Humanitarian Exchange

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About HPN

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We last featured the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories in November 2004 – nearly five years ago. Since then, the humanitarian situation has steadily worsened. Continuing violence has killed, injured and displaced many and caused the widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. Expansion of the controversial barrier wall and the related 'closure system' has undermined livelihoods, exacerbated poverty and caused a serious deterioration in basic services. These restrictions have contributed to an unemployment rate of over 40%, and associated low self-esteem, depression and family violence. As the overview article by Philippe Lazzarini of OCHA makes clear, the crisis in the oPt is not just a humanitarian one: it is a crisis of human dignity.

This issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* focuses on this human dignity crisis. Articles set out the current situation in the oPt and outline the impact of the barrier and the closure system. Rolf Holmboe, Denmark's representative to the Palestinian Authority, describes his government's programme to enable municipalities to provide basic services and support community development. Other articles look at UNDP's efforts to help individuals and communities to reclaim their agency and dignity, the hidden crisis of displacement, the impact of human rights group B'Tselem's distribution of video cameras to Palestinian civilians and a community-based child protection programme instigated by Save the Children.

Articles in the policy and practice section include an examination of civil–military relations in natural disasters, methods for measuring the socio-economic impact of post-disaster shelter programmes and the challenges of emergency nutrition programming in Eritrea. Others focus on a new decision-making tool for use in complex humanitarian environments, the question of whether chronic conflict and recurrent disasters exacerbate social divisions or strengthen cohesion, the ways in which the media influence charitable giving and the lessons learned from the deployment of UN and EU hybrid protection forces in Chad.

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

Putting dignity at the heart of the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory

Philippe Lazzarini, Head of OCHA oPt

The Gaza Strip in early 1992: the first *intifada* is yet to end, and intensive diplomatic efforts – which would lead later to the Oslo Accords – are ongoing, raising hopes for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Although that period was violent, with daily mass demonstrations, confrontations, arrests and casualties, it was at least possible to dream of a better future. Returning 16 years later, in 2008, with the media and the international community highlighting a major humanitarian crisis in Gaza, I was prepared for the worst. However, unlike Somalia, where I had just ended my last assignment, the population in Gaza was not on the brink of massive starvation, nor were there hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people. This is a different type of crisis, one which is not immediately apparent in this dense urban landscape. The population is enduring a massive assault on its human dignity: 1.5 million children, women and men are gradually losing the freedom to live their lives as they wish – a population locked into one of the most densely-populated places on Earth. While the situation in the West Bank is better, there too there are some troubling signs of an impending crisis.

this is a different type of crisis

The current crisis

The current crisis in Gaza was triggered by the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 and the unprecedented blockade imposed by Israel. The blockade marked the peak of a gradual process of isolation that started in the early 1990s with the imposition of a general closure, which forced Gazans to obtain special permits to leave the Gaza Strip.[1] Now in its third year, the blockade has resulted in a degradation in the living conditions of the entire population. Approximately 120,000 jobs have been lost as a result of severe import restrictions and an almost total prohibition on exports. Three-quarters of the population is affected by poverty and food insecurity. Access restrictions have also led to a steady decline in the infrastructure and the quality of services in vital sectors such as health, water and sanitation and education.

The Gaza population's distress is compounded by the lack of civilian protection. Israel's Cast Lead military operation of 27 December 2008–18 January 2009 provides a devastating example. The bulk of the 1,383 fatalities were civilians not involved in the fighting, including over 330 children.[2] Tens of thousands were injured or traumatised. Enduring three weeks of daily bombardment from land, sea and air, the population had nowhere to seek refuge: borders were sealed and safe havens non-existent since even UN premises and schools, where civilians had taken shelter, were hit by direct shelling.

The widespread destruction to homes, infrastructure and productive assets during the offensive has further deepened poverty and undermined the chances of economic recovery, if and when conditions improve. Locked in by a medieval siege whose enforcers decide what items will be allowed in and what people will eat, Gaza has become a 'humanitarian welfare society' supported by the international community. At the same time, despite billions of dollars pledged at the Sharm El Sheikh donor conference in March 2009, homes and schools cannot be repaired due to the ban on the entry of construction materials. Locked in and isolated, Gazans are collectively prevented from building their own future. Women and children in particular are paying a high price, as shown by a recent UN survey revealing an increase in the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence. Possible factors behind the increase in domestic violence include the unprecedented levels of trauma and stress that emerged after the conflict, as well as the growing number of male heads of households who have lost their homes and jobs.[3]

The internal Palestinian divide between Hamas and Fatah has increased the burden on an already exhausted population. At least 360 people have been killed in factional violence since May 2007. Individuals suspected of affiliation with opposition factions have allegedly been the victims of arbitrary arrests, torture and extra-judicial executions. Schools and hospitals have been disrupted by strikes and political infighting. Meanwhile, Hamas is extending its control over every level of the social fabric. 'Morality screening' is starting to impact upon various sectors of society, with NGOs being requested to separate female from male staff.

