanitarian principles is accepted, and the issue of the universality is not really relevant. But in all six countries, the insider-outsider dynamic plays an important role, as does the weight of the Western cultural baggage and humanitarian technique.

In Afghanistan, our original assumption was that the humanitarian enterprise would be seen as fundamentally Northern in values, appearance, and behavior. Data from the field, while not as clear-cut as might have been expected, does indicate that the activities and the *modus operandi* of humanitarian agencies, and the types of voluntary or involuntary alignments they make or are perceived to make, are problematic. Humanitarian action, unsurprisingly, is associated with the work of foreign agencies, and with few exceptions these are quintessentially Northern. The personal behavior of aid workers also tends to segregate them, physically, from the local citizenry. In many ways, expats are seen as inhabiting another world, one that is protected from the problems and realities of ordinary Afghans.

More importantly, perhaps, Northern-style humanitarian action sets the stage for others pursuing humanitarian objectives. Donor practices and other dynamics push indigenous NGOs, many struggling to survive, to mimic the structures and behavior of their Northern counterparts. This undermines the universality of humanitari-

anism as it fosters the copying of exogenous processes rather than the development of distinctive but perhaps complementary domestic approaches to humanitarianism. In “copy-cat” humanitarianism, the dictation by outsiders of the terms of discourse results not only in a dominant-dominated humanitarian dialectic. It also obfuscates the coping mechanisms of local communities and of the mostly invisible networks of solidarity (tribal, religious) that allow people to survive in times of crisis. At the February 2006 London meeting that launched the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, participation of Afghan civil society was limited to organizations and individuals who could speak the language of the foreigners, i.e., English.

The humanitarian values propounded by aid agencies are not generally a problem in Afghanistan. With the rather large exception of women’s rights and women’s employment, which remain points of friction, there is, broadly speaking, an easy fit between the values of the outsiders and the traditional beliefs and

mores concerning, for example, the rights of civilians in armed conflict. That these traditional beliefs have so often been violated in the past does not call into question the deep attachment of Afghans to notions of protection and justice, quite similar to those of Northern humanitarians. As mentioned above, the cultural baggage and the working practices of outsiders are much more an issue. Our case study documents huge perception and communications gaps surrounding the work of aid agencies in Afghanistan. The gaps have to do with unmet expectations and resulting disenchantment, but they are also symptomatic of a significant disconnect between outsiders and insiders. As a result, trust in aid agencies and government—also an “outsider” entity for many Afghans, particularly in rural areas—is rapidly eroding.

Would greater perceived connectedness between the humanitarian enterprise and local values matter to beneficiaries? We believe it would, to a point. While most Afghans would not necessarily make a distinction between assistance provided by a principled and universalist organization or one working within the ambit of the Afghan government or Coalition forces, deterioration of the security situation in many parts of the country is likely to make such distinctions much more important. Alignments, overt or covert,—with the Coalition or with its opponents—undoubtedly carry consequences. The acceptability of humanitarian personnel in contested areas is undermined by the blurring of lines between military and civilian actors and by the way in which aid

agencies themselves define the situation. Depending on whether they define it as “post-conflict” or as one where IHL should be rigorously applied, their posture towards authorities and belligerents is likely to be very different. As in Iraq, the credibility and credentials of agencies laying claim to the humanitarian imperative will be suspect unless they can demonstrate that they are adhering to the spirit and the letter of universal principles. Recent experience in Afghanistan militates in favor of a clearer separation between “copyrighted” humanitarians who will work only within the precepts of IHL and other aid organizations that may accept varying degrees of alignment with a belligerent.

The situation in Sudan bears some similarity to Afghanistan in terms of the perceptions of aid agencies, the less-than-perfect fit between local traditions and universalist

***It is the behavior of leaders and warlords that is problematic, not the dictates of cultures and religions.***

principles, and, most importantly, the polarization of the situation on the ground. In Sudan it is the government, rather than the insurgents, which claims that humanitarian action is a Western tool being used against it. Conversely, outsider values are appreciated by the beneficiaries of humanitarian action who are also the victims of government policies or government-supported violence. Outsiders are perceived as neutral and impartial by some communities (“Aid workers from abroad do not take sides...”) while agency national staff are mistrusted because they are seen as supporters of the central authorities. The situation is far from clear-cut, however. In South Sudan and even in Darfur, hostility is not so much directed at the West and its values, but at Islamic organizations and values. Throughout the country, moreover, there is tension between the promotion of human rights—in particular gender equity—and local traditions. One finding that deserves to be noted is the contrast between the sometimes clumsy promotion of humanitarian principles by aid agencies and the lack of awareness of these principles among national and sometimes international staff of the agencies themselves.

Unlike Afghanistan or Sudan, the Western nature of the humanitarian enterprise is not an issue in Colombia, which sees itself as part and parcel of the Western world. There is a comfortable fit between Colombian religious and civil traditions and global humanitarian ethos, laws, and institutions. The affirmation of universal norms by the Colombian authorities, however, does not mean that they are necessarily applied in the rough and tumble world of civil strife. In fact, the government frames the debate in ways that seek to limit the applicability of inter-

national law to conflict in Colombia. It keeps humanitarian and human rights groups on a short leash, limiting their access to armed groups and publicly alleging that they are motivated by partisan political agendas rather than by humanitarian principles. Yet the humanitarian ethos is alive and well. Humanitarian principles and advocacy for their universal applicability are important rallying points for local Colombian humanitarian and human rights groups in their interaction with the government and the international community.

Similarly, in northern Uganda, Burundi, and Liberia, the Western nature of the humanitarian enterprise is not in itself an issue. Foreign aid workers are generally respected and appreciated, and beneficiary communities tend to prefer expatriates over local staff because they are seen as less corrupt. Issues related to the imperfect outsider-in-

sider dynamic are, however, present in all three countries. In northern Uganda, for example, it is not so much an issue of cultural insensitivity as a

disconnect between cultural values. The outsider agenda (with “outsider” interpreted broadly—for example an educated, cosmopolitan Ugandan NGO aid worker is also seen as an outsider) is more in tune with IHL and humanitarian principles, whereas local views are a function of traditional cultural understandings, based on patriarchal and more hierarchal norms. Another issue looms large, particularly in Africa: universalism is undermined by the lack of proportionality. Interest in, and funds for African crises are scarce compared to Western munificence in the high-profile crises of Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Bosnia.

In summary, our findings point to three particular respects in which the humanitarian endeavor, as evidenced in the countries studied, is less than universal:

1. Humanitarian action is self-defined by those who practice it, with little or no consideration for different approaches or traditions aimed at alleviating human suffering. Trying to universalize a particularistic blend of humanitarianism that is inextricably linked with Western history, thought, and values is unlikely to sway doubters and nay-sayers in the South. Reinventing a globally acceptable notion of “humanitarianism” would require turning conventional thinking on its head.

2. The humanitarian enterprise seems to be particularly ill-equipped to deal with complex asymmetrical wars, as in Afghanistan and to some extent Sudan. In such contexts, the humanitarian endeavor itself tends to become asymmetrical, in the sense that it is often one-sided or seen as such, lacks proportionality to need, and



is prone to political manipulation. This argues for much more culturally sensitive approaches to humanitarian action, and much more attention to outsider-insider relationships. A deeper involvement with local communities is likely to require a departure from current top-down, supply-driven, and expatriate-heavy approaches to assistance and protection.

3. Humanitarian action is often guilty by association. Because its roots are in the North and because its apparatus is essentially Northern in appearance and *modus operandi*, humanitarian action is often associated with political and military “ordering” processes that also originate in the North. Manipulation and politicization of humanitarian action is, of course, nothing new. What is new is the extent to which it occurs in high-profile crises and, more deeply, the extent to which humanitarian action is associated with exogenous agendas and political designs.

*“Until the lions have their historians, history will always be written by the hunters,”* says the African proverb. Perhaps the time has come to give the lions, the gazelles and even the suffering grass a stake in the debate. In fact, testing the universality of the humanitarian impulse and its human rights cousin at the grassroots level, as we have done in our case studies, has helped broaden our understanding of contextual issues and how communities look at the work performed by outsiders. Much more work needs to be done in this arena. Caring for war wounded, protecting children and civilians in war situations, and aspiring for justice and accountability are obligations recognized, in their own ways, in all cultures. This humanitarian substratum is undoubtedly universal. It is the behavior of leaders and warlords that is problematic, not the dictates of cultures and religions. Hence, working with local groups and creating partnerships around common “humanitarian” concerns may be a more productive way of promoting effective humanitarian action based on universal principles than a global “dialogue of (the deaf) civilizations” at a political level. Perhaps, also, Northern humanitarians need to open their ears more to the humanitarian voices from communities in the South.

## Recommendations

We believe that the promotion of a more universal humanitarian discourse, building on all existing traditions, is a prerequisite for more effective humanitarian action. To achieve this, a number of urgent measures are required:

**1. Bridging the humanitarian gap.** Non-western humanitarian traditions provide crucially important life-saving services to communities caught up in crisis and conflict. These include contributions from affected

governments, charities and religious foundations, remittances, and local communities and families. Often these are the first, and sometimes the only, line of protection for the vulnerable. The international community needs to recognize the importance of this contribution by supporting on-going initiatives to foster dialogue between and among humanitarian traditions (e.g., those undertaken by OCHA, the government of Switzerland, and Islamic Relief). A study to quantify the contribution of non-Western entities to the global humanitarian endeavor or should be undertaken by OCHA, the DAC, or a research institution. The DAC should find ways of recording these contributions in its statistics.

**2. Listening more.** Given the institutional momentum of expatriate-driven assistance, Western/Northern humanitarian agencies in the field need to systematically acknowledge and build upon local capacities and coping strategies. This would result in internationally-supported activities more in keeping with the perceptions of affected and beneficiary communities. Providing feedback to communities should be an essential ingredient in fostering greater accountability to beneficiaries. Agencies should ensure that culturally-sensitive strategies are a compulsory component of their work. This includes making their employees aware of the cultural, linguistic, historical, ethnic, and religious contexts in which they work.

**3. Rethinking roles and functions of headquarters and field actors.** Humanitarian agencies at headquarters and their international consortia should support policies and programs more attuned to locally-identified needs rather than top-down, supply-driven, and expatriate-intensive approaches to humanitarian action. Such a qualitative change in the conceptualization and practice of humanitarian action will have major implications for donors as well.

**4. Protecting the independence of humanitarian agencies.** The humanitarian regime is only as universal as its actors are perceived as embodying core humanitarian principles. In hotly contested environments, agencies face twin dangers: that they will be manipulated by powerful political actors in ways that undermine their integrity and that they will be perceived, rightly or not, as vectors of a Northern/Western agenda. In such situations humanitarian agencies should carefully weigh the costs and benefits of attempting to operate in a principled fashion and be prepared to keep their distance if independence from belligerents cannot be assured, especially if other less principled actors or the military are in a position to provide life-saving assistance. The presence of agencies with impeccable humanitarian credentials alongside agencies with mixed mandates undermines the possibility of principled humanitarian action. The

humanitarian community is therefore encouraged to examine how universality might be strengthened through a clearer demarcation of various types of actors and the elaboration of verifiable standards of humanitarian performance and accountability.

**5. Nurturing universality.** Our case studies show that knowledge of IHL is weak, even among reputed humanitarian agencies. For example, humanitarian and human rights groups were well informed about the objectives and strategies of the state and non-state actors in Colombia and northern Uganda and did their best to promote behavior in accordance with international norms. However, in the Sudan and Afghanistan the humanitarian enterprise was less effective in situating its work in relation to universal benchmarks. More training and dissemination of best practice is required, notably on dealing with insurgent groups and the prevention of co-optation.

**6. Enhancing the protection of civilians in conflict.** Despite progress at the international level in defining the responsibilities of individual states and the adoption of the landmark “responsibility to protect” agenda, such internationally-adopted norms have yet to prove their value in reducing attacks against civilians, whether in Darfur, northern Uganda, or Lebanon. The issue of protection of civilians loomed large in our case studies, but the “R2P” approach seemed absent on the ground as a conceptual model or a programming device. Our data shows that the absence of security is of crucial concern to communities and imperils effective humanitarian action. Efforts by various military configurations to provide it leads to mixed results.