Albeit on a different scale and intensity, West Bankers too, including those living in East Jerusalem, are seeing their freedom to live and develop their life as they wish being

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1 As part of this process of closure, in 1995 Israel built a perimeter fence to separate the Gaza Strip from Israel. This was rebuilt and strengthened during the second *intifada*, which began in September 2000. For most of the second *intifada*, permits to enter or leave Gaza were limited mainly to 'humanitarian cases'.

2 See OCHA, 'Locked In: The Humanitarian Impact of Two Years of Blockade on the Gaza Strip', August 2009.

3 UNIFEM/UN Inter-Agency Gender Task Force, 'Voicing the Needs of Women and Men in Gaza Beyond the Aftermath of the 23 Day Military Operation', May 2009, http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail. php?ProductID=133.

eroded as a result of Israeli policies. Restrictions have significantly limited the opportunities for economic and urban development. A recent study by OCHA reveals that, in Bethlehem governorate, the land available for Palestinian development amounts to only 13% of the territory. The remainder, which is under direct Israeli control, has been allocated for the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements, or declared closed military areas or nature reserves.[4] In East Jerusalem likewise, although 30% of land has been zoned for settlement housing, only 13% has been zoned for the Palestinian population. The extent of the land available for Palestinian development has remained unchanged for decades. As a consequence, about 30% of houses have been built without permits, and between 60,000 and 100,000 people are at risk of displacement.[5]

The Barrier, which Israel began to construct in 2002 following a campaign of suicide bombings, is another component in a system which restricts Palestinian space. Once complete, it will isolate approximately 9.5% of the West Bank, while its attendant permit and gate regime restricts access to agricultural land and obliges Palestinians living between the Barrier and the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line) to apply for permanent residence permits just to remain in their own homes. The Barrier, together with access and movement restrictions and policies restricting the use of land, has had devastating economic and humanitarian consequences. In 2005, under the auspices of then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached an Agreement on Access and Movement (AMA), which included an Israeli commitment to reduce the number of obstacles (checkpoints and roadblocks) throughout the West Bank. At the time of the agreement there were some 390 such obstacles; by June 2009 this number had increased to 610, as counted by OCHA and corroborated by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).[6]

Recently, the Israeli authorities have taken steps to ease the flow of Palestinian traffic into a number of West Bank cities, reducing travel time. Early reports suggest that these measures have had a positive impact on commercial life in some cities. However, this has taken place in conjunction with the entrenchment of some of the mechanisms used to control and restrict Palestinian movement, including the expansion of the alternative ('fabric of life') road network

designated solely for the use of Palestinians, and the expansion of key permanently-staffed checkpoints. In some cases, these measures have eased access: however, they exact a price from Palestinians in terms of land loss, disruption to traditional routes and the deepening fragmentation of West Bank territory.

A close look at a West Bank map shows that most access restrictions are strategically located to protect Israeli settlements and settlers. The Israeli settler population has reached almost half a million, 190,000 of whom live in East Jerusalem. The Barrier will place 80% of the settler population on the western, 'Israeli' side, with the remainder connected to Israel through a road network restricted to Palestinian use. Settlement is a key concern, not only because it reduces the space available for Palestinian use and movement, but also because the Israeli authorities have systematically failed to protect Palestinians from settler violence. In summer 2008, for example, I met an 82-year-old man in Hebron. His face was bleeding and he was crying, having been humiliated by Israeli children who were preventing him from accessing his land. They put up tents in his olive and almond fields and threw stones at any Palestinians attempting to reach the land or simply pass by. According to the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, over 90% of investigations into settler violence are closed without an indictment filed against the suspect. Many victims do not even file a complaint at police stations because stations are located in settlements.[7]

settlement is a key concern

Restrictions on the humanitarian response

Locked into Gaza, denied space and access in the West Bank, at risk of house demolition in East Jerusalem, their basic rights denied and facing daily humiliation – all of these problems provide fertile ground for a prolonged humanitarian crisis. In this protracted and highly politicised conflict, further complicated by the internal Palestinian divide, addressing humanitarian needs in an impartial, neutral manner has become a daily challenge.

This is particularly true in Gaza, where the Israeli authorities have reduced to a bare minimum the list of items considered as humanitarian assistance. Key donors have linked funds to compliance with a strict 'no contact' policy with Hamas; by contrast, the latter is increasingly eager to take an active role in the coordination of aid delivery. To address this dilemma, humanitarian partners, with the support of some UN member states, have developed a framework for the provision of assistance in Gaza. This document spells out the conditions necessary to ensure that basic needs can be addressed in an impartial and neutral way.[8]

4 See OCHA, 'Shrinking Space: Urban Contraction and Rural Fragmentation in the Bethlehem Governorate', May 2009, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_bethlehem_shrinking_space_may_2009_english.pdf.

5 See OCHA, 'The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem: Understanding the Phenomenon of "Illegal" Construction', April 2009, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_planning_crisis_east_jerusalem_april_2009_english.pdf.

6 This figure does not include the approximately 400 kilometres of the Barrier already constructed, the physical obstacles protecting the Israel settler community in central Hebron (H2), and the 60–80 flying checkpoints which are recorded weekly. See OCHA, 'West Bank Access and Movement Update', May and June 2009, http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_2009_05_25_english.pdf and http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_access_2009_june_english.pdf.