More evidence-based research is needed to establish what internationally-led approaches work best for the protection of civilians in what kinds of situation. For example, are multilateral peacekeepers better able to provide protection for humanitarian work—as a comparison between Burundi and northern Uganda would suggest? Conversely, are bilateral operations, which often have more robust terms of engagement, a better investment in protecting humanitarian work? Should peacekeeping, multilateral and bilateral alike, focus as a matter of priority on protecting civilians and engage in hands-on project work (quick impact projects and the like) in exceptional circumstances only? In situations where peacekeeping units provide security for humanitarian operations, what kinds of safeguards can be built in (e.g., appropriate relationships, funding, accountability)?

## (b) Terrorism

The 2003 consultation process mentioned earlier flagged as an issue of major concern to the humanitarian enterprise the impact of terrorism and counter-terrorism on

its work. Two years after 9/11, “Humanitarianism in settings such as Iraq and Afghanistan,” we wrote in summarizing the discussions, “has become subsidiary to a much larger and essentially political agenda. . . . The global war on terror is casting a large shadow on humanitarian work that seeks to be faithful to core principles.”<sup>5</sup>

This Preliminary Report, building on the findings of the six country studies, is not an analysis of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). There is already a plethora of reviews of ‘Capital T’ terrorism, several of which are listed in the HA 2015 bibliography on our website. Instead, our study has a humanitarian focus, assessing the impact of the global war and of ‘Small T’ terrorism alike on civilians and on efforts to come to their aid. The country studies provide a full array of experience, from GWOT frontlines in Afghanistan to the hinterlands of northern Uganda and Colombia, where the terrorism that wracks civilian populations has little or no global dimension.

In each of the settings, the discourse on global terrorism has to one degree or another become a distraction and a distortion. The debate about terrorist threats to national security has upstaged and eroded humanitarian space, undermining efforts to address the humanitarian consequences of conflict. In each setting, there are different permutations of terrorism, but there are also generic cross-cutting issues. Our review highlights two issues in particular: the impact of the Global War on Terror (GWOT, or ‘Capital T’ terrorism) on humanitarian action and the impact of local or homegrown terrorism.

The case studies completed thus far suggest five broad conclusions.

**FIRST**, while there is no universally agreed upon definition, terrorism may be understood in a broad sense as “violence or the threat of violence against ordinary civilians, against their life, their property, their well-being. [It] is a means to attain a political goal which allegedly could not be attained by ordinary, lawful means, within the context of the established constitutional order.”<sup>6</sup> As noted by the UN Secretary-General, “any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians and non-combatants, with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from any act.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus understood, terrorism is a fact of life for many of the world’s civilians who find themselves caught up in situations of armed conflict.<sup>8</sup> The case studies document widespread instances of such acts of violence, with particularly grave humanitarian consequences in Afghanistan, Colombia, Sudan, and northern Uganda. However, terrorism results in human rights abuses in all of the



countries studied. Indeed, “terrorism is in itself a direct attack on human rights and the rule of law,” remarks Kofi Annan, adding that “If we sacrifice them in our response, we will be handing victory to the terrorists.”

That said, the degree of connectedness between terrorism as a daily reality for civilians at the local level (“small t” terrorism) and terrorism with a global reach (“Capital T” terrorism) varies considerably. Afghanistan is on the frontline in the Global War on Terror, and “the shadow of GWOT [has] become a major defining factor in the operating environment of aid agencies.” In Colombia, by contrast, the GWOT connection alleged by Colombian authorities and their US patrons is widely perceived to be overstated. Situated between the two is the Sudan, where the one-time residency of Osama bin Laden and the country’s suspected involvement in the bombing of US embassies in the 1990s establish a “Capital T” connection. Even in Sudan, however, our study concluded that “Apart from the Sudanese government’s cooperation with the USA on Al-Qaeda . . . there was little perceived connection [with] the war on terror—people felt that the latter was something distant.” We also found that “The global war on terror has had a less direct impact upon humanitarian assistance in Uganda than in other countries.”

The relative role of terrorism is further complicated by the reality that conflicts resulting in civilian distress and abuse usually have multiple causes and evolve over time. The conflict in Colombia is three wars wrapped in one: a war on insurgency, a war on drugs, and a war on terrorism. The packaging has evolved along with the conflict: there is a large element of opportunism in how the Uribe administration in Bogotá and the Clinton and Bush administrations in Washington have presented the conflict. In Afghanistan as well as Colombia, the battle against illicit trade in narcotics looms large, even though success in each instance will doubtless be viewed through a counter-terrorism, rather than a counter-narcotics lens. Lower profile conflicts, however, are not necessarily more unidimensional. Our case study on northern Uganda describes how exploitation of natural resources—a recurrent cause of internal armed conflict—blurs with traditional cattle-rustling and historical tensions between nomads and pastoralists, resulting in devastation for civilian populations.

The politicization of the nomenclature of conflict is also evident in Sudan. “Unlike in some other countries such as Uganda and Burundi,” notes our case study, “neither the rebels nor the Janjaweed militias have been labeled terrorists, although the Janjaweed are clearly engaged in a campaign of terror against civilians, supported by the government.” One suspects that cooperation by Khartoum on terrorism issues muted Washington’s use of

the term terrorism, as also the sustained application of the concept of genocide to events in Darfur. People in conflict have their own understandings of terrorism. “A group of young men in Khartoum,” interviewed for the study, “felt that the actions of the West in Iraq and the killing of Palestinians were the real acts of terrorism.” Interviewees in Colombia expressed similar sentiments about the US, citing abuses in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib to substantiate their view.<sup>9</sup>

**SECOND**, terrorism is clearly a useful analytical concept for describing a daily reality faced by many civilians around the world. It is relevant to understanding the vulnerability of rural Ugandans to the very specific abuses imposed by the LRA, no less than of Afghans to terrorism with a more global reach. The category fits well in Burundi, where, locked in a terrorist/counter-terrorism struggle, the country’s armed forces and its insurgents “have willfully killed civilians and committed other atrocities” in violation of international law. However, terrorism is not an all-purpose explanation for today’s conflicts, nor should it become the overriding determinant in the allocation of international resources. In particular, the indiscriminate use of the GWOT label demeans the terrible conditions that people have been living under year in and year out for decades.

While permutations vary from setting to setting, the problems evident in the various conflicts examined are essentially structural. In Colombia, many of those interviewed are actors in a decades-long drama of impoverishment and marginalization. “Before 9/11, the guerrillas were recognized as political counterparts to the State,” noted one analyst. In the aftermath of 9/11, they were beyond reach as the government had basically deprived itself, and others, of the possibility of dialogue with them. US policy has taken a similar approach, augmenting its pre-existing list of foreign terrorist organizations and declaring interactions with terrorists to be off limits. In Colombia, this approach has impeded US ability to support the paramilitary demobilization plan and even, it seems, to negotiate for the release of US contractors held hostage by the FARC.

The other country case studies confirm similar dynamics. One interviewee in Sudan observed that the “either you’re for us or against us” stance has left little room in the debate for moderate Muslims. An OCHA employee in Sudan lamented that the Manichean formulation of the war on terrorism had “closed avenues for dialogue between countries” and obscured any middle ground. A recurrent observation in the country studies is that playing the terrorist card reduces opportunities for negotiation and the pacific settlement of disputes, narrowing the options of governments to their own disadvantage.

A number of individual interviewees and several focus groups took exception with the prevailing approach to terrorism as a problem to be confronted by “war,” rather than as a law enforcement challenge to be tackled through national and international judicial institutions. Our northern Uganda research found that the Ugandan government had used the US classification of the LRA as a terrorist organization “to focus on the military defeat of the rebels as the primary strategy for ending the war—at the expense of peace negotiations and an amnesty process.” In global perspective, terrorism has clearly strengthened the extremes and made the moderate middle ground less tenable.

A recent illustration of the narrowed options available under the prevailing terrorism paradigm is provided by the challenge of dealing with the needs of Palestinians following the election victory in late 2005 of Hamas, a group classified by both the US and the European Union as a terrorist organization. In June 2006, press reports indicated that “A European proposal to provide aid for Palestinian health care has stalled because of concerns by the Bush administration that the plan may violate an American ban on paying salaries to a Hamas government.” The extent to which a humanitarian crisis even exists is at issue. The Europeans, reinforced by data from UN organizations, hold that it does. The US denies the humanitarian crisis, claiming instead, in the words of a senior administration official, that “There is a political and security crisis, and the Hamas government has to make some responsible decisions about how to handle it.”<sup>10</sup> The Israeli minister of health has showed greater flexibility in trying to avoid a worsening humanitarian situation, terrorism concerns notwithstanding.<sup>11</sup>

In a more generic sense, the infiltration of political judgments into the appraisal of humanitarian need is a recurring problem: witness, for example, UN Security Council debates on the imposition of sanctions on various countries.<sup>12</sup> A US observer has concluded that: “The war on terror is a false metaphor that has led to counterproductive and self-defeating policies. . . . An endless war waged against an unseen enemy is doing great damage to our power and prestige abroad and to our open society at home.”<sup>13</sup>

On balance, our studies suggest that the effects of the tying of terrorism to humanitarian and human rights work have been more negative than positive, distorting perceptions of the issues and distracting from efforts to address them. To be sure, in the six countries studied, a number of modest positive impacts on the humanitarian enterprise from the connection to terrorism were observed. These include wider awareness of the vulnerability of civilians and of the obligations of belligerents to assist and protect them or to allow other institutions to do so. In some in-

stances—Afghanistan is one—the desire to combat terrorism has generated additional levels of international resources. In Afghanistan and Colombia, however, the assistance provided has been disproportionately security and military in nature, leaving many *human* security priorities unaddressed. Some interviewees in both settings expressed the view that counter-terrorist strategies pursued under the GWOT banner have in reality only fueled terrorism. One person interviewed in Sudan expressed the view that the war on terrorism had made the United Nations itself more vulnerable because it is now seen as part of this war and, therefore, a legitimate target.<sup>14</sup>

**THIRD**, terrorism puts states on the defensive. It is often perceived as threatening their very survival. Terrorists put pressure on a state’s constitutional processes, which may not prove equal to the test. The pressures are evident in Colombia’s own executive, where the constitutional court and the office of the ombudsman have both questioned fundamental policies: the government’s denial of the existence of an internal armed conflict, its obligations to the displaced, and its ground rules for the demobilization of paramilitaries. Similar pressures are also evident in US discussions regarding the rebalancing of national security and individual civil liberties in the creation of the USA Patriot Act in late 2001 and its extension in 2006.

States are not only the victims of terrorism; they may be perpetrators as well, either directly, or through proxies (e.g., the Janjaweed in Darfur, the paramilitaries in Colombia). Foreign governments may also be linked to state violence: negatively through political, financial, technical, and material assistance or more constructively by pressing governments under duress to abide by international norms. The US role in Colombia offers examples of each, with the US providing major flows of military assistance but also seeking to promote a culture of respect for human rights within the Colombian military. The Ugandan government has also encouraged and facilitated the creation of local militias to protect the civilian populations.

Where non-state actors are disinclined to abide by international norms, the resulting asymmetry can tempt states themselves to cut corners in meeting their own obligations. However, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977 impose obligations on state and non-state actors alike. Sensing the value of affirming such norms, some 30 non-state actors have renounced the use of anti-personnel mines.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, non-state actors alienate civilian populations at a cost to their political objectives—witness the revulsion against the FARC in Colombia or against the Lord’s Resistance Army in northern Uganda.

A telling example of the trade-offs faced by political ac-

tors and their outside backers emerged during the writing of this report. “Militia loyal to sharia courts,” the African Union reported in June 2006, “wrested control of Mogadishu on Monday from a self-styled anti-terrorism coalition of warlords, widely believed to be backed by Washington, after a three month battle that killed 350 people.”<sup>16</sup> Defending a failed policy, officials in Washington are quoted as saying that the US will “support anyone fighting terrorism.”<sup>17</sup> The pursuit of terrorism irrespective of consequences is reminiscent of Afghanistan, where broad support for the US-led war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban has been undercut by the lack of consultation with village leaders in the execution of raids. The elevation of peace over justice (“Justice is a luxury we cannot afford,” President Karzai is quoted as saying) and the retention of warlords in positions of authority has drawn widespread criticism both among the Afghan people and in the wider international community.

**FOURTH**, terrorism and efforts to counteract it have specific, discernible, and recurring impacts on the humanitarian enterprise. These include increased unwillingness on the part of belligerents to allow organizations to carry out their mandates, stepped up efforts at manipulation and control, and reduced space for advocacy. Our case studies offer abundant and instructive instances of each.<sup>18</sup>

Assistance and protection work require regular access to civilian populations in need. This is essential both for information-gathering for program design and for the conduct of programs themselves. The sensitivity of access to conflict zones is evident in Colombia. FARC—at the time of our research in early 2006—had requested all aid and rights agencies to exit a particular area. They sought freedom for their tactical operations in places that were at the same time the areas of maximum need among imperiled civilians. Similarly, Sudanese authorities, citing security concerns, have regularly denied access to Darfur for humanitarian personnel, to the UN’s highest humanitarian official and most recently to a UN peacekeeping force authorized by the UN Security Council.

Terrorism and efforts to counteract it also breed suspicion. “The readiness of the government of Uganda to use the ‘terrorist’ label has . . . affected the ability of the NGOs to operate freely, particularly in the North.” (The same agencies operate without difficulty in the South, where there is no internal armed conflict.) “The government makes references to ‘the NGOs in the north who are involved in supporting terrorists’ but has yet to specify who these are.” Suspicions such as these, recurring in various country settings, lead to the scapegoating of humanitarian and human rights groups, undermining their credibility and undercutting their safety. Incriminating but also overblown allegations about the extent to which

NGOs are implicated in supporting terrorism have come from high places, including the president and members of the Afghan cabinet, the prime minister and ranking officials in Sudan, the president in Colombia, and a senior official in the US Treasury. Ill-advised or unprofessional behavior by aid personnel on occasion appears to confirm such suspicions.

Conflicts also increase the need for advocacy—many of the problems encountered are beyond the direct capacity or competency of relief and rights agencies—but they also heighten the belligerents’ sensitivity to the efforts of agencies to enlist governments and the international community in reining in abuse. “We are in a very difficult context,” said one church leader in Colombia. “Appealing to the authorities to stop displacement is more risky than tending to the displaced.” The Khartoum authorities have kept NGOs on a short leash in Darfur, threatening to expel two agencies that testified on human rights abuses before the UN Security Council. Indictments of LRA leadership by the International Criminal Court were followed up by targeted attacks on international NGO personnel.

Efforts by the belligerents to manipulate and control the activities of humanitarian and human rights organizations increase dramatically during conflicts. “The armed actors come in and play with our programs,” laments a USAID official in Colombia, describing terrorist tactics that discourage enrollment and/or expropriate benefits. The Ugandan government has tightened oversight on NGO activities, adding several officials from the state security sector to the relevant parliamentary committee.<sup>19</sup> US authorities have argued in one specific instance that a man being detained in Guantanamo should be held as an enemy combatant in part because he worked for an Islamic relief organization.<sup>20</sup>

Canadian, US, and EU authorities have also imposed tighter oversight over the international activities of NGOs. The Canadian government has closed down several organizations reportedly channeling funds from the Tamil diaspora in Canada to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. An Executive Order issued by President Bush shortly after 9/11 prohibits transactions “with individuals and organizations deemed by the Executive Branch to be associated with terrorism.” In response, US NGOs have resisted the government’s proposed implementation guidelines as potentially harmful to their work and unlikely to accomplish the stated anti-terrorism objectives. NGOs maintain that they are not “agents for enforcement of US laws or the policies reflected in them.” In responding to the Lebanon crisis in 2006 following the Israeli invasion, they find it difficult not to deal with Hezbollah, an organization on the US list of terrorist groups, which on its own initiative is spearheading the rehabilitation and

reconstruction efforts in southern Lebanon. At the same time they were encouraged by two former senior US administration officials to join in “the race between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government to rebuild homes and lives”—on the side of the Lebanese government.<sup>21</sup>

Fifth, and finally, support for robust civil societies represents a critical international investment in the viability and vitality of the humanitarian enterprise, both in conflict countries and at the global level. The six case studies show civil societies in various stages of vitality and disarray. In the case of Colombia, the resilience of civil society is viewed as something of a “silver lining” after decades of withering violence. Legendary Sudanese traditions of hospitality to strangers and guest-friendliness across ethnic lines have been eroded by years of civil strife, both North-South and in Darfur, but still exist. In northern Uganda, groups of parents have organized to try to prevent the abduction of young people by the LRA. In Afghanistan, where NGOs and other external actors are subjected to increasing scrutiny and criticism, endogenous alternatives to social transformation are being sought through direct project agreements with communities and local tribal structures. In Burundi, through regular meetings, local NGOs help ONUB monitor human rights violations perpetrated by rebels and government forces in the rural areas. This helped the SRSF in her efforts to hold rebels, Burundian government, police, and military forces accountable for their actions.

The targeting of civil society leaders, whether from religious, labor, journalism, academic, or other sectors, is frequently employed as a weapon of war, whether by the government or non-state actors. That has been the case in Afghanistan, Colombia, northern Uganda, and Liberia, among others.

## Recommendations

**1. Understanding the drivers of conflict.** Given the complexity of conflicts that generate humanitarian and human rights needs and the varying links of terrorism to them, humanitarian organizations should give higher priority to understanding and taking into account in their strategic planning the underlying drivers of specific conflicts. Failing to do so may well result in acceptance of the “problématique” and the “nomenclature” of the conflicts espoused by one belligerent or another, thereby contributing to the continuation of the problem rather than to its resolution. The effort to understand conflicts better would have both global and country-specific aspects, as well as implications for individual agencies and for the humanitarian enterprise as a whole.

**2. Nuancing the invocation of terrorism.** Given the opportunism frequently reflected in the application of

the concept of terrorism, individual states and the international community should cultivate a more nuanced approach to the use of the concept. It is essential that they separate the assessment of humanitarian need from political judgments about a given conflict and its belligerents. In addition to approaching terrorism as a diplomatic and law enforcement challenge rather than an exclusively military task, they should craft a more balanced set of international inputs, including larger proportions of economic and human security assistance in relation to military and security aid.

**3. Reaffirming the importance of humanitarian values.** Given the inevitable rebalancing of priorities that transpires when governments and non-state actors are engaged in the pursuit of security interests, the indispensability of humanitarian and human rights values requires constant reaffirmation including in interactions with militant groups that employ terror tactics. Moreover, the practice of counterterrorism must not be pursued in ways which compromise humanitarian standards. The longer term political benefits to the belligerents from adherence to international norms should be stressed. There is arguably a role for OCHA in this area, but, given the political constraints on UN-led humanitarian action, independent coalitions also need to become engaged.

**4. Nurturing increased professionalism.** In order to increase its effectiveness in settings where terrorism is a fact of life, the humanitarian enterprise should nurture a more strategic and cohesive approach to assistance and protection challenges. A higher level of professionalism needs to be cultivated, both within individual organizations and across the enterprise as a whole, to deal with the painful dilemmas of humanitarian action illustrated in this study. Meanwhile, political officials should be held to account when they attack without due cause agencies for their presumed partiality. In the long run, there can be few real winners from such tactics.

## (c) Coherence

The third theme in our Humanitarian Agenda 2015 study centers on how humanitarian and human rights activities should relate to political-military interests and priorities in responding to conflicts. Our discussions in 2003 concluded, that: “The last few years have seen the emergence of the coherence of political, humanitarian responses as a standard template—but for the most part only in high-profile crises where the overall policy approach is driven by the Security Council or superpower interests. In lower profile crises, principled humanitarian action has a better chance of survival.”<sup>22</sup>

From the discussion among stakeholders in these meetings two basic options for humanitarian and human



rights organizations emerged: “full membership in the UN conflict-management and resolution machinery [or] some degree of separation, insulation, or independence of humanitarian and possibly human rights entities from that machinery in the interest of nurturing humanitarian space and partnerships in the humanitarian community.” Each option clearly has costs and benefits. Assessing these in the light of actual experience in the field was one of the items identified for follow-up action. The humanitarian community as a whole was urged to “Revisit the coherence-versus-independence debate with an eye to insulating humanitarian activities more effectively from association with political, military, and peacekeeping work.”<sup>23</sup>

The coherence issue has two major aspects. The first is conceptual: how should the relationship between humanitarian and human rights imperatives be understood in relation to political, peacekeeping and military frameworks? The second is managerial and operational: how should the activities of the humanitarian enterprise be organized in relation to the panoply of other actors: diplomats working to bring about peace, military and peacekeeping contingents, aid agencies working at such tasks as reconstruction, state (re-)formation, good governance, and accountability issues.

In the three years since our initial “mapping” discussions, the standard integration template has become more widely accepted by diplomatic, political, military institutions, and, to a lesser extent, humanitarian and human rights agencies. A conference on integrated missions held in Oslo in April 2005 gave broad endorsement to the concept, in effect setting aside both conceptual and managerial reservations that had been sharply articulated by many of the humanitarian and human rights officials in attendance. The conference largely accepted the approach outlined in a *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations* commissioned by a UN interagency panel and prepared by a team of independent consultants.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis of the study, and of the meeting, was on managing humanitarian and human rights issues within a larger UN political framework, rather than on protecting or insulating those interests from intrusion or marginalization.

While the integrated mission template endorsed by the meeting has won a now-established place in the firmament of contemporary theorizing about coherence, recent experience sheds new light on the tensions between humanitarian and human rights priorities and the ambient political frameworks. (Even at Oslo, criticisms were raised that the discussion was inadequately informed by

the rough-and-tumble world of daily humanitarian operations.)

The six country studies reviewed in the present round provide multiple variations on the theme of coherence. Interestingly, the number of variations exceeds the number of countries inasmuch as the studies of Afghanistan, Sudan, and Burundi encompass two models each. The country studies are rich in detail and nuance of the kind that was lacking at Oslo and other high-level discussions. In this section, we avoid the temptation to recap this

***“Once used to describe the aspiration for a higher level of concern for humanitarian and human rights principles in the context of a multidimensional response,” coherence and integration have now become “euphemisms for the subordination of principles to political objectives.”***

broad set of experiences, focusing instead on whether in each instance the results of a given approach to integration were on balance—from the standpoint of humanitarian and human rights interests—positive or negative.

We begin with Afghanistan, the grandfather and the graveyard of multiple structural variations on the coherence theme over more than a quarter-century. The conclusions of the Afghan review stand proverbial thinking about coherence on its head. That is, the analysis establishes “a negative correlation between ‘international politics,’ as in superpower involvement, and the ability of the international system to provide humanitarian assistance in a relatively principled manner.” While this conclusion may lead pragmatists to acquiesce in the sacrifice of principle for humanitarian access and operationality, our study sounds a more ominous note. Close association with the government and the US-led Coalition have undercut the effectiveness of UNAMA and the wider family of associated agencies and, looking to the future, has rendered them ill-suited to confront any major humanitarian crisis resulting from rapidly growing insecurity in major portions of the country.

The Afghan experience illustrated an important evolution in the concept of coherence itself. In its earlier incarnation under the Strategic Framework (1998-2001), coherence was espoused by humanitarian and human rights actors to achieve greater effectiveness in their work at a time when a UN political framework had yet to be established. With the advent of UNAMA, however, the humanitarian enterprise was pulled into a more political orbit, losing much of its independence and becoming associated with the Afghan government as it, like the

UN, juggled humanitarian and political priorities. Our Afghanistan case study notes, “Once used to describe the aspiration for a higher level of concern for humanitarian and human rights principles in the context of a multi-dimensional response,” coherence and integration have now become “euphemisms for the subordination of principles to political objectives.”

What particulars are adduced to substantiate the conclusion that in Afghanistan “the pluses of integration are greatly outpaced by the minuses”? A major one was that mounting and maintaining humanitarian and human rights activities were carried out within limits imposed by the UN’s overriding concern that the peace process succeed. Ranking UN political officials chose not to challenge the government on incidents of abuses against civilians and harassment of humanitarian and human rights staff, nor to send dispatches to UN headquarters in New York detailing difficulties regularly encountered by aid agencies. Our study suggests that the UN leadership did not see the value of promoting humanitarian principles and human rights as necessary ingredients of peace. Thus, greater separation from the UN’s political objectives might have allowed humanitarian and human rights activities to be pursued without fear of undercutting the peace process.

These negatives were not offset by the modest positives from the UNAMA association, for example, in the facilitation of communications among diverse UN personnel now operating under a single roof, with somewhat enhanced security. Indeed, from a humanitarian perspective, it is debatable if there were *any* benefits derived from the association. At this point in the evolution, our preliminary study concludes, the encroachment on humanitarian space within UNAMA, and, more importantly, by the Coalition and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams is largely irreversible.

Beyond Afghanistan, the other country case study experience is less stark and in a sense, therefore, less instructive—perhaps because the lower level of political concern has muted some of the trade-offs between politics and principle. Like Afghanistan, our Sudan study also examines two different frameworks: the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), operating in South Sudan, and the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the instrument of the African Union in Darfur. The former is an integrated or unified mission, within which humanitarian and human rights personnel are situated. The latter was still, as of mid 2006, a military operation without a major humanitarian component.

The experiences in Sudan suggest a balance sheet for coherence that has more positive benefits to humanitarian and human rights interests than was the case in Afghani-

stan. Because of the lower level of political priority attached to Sudan by the international community, there were fewer (but nevertheless some) examples of micro-management by donors. Operating from within an integrated mission, humanitarian officials saw an enhanced opportunity to influence political and military actors. Such was the case even though “[T]he link between humanitarian action—particularly its motivations, scale, timing, and efficacy—and external politics is certainly present in Sudan although aid agencies may not feel it as acutely as in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The major area of tension regarding coherence involved the humanitarian activities of UN peacekeeping troops in UNMIS. The troops’ Chapter 6 mission limited the extent to which they might use robust measures to protect civilian populations, but the recently signed peace agreement between the government and the SPLA reduces the likely need for force. At the same time, peacekeepers have taken on tasks such as providing direct assistance to local communities in the form of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) often without consulting humanitarian professionals and without adequate understanding of their impact on local communities. The availability of convoy escorts from UNMIS for work in areas with a strong Lords Resistance Army presence would have been seen as positive, but at the time of the study UNMIS had not deployed fully and so was unable to provide such support. The liaison between the integrated UNMIS and Sudanese authorities in the form of the government’s Humanitarian Aid Commission was also viewed by some NGOs as creating policy, political, and bureaucratic difficulties.

The review of AMIS found less interaction with humanitarian and human rights groups, some of whom were critical of the African Union group for its lack of a mandate to stop human rights violations and for the lack of knowledge on the part of its troops regarding the context into which they had been deployed. Difficulties were thus anticipated should AMIS be replaced with a UN peacekeeping force with Chapter 7 authority. At that point, a different problem might arise: the association of humanitarian and human rights activities with a coercive, and in some quarters unwanted, military presence might constitute a liability undercutting their effectiveness and safety.

In Burundi, two peacekeeping formations provided the frameworks within which humanitarian and human rights activities were situated. The African Union established the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in April 2003, three months after a ceasefire had been agreed in that nation’s internal armed conflict. Following the signing of a peace agreement in November of that year, the UN Operation for Burundi (ONUB) replaced AMIB, effective in June 2004. The passage from AMIB to ONUB

provides a typical example of the irruption of coherence in the management of a transition evolving from a confused peacekeeping apparatus to a semi-integrated mission concentrating all the aspects of the mandate given by the international community. This new format has its pluses and its minuses. The mission is credited with energizing coordination among UN system agencies and between the political/military and humanitarian agencies. Nevertheless, the temporary proximity of OCHA to the political leadership and the objectives of the mission compromised coordination between OCHA and the NGO community. After the near absorption of OCHA by the mission, the humanitarian component (but not the human rights component) was able to maintain a degree of autonomy. ONUB, having fallen afoul of the newly elected government, is phasing down operations and will leave the country at the end of 2006.

In Liberia, the UN Security Council in September 2003 authorized a peacekeeping operation with a Chapter 7 mandate, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Following elections in October-November 2005, UNMIL's mandate was extended through September 2006, with further extensions expected into and perhaps through 2007. UNMIL is similar to UNAMA in terms of the breadth and depth of integration. As in Afghanistan, OCHA was folded into the integrated mission with similar results: it became more difficult to articulate humanitarian concerns that were seen as possibly undermining the political objectives, thus subordinating humanitarian principles to the mission's *realpolitik* and provoking a crisis between UNMIL and the NGO community whose trust in the mission's coordination mechanisms rapidly plummeted. This experience was termed "a failure for nearly everybody involved."

In Burundi like in Liberia, the subordination of the HC/RC to the SRSG, and its negative consequences on OCHA's survival, has compromised the perception of impartiality and neutrality of UN humanitarian coordination. In this context, various attempts of instrumentalization of humanitarian action for short term political objectives took place in both countries resulting from integration but obviously not based on systematic policy like in Afghanistan.

The remaining two country studies do not involve issues of coherence in relation to UN peace operations. In Colombia, the political framework for international humanitarian and human rights activity is provided by Plan Colombia, a bilateral framework negotiated between the Colombian and US authorities. In northern Uganda, the interface issues involve the government of Uganda and the national military and their presence in areas controlled or contested by the Lord's Resistance Army. In each of these settings, however, the coherence conun-

drum presents itself: that is, how should humanitarian and human rights work be situated so as to enhance its independence and efficacy in relation to other actors with conflicting priorities?

Plan Colombia is "an integrated strategy to meet the most pressing challenges confronting Colombia today—promoting the peace process, combating the narcotics industry, reviving the Colombian economy, and strengthening the democratic pillars of Colombian society." Initially proposed in 1999 by then-President Pastrana, the Plan evolved in discussions with the Clinton and Bush administrations, the United States being Colombia's major patron and in the case of the Plan, its major influencer.

In the view of most humanitarian and human rights actors, Plan Colombia provides a somewhat uncomfortable and unproductive operating framework. While the Plan offers resources in substantial amounts for a variety of activities—some of which are human security priorities, including human rights protection—its overriding priorities involve military and police aid directed toward the defeat of the guerrillas. Plan Colombia has also been a point of tension between the US and other donor governments to whom UN agencies, international NGOs, and the institutions of Colombian civil society relate. Other governments have had different funding priorities and, unlike the US, have not made drug eradication in a given area a condition for funding aid projects.

The absence of a UN political or peacekeeping framework does not mean that the UN itself is altogether without a plan or a strategy. However, by most accounts the activities of its 22 individual agencies and programs do not interact with or reinforce each other in a synergistic way. In 2003 the UN sought to work with the Colombian authorities to develop a "humanitarian action plan," but the effort foundered. Our case study speculates that a single, unified entity could help counter the local perception that, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, the UN is first and foremost a US tool. Its effectiveness, too, might increase as a result of the kind of guidance that the UN Department of Political Affairs could provide to the UN system.

A number of humanitarian personnel interviewed in Colombia expressed an interest in maintaining policy and operational independence from the US government and US government aid resources. Some US NGOs have refused to seek or accept USAID funding; that approach was taken at one point by UNHCR as well. One American NGO has a non-US national in charge of its Colombia program specifically to minimize perceptions of its US connection. Several international and Colombian NGOs have accepted EU but not US funding. Some humanitarian groups wary of bilateral ties are more open to collaboration with the United Nations, the Organization



of American States, or other multilateral institutions. The context for humanitarian and human rights work in northern Uganda is provided by the Ugandan government and its army, the United People's Defense Force (UPDF). In LRA territory, the UPDF provides armed escorts for humanitarian actors (and, at times for the Tufts research team). The UN's World Food Programme, which through several implementing NGO partners has provided food rations to the internally displaced for a decade, uses armed escorts for its food deliveries. "Although there is some criticism from national and international actors regarding the close links between WFP and the Ugandan military, WFP is the only agency able to access all the IDP camps." None of those interviewed for this study felt that this collaboration compromised the humanitarian agenda or the principles of the UN agency.

Many of the humanitarian organizations that launched operations in northern Uganda as the crisis worsened also have availed themselves of UPDF armed escorts. By contrast, two well-established agencies, the ICRC and MSF, refuse to do so on grounds of principle and organizational policy. Most of those interviewed, including beneficiaries as well as aid workers, gave credit to these two organizations for successfully preserving their independence. The use of escorts raised questions not only about a perceived loss of independence but also of decreased responsiveness and added program cost. The use of military escorts in affected districts in the north constrains humanitarian access (escorts must be arranged in advance) and hinders the ability of organizations, especially smaller international and Ugandan ones, to operate and monitor projects. Moreover, by hiring escorts, aid agencies might be said to be underwriting the military.

Beyond the issue of armed escorts, some of the policies and practices of the Ugandan authorities create dilemmas for agencies. Several years ago the UPDF forcibly moved civilians into "protected camps" in order to cut off the LRA's food supply and to reduce the abduction of child soldiers. As the camps became the locus of violence against civilians, the Kampala authorities encouraged the creation of local militias to provide protection (and often to directly engage with the LRA in areas far removed from the camps). Agencies working in the camps interact with members of these militias, who are often poorly trained and supervised, lack regular salary payments, and are frequently cited as being behind criminal and violent acts affecting the local population. As in Burundi and Sudan, providing assistance could be seen as acceptance of forcible civilian relocation into camps as part of the war effort. Meanwhile, agencies and other observers are troubled by the continuation of the war, apparently fueled in part by economic interests and with no major diplomatic breakthroughs in sight.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The disparate experience with coherence reviewed in the six countries has a number of recurring themes. In each setting, humanitarian and human rights officials took seriously the task of situating their work in relation to other activities in the areas of conflict resolution, state-building, and security.

Each of the institutional frameworks had its positive and negative features from a humanitarian vantage point. The impact on the integrity and effectiveness of humanitarian and human rights activity varies from setting to setting. Despite the range of institutional permutations, the experience in Afghanistan seems to have been the most negative, in part because the high political profile of international intervention constrained the functioning of agencies. In Sudan, by contrast, there was less international interference with humanitarian work, but there was still an absence of space established vis à vis local political authorities. In Burundi and Liberia, isolated and opportunistic examples of influencing the humanitarian agenda to meet the political objectives of the transition were noted although they did not threaten humanitarian space as a whole.

The following recommendations emerge from the analysis. They are presented as preliminary findings, with an eye to their refinement in Phase 2 of the HA 2015.

1. **Bridging the cognitive gap.** Given the fact that crises with major humanitarian and human rights components generally reflect structural dysfunctions in societies, humanitarian and human rights organizations have a clear interest in the effective functioning of appropriate political and military frameworks. The fact that for reasons of principle and effectiveness they seek to differentiate themselves from those frameworks should not be viewed as a lack of interest in their success. One recurring theme of post-Cold War internal armed conflict has been the need for political attention to the root causes of humanitarian distress. There is often a cognitive gap between the UN officials dealing with political and peace missions and those involved in humanitarian and human rights action. More has to be done to bridge this gap through training on IHL and humanitarian principles for political staff and for SRSGs with UN system-wide responsibilities in major crises.

2. **Protecting humanitarian action from instrumentalization.** There is a recurrent danger in the different settings examined that humanitarian and human rights priorities will be made subservient to political objectives. Responding to humanitarian need for its own sake has rarely proven to be the driving force in international initiatives.<sup>25</sup> Some institutional separation is there-

fore recommended, either within political frameworks or, preferably, between humanitarian and human rights action and such frameworks, to allow humanitarian and human rights organizations to function with integrity. In other words, from a humanitarian perspective, maintaining a separate humanitarian entity works best to ensure that assistance and protection activities are not held hostage to political considerations. Integration should not sacrifice humanitarian and human rights principles.

**3. Un-blurring the lines.** It is important to refine the concept of integration differentiating between hot war situations (in which greater insulation or independence for humanitarian and human rights action is required) and post-conflict settings (in which there is broad agreement around the nation-building objectives and where the integration of humanitarian and human rights activities is less problematic). It is unlikely that a template for all seasons is possible. There is an indispensable role for military and peacekeeping forces in the protection of civilian populations in conflict and post-conflict settings. However, their implementation of quick impact projects and other forms of civic action, while not without value, can have negative consequences and should for the most part be avoided. The use of military escorts for aid personnel is a matter to be determined according to circumstances, likely impact, and the individual agencies involved. When the use of a military escort is tantamount to alignment with a belligerent, it should be avoided, except as a last resort. Existing IASC guidelines, which are basically sound, should be more rigorously communicated and respected.

**4. Strengthening the UN humanitarian wing.** From a management standpoint, humanitarian and human rights interests are best served by a strong UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and by SRSGs who are committed to those interests. From a policy standpoint, multilateral frameworks are in principle less politicized than bilateral ones, although UN structures themselves need protection from manipulation. In order to reinforce the attractiveness of multilateral frameworks, UN humanitarian activities should be strengthened and, particularly in emergency relief settings, provided with greater operational independence from multilateral political frameworks.

**5. Documenting the practice of coherence.** Our review suggests that while integrated peace missions are increasingly accepted as orthodoxy in policy circles, humanitarian actors within and outside the UN are concerned that their activities are expected to be situated within political frameworks. We recommend additional case study research and reflection geared to identifying points of friction and the development of safeguards that can protect the operational autonomy, or at least the

relative independence, of humanitarian—and human rights—work.

## (d) Security

At the time of our October 2003 meeting, the humanitarian community was still reeling from the shockwaves of the attacks against the UN and the ICRC in Baghdad. “Humanitarianism has suffered its own 9/11,” recalls one participant. Humanitarian emblems no longer seemed to protect. There was a feeling that GWOT was having ominous implications: new types of wars were emerging in which the unwritten social contract for humanitarian actors no longer seemed to hold. It used to be that belligerents saw an advantage in the presence of humanitarian actors because of services they provided and, sometimes, belligerents’ own interests in protecting and assisting non-combatants in the areas they controlled. In wars where mobile and hidden groups of insurgents controlled no territory and did not necessarily aspire to do so, had the presence of humanitarians become more a nuisance than an asset? Would the ability to mount humanitarian and human rights activities in conflict and peace-building settings be more subject than ever to the whims of the belligerents, who were themselves less solicitous of world public opinion?

Conventional wisdom has it that the last decade has seen a significant deterioration in the working environment for humanitarian agencies and a corresponding increase in attacks against humanitarian and human rights workers. High-profile attacks and targeted killings in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Sudan, the DRC, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere have reinforced the impression that the humanitarian profession is more dangerous and more reviled by militant groups that deliberately attack aid workers. There is little hard data to back up this impression. Are there more attacks on aid workers than, say, 15 years ago—or is it that we pay more attention to such incidents today? Are there more attacks relative to the numbers of aid workers, or fewer? Are we simply recording them more accurately?

While a few studies have attempted to collect data on such incidents,<sup>26</sup> the data itself is patchy, particularly on incidents involving national staff, and does not lend itself to a disaggregation of motives. When an incident occurs—for example, an aid worker is fired upon—it is often unclear if the attack was politically motivated, a random episode of opportunistic petty criminality, the result of a personal dispute, an attempted sexual aggression, or a case of mistaken identity. Was the individual attacked because of who s/he is, what s/he represents, what s/he does, what s/he is perceived as doing, because s/he happened to be there, or because s/he was involved in a personal, professional, or commercial dispute?

One of our objectives for including staff security as the fourth petal in our HA 2015 research was to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the political economy of attacks against humanitarian workers in conflict environments. The other objective was to look at staff security in the wider context of the security of communities affected by conflict and the protection deficits they face. As noted in the introduction, our template for examining security issues is derived from an earlier study, *Mapping the Security Environment: Understanding the perceptions of local communities, peace support operations, and assistance agencies*, which was based on case studies in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. That study identified widely differing views of security among and within three actor sets: local communities, military forces in peace support operations, and aid agency personnel. While local people think of their own need for security as encompassing—broadly—human security indicators that range far beyond physical security, and see human security as an essential ingredient in “positive” or sustainable peace, military and assistance personnel are to one degree or another preoccupied with their own safety and only secondarily with that of beneficiary populations. Hence, one theme of the report was, “Whose security?”

Our six case studies confirm the same dichotomy but with some important variations. While people in all six settings suffer from substantial deficits in human security, they are in different positions on the conflict-to-recovery axis and face different physical security and protection issues. Afghanistan and Sudan (Darfur) are in active and worsening conflict situations. Colombia and northern Uganda are more or less stable, but could deteriorate at any time. Burundi, Liberia, and South Sudan are improving but still face specific security problems. The security problems faced by civilians in these settings are all very situation-specific and are particularly dire in northern Uganda, Darfur, and Colombia. Afghanistan is paradoxical in that while the population at large suffers from a huge human security deficit, protection issues are localized and limited to certain groups such as government officials, teachers, or taxi drivers. Generally speaking, insurgents do not target their own country folk. If anything, collateral damage from coalition activities represents a higher security risk.<sup>27</sup>

As for humanitarian and human rights staff, the risks they face are equally diverse and no clear pattern emerges from the data. Sudan and—in the perception of some UN officials—Colombia are very secure for international humanitarian staff but extremely insecure for local staff. In both countries government authorities are often highly critical of international humanitarian and human rights groups. In Sudan senior government officials have described international activities as anti-Islamic, while in Colombia agencies have been specifically accused by the

head of state of “serving terrorism.” Despite such pointed allegations from those in authority, targeted attacks against international aid workers have been rare (perhaps no more than one or two killings in each country over a period of 15 years). By and large, insurgents have respected international staff, if not their emblems; however, in both countries national staff face serious security risks and have paid a heavy price. In Darfur, there is also an additional complication: national staff are not trusted by beneficiaries because they are seen to be aligned with the government, whose agenda for the region is distrustful.

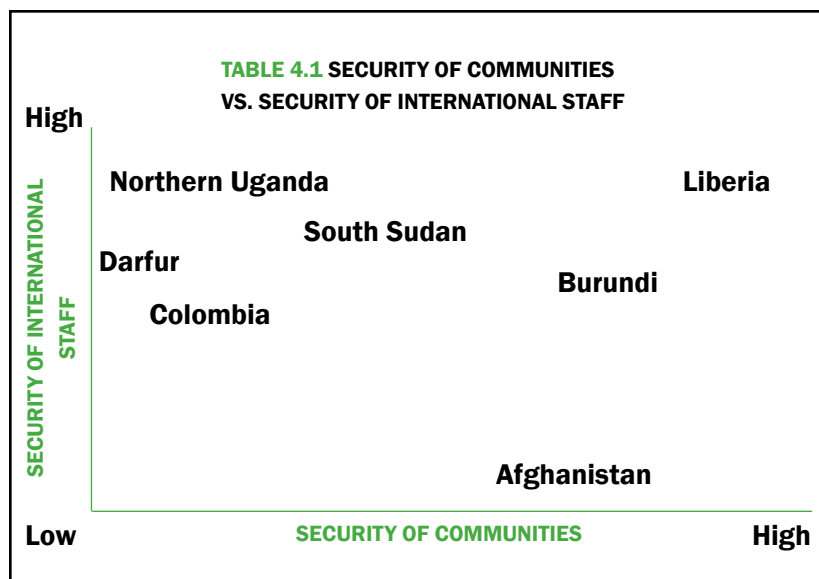
Aid agencies in northern Uganda have, for the most part, been spared direct targeting by belligerents. There are localized and specific examples to the contrary, such as attacks on several international NGOs following the release of the ICC indictments against senior LRA members in late 2005. Local populations reported that agencies such as ICRC have been effective in their recent public information campaigns to disseminate information regarding their position of neutrality. Interviewees stress that while the local population is generally at much higher risk of violence than aid agencies, the violence is sporadic and unpredictable and the situation may change at any time.

In Burundi and Liberia, aid agencies have not faced security problems in recent years. The most serious attack against international aid workers in Burundi goes back to 1999 and 2001 (when two UNICEF and one WHO staff were killed). Despite widespread insecurity, no attack against international humanitarian staff has taken place in Liberia since 2002. In fact, in these two countries there was a widespread feeling in mid-2006 that the international peace support operations are overstuffed and that the UN security establishment is overcautious and risk averse as compared to the actual security situation on the ground. Perhaps, of course, the over-presence has eased the level of insecurity.

Afghanistan is a case apart. While the other situations studied present features that are mostly context-specific, the security situation in Afghanistan is defined, beyond a number of local idiosyncratic features, by variables and processes that are much more global in nature. In fact, the issues discussed under the three other “petals” of our research have a direct bearing on the security of humanitarian staff there:

- Perceived shortcomings with respect to the universality of the humanitarian endeavor directly affect the security of humanitarian staff: the loss of neutrality and independence explain at least some of the attacks against aid workers.
- GWOT and the perception that humanitarianism is

**TABLE 4.1 SECURITY OF COMMUNITIES  
VS. SECURITY OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF**



qualitative trends. In Afghanistan before 9/11 (and in Iraq before the US-led intervention), there had been very few attacks against international aid agency staff. Today, this no longer the case. It is now no longer taboo to attack aid workers, local or international, and the price paid by the aid community has been high. Mechanisms of social protection and control—the contract of acceptability—have been deeply affected in these countries, or so it would seem. Whether the attacks are politically motivated, criminal, opportunistic, or of a personal nature, the worrying fact is that

linked to a world ordering agenda is also an important factor.

- The subordination of humanitarian action to the political designs of the UN integrated mission (which in turn supports a government with weak internal legitimacy) also contributes to a climate in which attacking UN workers—and by extension their NGO counterparts—is fair game in the eyes of insurgents.

The Afghanistan experience is particularly significant and disturbing because the link between insecurity and GWOT is the clearest. Our case study documents the heavy toll paid by humanitarian staff in Afghanistan. Not all, and perhaps not even the majority of attacks in Afghanistan can be ascribed to GWOT or to the three other factors above. Many are opportunistic and criminal. But the insurgents themselves have stated that aid workers and election workers were being targeted because they were seen as instruments of the coalition intervention. In Iraq (which we plan to examine in our next round of HA 2015 case studies), as well as in Afghanistan, compromises on principle and the blurring of lines between humanitarian and other forms of international action have dramatically increased the security risks for aid workers. As a result, the “contract” of acceptability that linked humanitarian actors to the communities they served (and to the belligerents they may also have interacted with) has been severely frayed, if not broken.

Table 4.1 above attempts to plot the areas covered in our case studies showing the differences between security for local communities and the risks faced by international humanitarian staff. With the exception of Afghanistan, the overall occurrence of attacks against aid workers in conflict situations in the countries studied is not particularly high, but it is nevertheless possible to identify some

they are taking place at all in places where aid workers were relatively secure only a few years ago. International aid institutions and personnel may contribute to the problem through a lack of understanding of the local context and inappropriate behavior. There are similarities in Sudan as well. It is possible that the banalization of attacks could spread. Once it has become “permissible” in certain quarters to attack aid workers, the lifting of the taboo could spread to other conflict situations.

Our case studies suggest that not all humanitarian and human rights personnel are equally vulnerable. In Colombia, the Sudan, and northern Uganda, international staff feel less vulnerable to attack than their indigenous counterparts. In fact, strategies of accompaniment are an attempt to use international identity, recognition, and connections to shield local leaders and organizations that are particularly susceptible to harassment from state and non-state actors. “They can kill a local doctor or nurse,” observed one interviewee in Colombia, “and nobody cares.” At the same time, our analysis suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of “international,” “national,” and “local” staff than the labels suggest. In several settings—Afghanistan is one—international personnel sometimes bring greater exposure rather than enhanced security to their indigenous counterparts.

The data also suggest that some functions within the humanitarian endeavor may be more hazardous than others. Protection activities often require advocacy vis-à-vis host political authorities, and in conflict settings even the simple act of providing food or shelter, or gaining access to do so, may require interventions with belligerents. One interviewee in Colombia noted that “Appealing to the authorities to stop displacement is more risky than tending to the displaced.” In northern Uganda, the secretive collaboration of certain NGOs with international





**Abandoned village, Agoro, northern Uganda. Photo: L. Stites**

war crimes investigations may have heightened their vulnerability to harassment, whether by the Ugandan authorities or the Lord's Resistance Army. In Sudan, the Khartoum authorities closely monitor the advocacy and information activities of international NGOs, penalizing them on occasion for their outspokenness. In Afghanistan and, to a lesser degree, in Sudan, statements by public officials casting aspersions on the integrity of NGOs create suspicion among the local populace, although, as in the case of Darfur, whether that results in greater insecurity is difficult to determine.

Finally, a comparison of the six-country experience suggests that when a conflict is linked to the global war on terror, insecurity grows—for humanitarian and human rights organizations and for international and local personnel. In Afghanistan and Colombia alike, humanitarian efforts were politicized by belligerents. In the view of assistance and protection personnel in each of those settings, the association of their efforts with US-led counter-terrorism undermined their perceived neutrality and heightened vulnerability. By contrast, in settings such as Burundi, Liberia, Sudan, and northern Uganda, which were not framed in terms of terrorism and counter-terrorism, humanitarian operations were able to proceed with greater (although by no means complete) security.

Efforts such as ours to understand and rank the vectors of insecurity for humanitarian personnel should not detract from the more important concern about the security of local civilians. Our earlier Security Mapping study noted that international aid and peacekeeping personnel, appropriately concerned about their own safety and their ability to function, often failed to understand local perceptions of what security means. An AMIS official could not have been clearer: "Our first priority is our own force protection. If Nyala was burning, we would have to protect our own personnel first and then go and help others."

## Conclusions

Our conclusions about security can be summarized as follows:

- The deterioration of security for staff, particularly in high-profile politicized conflict settings, is linked, at least in part, to the make-up of the humanitarian enterprise, i.e., to the fact that it is largely Northern in values, funding, personnel, and modes of operation. In lower-profile crises there does not seem to have been a deterioration of security for international staff. National staff, however, are often at high risk, but NGOs often do not take account of this when developing and implementing security measures. One of the more troubling developments in recent years has been the passing on of security risks from international to national staff, as if the latter were more expendable.

- The "lifting of the taboo" against harming aid workers has multiple origins. "Occidentalism," i.e. the reaction of some groups against ideas, values, and types of behavior which are seen as a western imposition, is one. The anti-Western dynamic has contributed to hostility towards aid agencies, especially in places where other agendas are also operative (economic, commercial, criminal, personal). This has led to a deterioration of the overall acceptability of humanitarian action, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

- The re-establishment of a climate of acceptability in places like Afghanistan and Iraq—and of the support and protection provided by communities to aid agencies—is likely to be a long-term process that both contributes to and benefits from the overall improvement of human security for local populations. A more universal, culturally-sensitive, and accountable humanitarian ethos could be one prerequisite for the re-establishment of a workable social contract, but this is far from proven.

- The costs of staff security are high and represent an increasing burden on the budgets of humanitarian organizations. Many organizations, in particular the UN, have become more risk averse since 9/11. This has resulted in a hardening of passive security and substantial increases in the costs of programming and monitoring in insecure areas. In places like Afghanistan, Darfur, and northern Uganda, the UN and some NGOs (but not the ICRC) have resorted to armed escorts. These result in additional costs as well as a blurring of the humanitarian profile. In some cases costs are so high that tradeoffs have to be made between the cost of safety and any presence at all in highly insecure areas;

- The costs of staff security nevertheless pale in comparison to the costs borne by civilians in terms of livelihood, land and livestock, and access to services: physical security directly affects human security.

- While some progress has been made by the UN in moving from a defensive to a more dynamic posture in security management, NGOs have been reluctant to share and coordinate among themselves on security matters. The Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) experience in Afghanistan has not been replicated in other situations, despite the obvious positive services it has provided. A rethinking of the way in which expatriate aid agencies operate in extremely insecure contexts is an urgent priority for effective humanitarian action and the security of staff. In fact, increases in security costs present opportunities to test less intrusive and more grounded approaches to humanitarian action at the community level.

- Approaches to security vary, particularly among NGOs: some seek to blend in with local communities while others maintain their international “otherness”. There is no evidence regarding the effectiveness of one approach over the other in ensuring support from local communities or the security of international personnel. This is an area flagged for further study.

- The military contingents of peacekeeping missions in the countries studied have not demonstrated a clear-cut comparative advantage in tackling protection issues. The situation has reflected mandate and resource limitations in the case of Darfur and South Sudan and weak understanding of protection issues in other cases. In our Phase 2 research we will devote more attention to this issue, particularly in the DRC, where MONUC has been more active on the protection front.

## Recommendations

**1. Understanding local perceptions of security.** Our data points to a disconnect between the security per-

ceptions of local populations and those of international aid agencies. More effort should be made by humanitarian agencies to assess and review local perceptions on security issues and to recalibrate programs accordingly. A more nuanced and data-based understanding of the various vectors of insecurity is a prerequisite to operationalizing lessons from other crises. The high cost of insecurity cannot be offset by the high costs of hard security alone. Long-term physical security will grow only from the sustainability of human security. Donors as well as humanitarian and development agencies need to factor this into relief-to-development planning.

**2. Improving security analysis.** While some progress has been made by the UN and NGOs in the collection and sharing of information on security incidents, there is very little analysis of security trends and the influence of socio-economic and cultural factors on staff security. This is an area where NGOs should be urged to collaborate among themselves and where donors would be wise to invest, for example by boosting the capacity of ANSO and similar NGO bodies—which could become routine in insecure environments—as well as of the UN Department for Safety and Security.

**3. Calibrating security measures to actual risk.** Humanitarian agencies, both UN and NGO, need to undertake more regular security reviews to ensure that security measures (security phases, need for escorts, provisions for evacuation, etc.) are commensurate with the actual security risks on the ground.

**4. Understanding the principle-security linkages.** More research is needed to document the relationship between a lowering of humanitarian principles and higher incidences of insecurity—both for communities and humanitarian staff, particularly national staff. Two contentious areas are flagged for further study: the use of armed escorts by aid agencies and working under the umbrella of, or in close proximity with, the military.

The future of the humanitarian enterprise rests in some measure on its ability to understand and address the security conundrum. For all but the most intrepid, the humanitarian imperative will continue to be trumped by concerns about staff security: that is, the claims of the conflict-affected to assistance and protection will be undercut by the vulnerability of organizations and individuals providing it. Behavior in high profile situations could not only render humanitarian action moot there, given the costs and risks to staff, but might prove contagious into lower profile settings. The humanitarian enterprise should therefore give more probing and creative attention to the issues identified here.

## 5. Thinking Ahead

The purpose of this study has been to identify issues that will affect the functioning of the humanitarian enterprise during the coming years. The data and analysis suggest that humanitarian action in 2015 will face obstacles more structural in nature and more confining in impact than many practitioners are currently aware.

The country studies contain elements of optimism and promise. With respect to the threat of instrumentalization, there is much more awareness in the humanitarian community at large about the pluses (few) and minuses (many) of association with political initiatives. One encouraging initiative, noted in the Colombia study, has been the community-wide effort by US NGOs to review the probable impacts of anti-terrorism financing guidelines proposed by the US Executive Branch. The US NGOs have recommended that their own “principles of international charity” be substituted *in toto* for the government’s. With respect to security, the shift from passive security to “risk management” helps change the focus from the safety of practitioners to a more dynamic approach that focuses on the security measures required to ensure program effectiveness.

At the same time, the humanitarian enterprise is far more vulnerable to instrumentalization by powerful political forces than is widely understood. Its practitioners are far more overextended and overmatched than most realize. While we would like to be proven wrong, we believe that failure to address and reverse present trends will result in the demise of an international assistance and protection regime that is characterized by time-tested principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

In this regard, the bottom line of the HA 2015 study confirms and reinforces the conclusions in our 2005 research. There is a major disconnect, not between the aspirations of the organized humanitarian endeavor and those for whom it is mounted but between the perceived needs of the intended beneficiaries and the assistance and protection actually provided.

In calling for higher levels of professionalism, we do not envision an approach that is more technical, bureaucratic, disengaged, calculating, centralized, or output-oriented.

Rather we have in mind a humanitarian enterprise that is more culturally-sensitive and politically savvy, more resourceful, more creative, and more committed to finding ways to put principles into action. It must also become more principled and more accountable to beneficiaries and benefactors alike.

All hard-hitting research generates at least some questions it does not answer, and HA 2015 is no exception. We identify several that may interest other research groups and that we ourselves will keep in mind as we proceed with Phase 2.

The first concerns **the political implications of effective humanitarian action**. Our study highlights the dangers of politicization and calls on all actors, including agencies and host political authorities, to exercise tight discipline over their utterances and activities. We have made similar recommendations in earlier case studies, including one on *Humanitarian Challenges in Central America: Learning the Lessons of Recent Armed Conflicts*. We concluded that study with the following question about the liberalizing impacts of humanitarian and human rights work on those societies:

*Beyond civilian populations, the major beneficiaries of the decade’s humanitarian action in the region appear to have been the revolutionary political movements. While the purpose of humanitarian action was not to undermine counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua or seated governments in El Salvador and Guatemala, humanitarian efforts appear to have helped shift the balance of political forces in favor of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and revolutionary movements in El Salvador and Guatemala. If events substantiate the suspicions of conservative forces that humanitarian action was political, have they acted inappropriately as treating it as against their interests?<sup>28</sup>*

To what extent does more recent experience suggest that humanitarian action may over time promote political liberalization? The authorities in Colombia, who as highlighted in our country study wage a day-to-day battle with humanitarian and human rights groups, may be at least partially right in their concern about outsiders. The



government of Burundi, which has requested international organizations to wind up their work, and Sudanese authorities, who have resisted Western replacements for the African Union, may harbor well-founded worries about the longer-term impact of external actors.

A second issue deserving additional research and reflection concerns **the tension between the generic and the idiosyncratic within each country challenge**. We have concluded in earlier studies that recurring challenges (ensuring humanitarian access, establishing an effective division of labor among the agencies, and so on) outweigh the particularities of individual conflicts (the tactics of a particular insurgent group or the presence of ethnic tensions). This puts a premium on lesson-learning, paired, of course, with necessary elements of adaptation and improvisation.

Practitioners often say that “every situation is unique” and then proceed to reinvent the wheel. The most recent example concerns arrangements for the UN to take over activities mounted by the African Union in Sudan. During consultations with the Sudanese government about the mandate and size of the new UN presence, UN diplomats stressed that using “all the resources at its disposal . . . would mean adding, as an extension of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in South Sudan, a multidimensional presence in Darfur. This would include humanitarian assistance, human rights observers and support for voluntary returns and longer-term recovery, as well as security.”<sup>29</sup>

We encountered no evidence that planning for the Sudan intervention is being informed by the experience of other such undertakings as regards the positioning of humanitarian and human rights activities or by an analysis of difficulties encountered over 30 years of international aid efforts in the Sudan. Our HA 2015 review suggests, based on experience in Sudan, Afghanistan, and Liberia, that some insulation of humanitarian and human rights activities from UN peace frameworks is an investment—not only in those activities but in their contribution to the broader political objectives of international presence. Researchers should continue to insist on the importance of lessons learning.

A third issue for further research involves **reinvigorating the “social contract”** between humanitarian agencies, belligerents, and communities affected by conflict. Humanitarians like to believe that more faithful observation of IHL principles would provide more solid guarantees of security for staff working in conflict situations. This may well be the case in “traditional” conflicts where the emblems of humanitarian agencies are still respected. But it is not necessarily the case in today’s more asymmetrical conflicts. In such cases, humanitarian action

risks becoming itself asymmetrical and, *de facto*, aligned with one side. The choice may be between working under the security umbrella of coalition forces or not working at all.

There is an added complication: as we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the simple perception that aid agencies are associated with the Coalition can put the security of beneficiaries and their communities in jeopardy. More evidence-based research needs to be done on the issue of symmetry and its discontents, that is, on how new GWOT-related wars affect the ability of humanitarian actors to provide assistance and protection.

A fourth issue relates to **methodologies for eliciting views** of and engaging local communities in the humanitarian enterprise. We have tested our methodology in this study and in our earlier Mapping study. But the bigger issue is how views are shaped, how local communities collect and process information, and how this affects local coping mechanisms and local traditions of humanitarianism.

A fifth area: more study is needed on improving the **balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches** to humanitarian action. Our studies show that universalist values are not *per se* the source of major tension between outsiders and insiders. Tension has more to do with personal behavior, lifestyle, arrogance, programming methods, and value systems. It is important to understand more about how the Western baggage accompanying the humanitarian enterprise influences the universal ethos that agencies and their contributors affirm. While data from the Sudan and Afghanistan suggests the importance that an international presence can have in promoting universal rather than parochial approaches to problem-solving, experience in Colombia and Burundi confirms the indispensability of a vibrant civil society in the areas of appropriateness, ownership, and accountability.

Finally, a major unresolved issue relates to the **reform of the humanitarian enterprise**, or more precisely, to the place of humanitarian action in the international community’s panoply of tools for dealing with crisis and conflict. The current trend toward an integrated response carries both policy and institutional consequences, particularly for the place and agency of the humanitarian wing of the United Nations. From a theoretical perspective, placing a function that draws its legitimacy from the UN Charter (or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) within a management structure borne of political compromise in the Security Council is questionable and possibly self-defeating. Under such circumstances, claims that UN humanitarian action can be truly neutral, impartial, and independent ring hollow.

Institutionally, the pendulum has swung in different and sometimes confusing ways, subordinating OCHA to the SRSGs while at the same time giving humanitarian coordination a surer financial and organizational footing. Paradoxically, the strengthening of OCHA may well result in the weakening of humanitarianism. Its prominence within the UN, its proximity to donors, and its visibility on the ground may weaken its independence from political agendas. In-depth reform may not be on

the agenda for now, but debate on an institutional set-up that would best guarantee principled and unbiased support for the millions living *in extremis* should continue. Various proposals, including studies by our Center, have been put on the table in the past—a single UN humanitarian agency, an internationalized ICRC, and so on. Perhaps the time has come to revisit them in the light of the experience chronicled in the present study.

## Is the Humanitarian Enterprise Equipped for 2015?

What is the outcome of our research as we conclude Phase 1 of our study, *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power, and Perceptions*? Five years after September 11, 2001, and a decade away from 2015, the humanitarian enterprise is wrestling with major challenges identified in our consultation of 2003 and explored in the present research. Humanitarian principles and action are under duress from those with power, whether major states, donor governments, host political authorities in countries in crisis, or non-state actors. Often it seems that the greater the power, the more the duress. Perceptions of affected populations, both of their own priorities and of the activities of international agencies, exist in tension with how the agencies see themselves.

With respect to the specific challenges identified for humanitarian actors, our research confirms that **a lack of universality characterizes the present humanitarian enterprise**, which is largely western and northern in approach and underwriting, in personnel and accountability. There is little that is new in our findings in this regard. Although the institutions are for the most part aware of their limitations, they are unable and/or unwilling to take the necessary steps to become more inclusive and culturally sensitive. The data suggest that while the current enterprise does by and large function as a partial safety net for the world's most vulnerable, a strategy and the political will for focusing international involvement in areas of clear comparative advantage remain lacking.

**Terrorism is a fact of life in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.** Yet violence against civilian populations did not originate with 9/11 but has been an ongoing reality for generations. Indeed, the politicization of the concept of terrorism and the paradigm of a “global war on terror” distort the reality that affected people experience and complicate the work of assistance and protection agencies. Our report breaks some new ground in documenting constraints imposed on humanitarian action in the service of GWOT and the need for, and benefits of, governments and non-state actors to respect humanitarian norms and to provide space for the work of the agencies, which must themselves achieve a higher degree of professionalism.

Our findings regarding the third issue reviewed provide evidence that **assistance and protection activities often suffer from inclusion within political frameworks**. The report therefore calls into question current orthodoxy in policy circles: that the integration of humanitarian and human rights activities within, for example, UN peace missions, is a win-win proposition. Additional case study work is needed, however, to fine-tune this conclusion and draw the necessary institutional implications.

Finally, the **security of civilian populations**, an objective in its own right, is affected by the perceived lack of universality of humanitarian activities, by the conduct of counter-terrorism measures, and by the extent to which assistance and protection work is integrated into political frameworks. The security of international and national humanitarian personnel is similarly affected by those vectors (though the latter pay a higher price than the former). Association with political-military efforts bodes ill for the future of humanitarian action in Afghanistan or, for that matter, Iraq. In other countries its longevity may be less compromised even if the blurring of lines is far from absent in lesser crises.

In short, the picture of challenges and responses is a checkered one which, in our judgment, the humanitar-

ian enterprise, optimistic by nature and can-do in orientation, is in some danger of misreading. As we see it, the humanitarian project is in far more serious straits than is widely understood or acknowledged. Projecting the data from our six-country sample onto a more global and future-oriented screen, we are doubtful that the current love affair of the international community with humanitarian action will continue deep into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a result, humanitarianism as traditionally framed and implemented may well come to occupy a smaller place on the international screen, relegated to crises, both conflict and non-conflict related, with a low political profile in which the strategic interests of the major powers are not perceived to be in play. Meanwhile the provision of assistance and protection in the Afghanistans and Iraqs—Lebanon's emergency and postwar reconstruction may soon join their number—will continue to pose major assistance and protection challenges. However, the needs in high-profile conflicts and disasters seem likely to be addressed increasingly, if at all, by an array of non-traditional actors, including international military forces, private contractors, and non-state actors rather than by card-carrying humanitarian agencies.

An evolution toward a more modest humanitarianism, delimited in scope, objectives, and actors, would not be an entirely negative development. It would reflect a realization that current global trends and forces that generate a need for humanitarian action can be neither transformed nor significantly buffered by the humanitarian enterprise itself. This does not mean that humanitarians are uncommitted to a more just and secure world but rather that they are realistic in recognizing that their first obligation is to be effective in saving and protecting lives.

As often the case with serious research, this study has produced answers to some essential questions while refining others that need more detailed attention. Both the answered and the unanswered questions from Phase 1 of our work will benefit from discussion in the various debriefings planned for the fall of 2006 as well as from further attention in additional case studies and reflection to be carried out during Phase 2 in 2006-07. As the process goes forward, we welcome input and criticism from all quarters.



**Villagers, Sarobi district, Kabul Province, Afghanistan**

1. Donini, A., Minear, L., Walker, P. 2004. "The Future of Humanitarian Action: Mapping the Implications of Iraq and Other Recent Crises" *Disasters* Vol. 26, 190-204.
2. Hugo Slim, "With or Against? Humanitarian Agencies and Coalition Counter-Insurgency", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 2004 23: 34-47
3. Donini, A., Minear, L., Smillie, I., van Baarda, T., and Welch, A. C., *Mapping the Security Environment: Understanding the perceptions of local communities, peace support operations, and assistance agencies, a report commissioned by the UK NGO-Military Contact Group, June 2005*. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.
4. See Mapping study, p 4.
5. Donini, A., Minear, L., Walker, P. 2004. "The Future of Humanitarian Action: Mapping the Implications of Iraq and Other Recent Crises". *Disasters*. Vol. 26, 197-8.
6. Hans-Peter Gasser, "Acts of terror, 'terrorism' and international humanitarian law, *International Red Cross Review*, Vol. 84, Sept, 2002, 7.
7. Keynote address at the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, Madrid, 10 March 2005.
8. Terrorism also affects people well outside of war zones—New York and London, Madrid and Mumbai come to mind—in direct and personal ways.
9. Interviewees in Afghanistan expressed their view that US violations of international humanitarian law compromised perceptions of international humanitarian organizations working there.
10. Steven R. Weisman, "Europe Plan to Aid Palestinians Stalls Over U.S. Salary Sanctions," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2006, A9.
11. In the conflict that erupted in July 2006 between Israel and Hamas in the Palestinian territories and between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, numerous commentators expressed the view that the United States, by refusing to deal directly with either Hamas or Hezbollah, had effectively dealt itself out of any diplomatic or conflict resolution role.
12. See, for example, Larry Minear et al., *Toward More Humane and Effective Sanctions Management: Enhancing the Capacity of the United Nations System* (Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1998), Occasional Paper 31.
13. George Soros, op-ed, *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2006.
14. Our second round of case studies will examine such hypotheses in the case of Iraq.
15. Geneva Call, "Chin National Front of Burma renounces the use of anti-personnel mines." Geneva, Aug. 10, 2006.
16. African Union Situation Room, Daily News Highlights, June 11, 2006. The AU reprints a Reuters dispatch from Mogadishu, "Somali government urges Islamists to hand over arms."
17. African Union Situation Room, Daily News Highlights, June 8, 2006.
18. Our case study of Afghanistan suggests that the effects of the war on terror on humanitarian and human rights activities were "immediate" and discernible, perhaps more so than in the other countries studied. This may well reflect the reality that "The US intervention in Afghanistan came squarely under the banner of GWOT. The objective was to crush the Taliban and Al Qaeda by all available means." The Afghanistan experience looms equally large in the area of coherence, as discussed in the conclusions and recommendations there.
19. The Ugandan government has arrested elected political officials and civic leaders from the North and closed down radio stations sympathetic to the opposition.
20. The person had been employed by the International Islamic Relief Organization. Farah Stockman, "Deten-

tion over charity ties questioned,” *Boston Globe*, 31 August 2006, p 1.

21. Carlos Pascual and Martyn Indyk, “In Lebanon, Even Peace is a Battle”, *The New York Times*, 22 August 2006.

22. Donini et al., op. cit., 198-99.

23. Ibid., 202.

24. Espen Barth Eide, Anja Therese Kaspersen, Randolph Kent, and Karen von Hippel, Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group. May 2005.

25. Earlier studies by the Humanitarianism and War Project have concluded that humanitarian concern is often the bridesmaid but rarely the bride.

26. A number of studies are however underway or nearing completion. Preliminary data from a forthcoming study by Adele Harmer and Abby Soddard, Center for International Cooperation, NYU, seems to indicate that if Afghanistan and Iraq are excluded the trend does not show an increase of attacks against humanitarian aid workers in the last decade. Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer, and Katherine Haver (forthcoming 2006) report “Measuring Insecurity: quantitative analysis of violence against civilian aid operations”, Center on International Cooperation, NYU and Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI. Another study is under preparation by Larissa Fast at the University of Notre Dame.

27. This finding is consistent with Mazurana, D., Stites, E., and Nojumi, N. 2004. *Human security and livelihoods of rural Afghans, 2002-2003*. Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University & United States Agency for International Development: Medford MA & Washington DC, which noted that people actually felt more secure in those areas that were considered as most dangerous by the UN security office.

28. Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1993, Occasional Paper 14, 77-78.

29. African Union, Daily News Highlights, May 27, 2006.



## Annex 1: Acronyms

The acronyms below cover this document *and* in the individual country studies, available online at [fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu).

ACPA: **Arusha Comprehensive Peace Agreement**

AMIB: African Union Mission in Burundi

AMIS: African Mission in Sudan

ANA: Afghanistan National Army

ANSO: Afghanistan NGO Security Office

AREU: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

AU: African Union

AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia

CAP: United Nations Consolidated Appeal Process

CCAI: Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral (Colombia)

CERAC: Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos

CF: Coalition Forces

CNDD-FDD: **Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie / Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie** (Burundi)

CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CSA: Chief Security Advisor

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration

DN: National Defence Ministry in Bujumbura

DO: Designated Official (United Nations)

DPKO: Department of Peacekeeping Operations

DSRSG: Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General

ECOMOG: ECOWAS Military Observers Group

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West-African States

ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (Colombia)

ENRU Environment Unit (Liberia)

ERC: Emergency Relief Coordinator

FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

FDD: Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (Burundi)

FDN: Forces de la Défense Nationale (Burundi)

FG: Focus Groups

FIC: Feinstein International Center

FNL: Forces Nationales de Libération (Burundi)

FSA: Field Security Advisor

FSO: Field Security Officer

GoSS: Autonomous Government of South Sudan

GoU: Government of Uganda

GWOT: Global War on Terror

HA2015: Humanitarian Agenda: 2015

HAO: Humanitarian Affairs Officer

HAP: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

HC/RC: Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator

HC: **Humanitarian Coordinator**

HCS: Humanitarian Coordination Section (Liberia)

HQ: Headquarters

HRPS: Human Rights and Protection Section (Liberia)

HRU: **Human Rights Unit**

HSM: Holy Spirit Movement (Uganda)

IASC: **Inter-Agency Standing Committee**

ICC: International Criminal Court

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross	SDF: Self-Defense Forces
IDP: Internally Displaced Person	SF: Strategic Framework
IHL: International Humanitarian Law	SMT: Security Management Team
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization	SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
IRC: International Rescue Committee	SRRC: Sudanese Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Commission
ISAF: International Security Assistance Force	SRSG: United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General
LRA: Lord's Resistance Army	UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
MDTF: Multi-Donor Trust Fund	UNCT: United Nations Country Team
MONUC: Mission des Nations Unies au Congo	UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
MOSS: Minimum Operational Security Standards	UNDSS: United Nations Department for Safety and Security
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding	UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme
NDA: National Democratic Alliance	UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization	UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
NRA: National Resistance Army	UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NRC: Norwegian Refugee Council	UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
NTGL: National Transitional Government of Liberia	UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund for Women
OAS: Organization of American States	UNLA: Uganda National Liberation Army
OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)	UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
OLS: Operation Lifeline Sudan	UNOB: United Nations Office in Burundi
ONUB: Opération des Nations Unies au Burundi	UNOCA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes relating to Afghanistan
ONUB: United Nations mission in Burundi	UNOCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
PNC: Popular National Congress	UPDF: United People's Defense Force (Ugandan military)
PRT: Provincial Reconstruction Team	WFP: World Food Programme
QIP: Quick Impact Project	WHO: World Health Organization
RC: Resident Coordinator	WVI: World Vision International
RCM: Red Cross Movement	
RESO: Rassemblement, Echanges et Solutions entre ONG (Burundi)	
RFTF: Results-Focused Transitional Framework (Liberia)	
RRR, or Triple R: Relief, Recovery, and Rehabilitation	
RSO: Regional Security Officer	
SAF: Sudanese Armed Forces	
SCF: Save the Children Fund	

## Annex 2: Methodology

The data collection for our research builds a composite picture of perceptions and judgments among the key players, indigenous and international, on the four issues identified. The data gathered from focus groups and interviews, together with inputs from other sources, constituted the ingredients for analysis. An initial objective was to be clear about prevailing perceptions on the various issues covered. While perceptions are important in their own right, they also provide pointers regarding the functioning of the humanitarian enterprise as presently constituted.

Given time and budget constraints, the data are not based on exhaustive sampling and statistical analysis. In conducting in-country interviews, we have utilized wherever possible indigenous NGOs and local people and have encouraged interviewers to engage in open-ended conversations devoid of externally imposed straitjackets.

We have used four instruments: for local communities in crisis areas; for aid agencies and aid workers; for other international personnel; and for personnel working for donors and aid agencies at headquarters. The first three are designed for face-to-face interviews; the fourth is an electronic questionnaire, for which roughly fifty responses have been received, plus another fifty during a focus group at CARE headquarters in Atlanta. We plan to circulate survey four more widely to aid agency and donor personnel working in headquarter offices. Preliminary data gathered through survey four in phase one reveals a diversity of opinion on the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to gaps within the current humanitarian agenda but resounding agreement that the four petals identified in this report are drastically reshaping the topography of the humanitarian landscape. Our survey instruments are available on the web. They were often used as a general guide rather than a detailed checklist.

In soliciting information and perspectives from people in countries affected by crises, we have sought a wide range of respondents including people who are not directly linked to assistance projects and people willing to express their views about how international aid has affected them, their community, and their society. Interviewees and focus group participants were selected with an eye to

a balance of factors such as socio-economic status (from destitute widows and unemployed laborers to political leaders and intellectuals), gender, religious background, ethnicity, and age. Given the limitations of the study in terms of resources and time, we have sought diversity and inclusiveness rather than demographic precision.

In discussions with humanitarian personnel in the field, we sought aid workers, both national and international, with a mix in levels of responsibility, years of service, and programmatic functions. Aid agencies represented a cross-section, including UN, bilateral, NGO, and Red Cross movement organizations. One of our instruments was designed to elicit observations from other international personnel: international peacekeeping and diplomatic personnel, employees of international commercial firms, and media representatives.

Our electronic survey was shared with personnel in donor organizations and selected UN, Red Cross movement, and NGO agency headquarters in Europe and North America. They represented a variety of responsibilities, including planning, program management, advocacy, evaluation, and constituency relations. The survey instruments sought to ensure basic consistency in the questions asked and the approaches taken on each topic and in all countries. They also helped ensure consistency when multiple interviewers were gathering data within the same country.

Despite the acknowledged limitations, we are confident that the data generated represent a large enough critical mass for key findings to emerge. We base our confidence on experience gained in similar efforts at the Feinstein International Center, including the recently completed study on perceptions of security. The knowledge and experience of our researchers, many of whom have lengthy experience of the case-study countries, has contributed to the quality of the analysis.

## Annex 3: About the Authors

**Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam** is an independent development consultant focusing on Afghanistan. She is a social scientist and specialist in gender, with expertise on civil society and community participation. She has thirteen years of experience working in south and Central Asia, primarily Afghanistan and Pakistan. She has worked for a range of donors and NGOs as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross in a number of countries. She has written extensively on Afghanistan and had numerous media interactions (TV, radio, print) raising awareness on the situation of Afghans.

**Antonio Donini** is a senior researcher at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, where he is working on issues relating to the future of humanitarian action. From 2002 to 2004 he was a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. He has worked for 26 years in the United Nations in research, evaluation, and humanitarian capacities. His last post was as Director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (1999-2002). Before going to Afghanistan he was chief of the Lessons Learned Unit at OCHA, where he managed a program of independent studies on the effectiveness of relief efforts in complex emergencies. He has published widely on evaluation, humanitarian, and UN reform issues. In 2004 he co-edited the volume *Nation-Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace, and Justice in Afghanistan* (Kumarian Press) as well as several articles exploring the implications of the crises in Afghanistan and Iraq for the future of humanitarian action (see <fic.tufts.edu>).

**Greg Hansen** is an independent consultant specializing in humanitarian action in armed conflict. He has consulted widely in the Caucasus, south Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere for a variety of international NGOs, UN agencies, and the Red Cross Movement on interactions between aid and conflict and protecting humanitarian space. He has conducted training sessions for UN OCHA and the Canadian Forces on civil-military coordination aimed at preserving the distinctions between military and humanitarian actors. Hansen, a Canadian, was co-author with Robert Seely of the Humanitarianism and War Project's *War and Humanitarian Action in*

*Chechnya* and author of *Humanitarian Action in the Caucasus: A Guide for Practitioners*.

**Larry Minear** was co-founder of the Humanitarianism and War Project in 1991 and its director at the Feinstein International Center in Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy from September 2000 until the program's closing in June 2006. He has worked on humanitarian and development issues since 1972, managing a post-conflict reconstruction program in the Sudan for an NGO, conducting advocacy activities in Washington DC, and serving as a consultant to NGOs, governments, and UN organizations. He has conducted research on many humanitarian emergencies and has written extensively for specialized and general audiences. His most recent books are *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries* (Kumarian, 2002), a review of the work of the Humanitarianism and War Project, and, with Ian Smillie, *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World* (Kumarian, 2004), a study of the political economy of international assistance and protection activities.

**Tasneem Mowjee** has been involved in humanitarian aid work and research for thirteen years. Since completing a PhD on UK government and EC funding for the humanitarian aid activities of UK NGOs in 2001, she has undertaken a range of research work on tracking humanitarian aid flows and humanitarian funding mechanisms. She was a co-author of *Uncertain Power: the changing role of official donors in humanitarian action* (Overseas Development Institute, 2002). She contributed a chapter each on the campaign to increase access to HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa and the Consumer Association in *Globalizing Civic Engagement: Civil Society and Transnational Action* (2003). Most recently she has conducted a review of OCHA's emergency response funds in five countries. She is currently a researcher with the UK-based research organization Development Initiatives.

**Karina Purushotma** joined the Feinstein International Center as a Researcher with the Humanitarianism and War Project. Prior to this, Karina worked as a Program Manager for a US-based NGO seeking to engage youth in service-learning. She has also worked with children and

youth in several international locations, most recently in Bosnia and Kosovo, using the performing arts to engage audiences in interactive discussions on themes such as domestic violence, the hereditary nature of prejudice, the need for gender partnership, and more. She has authored several youth leadership curriculums and frequently facilitates trainings. Karina is part of the Working Group for the Ratification of CEDAW and is co-author of *CEDAW: Rights that Benefit an Entire Community*. She holds a BA from UC Berkeley and an MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

**Ian Smillie** has lived and worked in Africa and Asia. He was a founder of the Canadian development organization InterPares and its Executive Director from 1998 to 2001. During 2000 he served on a UN Security Council Panel investigating the links between illicit weapons and the diamond trade in Sierra Leone. His latest books are *Patronage or Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises* (Kumarian, 2001); *Managing for Change: Leadership, Strategy and Management in Asian NGOs* (with John Hailey, London, 2001) and *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World* (with Larry Minear, Kumarian, 2004). Ian Smillie serves as a research coordinator on Partnership Africa Canada's Diamonds and Human Security Project and is an NGO participant in the intergovernmental "Kimberley Process" which is developing a global certification system for rough diamonds.

**Elizabeth Stites**, MA, MALD, is a Senior Researcher in Conflict and Livelihoods at the Feinstein International Center. Her areas of interest include household-level coping strategies, shifts in land tenure during and after conflict, changes in intra-household dynamics as a function of conflict, and the link between human security, protection, and livelihoods. Stites currently heads the livelihood portion of the Center's multi-country project on northern Uganda, South Sudan, and Eastern Uganda. Earlier projects for the Feinstein International Center included field work in Afghanistan in 2002 and 2003 to examine food security, livelihoods, and human security; a review of non-food emergency food security assessments mechanisms; an analysis of changes in household livelihood strategies in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the end of the Cold War; and a review of USAID/OFDA livelihood interventions. Prior to joining the Feinstein Center as full-time research faculty in early 2006, Stites worked as a consultant on a variety of UN, NGO, and Tufts projects. She has published international reports on livelihood and human security in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and northern Uganda; external evaluations of UN and donor policies and programs; and various journal articles and book chapters. Stites received a MALD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (2001), a M.A. from the University of Cape Town, South Africa

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