7 Yesh Din, 'A Semblance of Law: Law Enforcement upon Israeli Civilians in the West Bank', June 2006.

8 The full text of the Framework on the Provision of Minimum Humanitarian Assistance in Gaza can be found at http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_humanitarian_framework_english.pdf.

There is still much distrust between humanitarian organisations and the Israeli authorities. However, the atmosphere and mindset can change if there is a real commitment to address the fate of the affected population, regardless of any political agenda. It is time for a sincere and substantial dialogue with the Israeli authorities at every level. Humanitarian organisations should avoid being trapped in a hostile, politicised debate. In turn, the Israeli authorities should view criticism as constructive, and designed to improve respect for the rights of the civilian population.

The humanitarian response, however important, is not the solution, as it perpetuates a humiliating feeling of dependency on the part of the Palestinian population towards the international community. Palestinians deserve much more than food parcels: nothing will substitute for a political solution which lays the ground for future peace, stability and prosperity. Unfortunately, time is running out and frustration is high. All the ingredients for a new round of violence are in place. Poverty, isolation and humiliation are recipes for extremism. 'Unlocking' Gaza by opening its crossing points and freeing up space for Palestinian development in the West Bank are the first steps towards averting a future explosion of violence. Most of all, they are critical in restoring the dignity of the population, and the Palestinian people's ability to hope and dream for a better future.

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The Barrier: implications and prospects

Ray Dolphin, OCHA

In mid-2002, following a campaign of suicide attacks by Palestinian militants, the Israeli government approved the construction of a Barrier to prevent suicide bombers from entering the country.[1] Five years on, approximately 58.3% is complete, a further 10.2% is under construction and 31.5% is planned. The Barrier is made up of fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads and a buffer zone. Around 30km consists of 8–9-metre-high concrete slab segments which are connected to form a wall, notably in urban areas such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem. When completed, approximately 85% of the route will run inside the West Bank and East Jerusalem, rather than along the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line). Although the Israeli authorities state that it is purely for defensive purposes, the Barrier encircles 80 Jewish settlements, physically joining them to Israel. The total area between the Barrier and the Green Line amounts to 9.5% of the West Bank. The estimated cost of the complete Barrier is $3–4 billion.

The ICJ opinion
The Barrier intrudes deep into the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). It was the legal implication of this intrusive route, not the Barrier itself, which was the subject of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of 9 July 2004.

In its opinion, the ICJ recognised that Israel 'has the right, and indeed the duty, to respond in order to protect the life of its citizens [but] the measures taken are bound nonetheless to remain in conformity with applicable international law'.[2] The ICJ stated that the sections which ran inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violated Israel's obligations under international law. The ICJ called on Israel to cease construction of the Barrier 'including in and around East Jerusalem'; dismantle the sections already completed; and 'repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto'. The ICJ also called on Israel to 'make reparations for the requisition and destruction of homes, businesses and agricultural holdings' and 'to return the land, orchards, olive groves, and other immovable property seized'.[3] The court also obligated member states not to recognise the illegal situation created by the Barrier, and to ensure Israel's compliance with international law. Although this is a non-binding advisory legal opinion, on 20 July 2004 the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved Resolution ES-10/15, which demanded that Israel comply with the ICJ opinion.

The Barrier's impact on urban areas
Continuing construction of the Barrier inside the West Bank is not only contrary to the ICJ advisory opinion, but is also having a devastating humanitarian impact on Palestinian cities, towns and villages. The West Bank population depends on East Jerusalem for specialised medical and educational services; for work, social and family relationships; and for worship at the Al Aqsa Mosque and Christian holy sites. The Barrier has become a *de facto* border, severing historic religious, social and economic ties between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. Neighbouring Bethlehem is cut off from Jerusalem, restricting its potential for residential and industrial expansion. If construction goes ahead as

1 Since 2004, the number of suicide bombings has decreased. In 2005, Palestinian militant groups declared a ceasefire on suicide bombings in Israel.

2 ICJ, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004*. The full text of the ICJ opinion, from which all of these quotes are taken, can be found at www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=4&k=5a&case=131& code=mwp&p3=4.

3 Following General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/17 of January 2007, the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (UNRoD) was established to record, in documentary form, the damage caused by the Barrier. UNRoD receives, processes and reviews claims by people who have sustained material damage as a result of the Barrier; by June 2009, more than 1,500 claims forms had been collected.

planned in the western part of the governorate, the rural hinterland will be cut off, further reducing Palestinian access to land and water resources.4

'Seam Zone' communities: living in a closed area

One consequence of what the ICJ described as the Barrier's 'sinuous route' is that approximately 35,000 West Bank Palestinians will be located between the Barrier and the Green Line, in addition to the majority of the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Some 10,000 Palestinians in the northern West Bank have been in a bureaucratic and social limbo for five years, since the area between the Barrier and the Green Line was declared closed by military order in October 2003. Palestinians residing in the closed area (or 'Seam Zone') require permanent residence permits just to continue to live in their own homes, a requirement which is not imposed on Israeli settlers living in the area.

As their centre of life is located on the 'Palestinian' side of the Barrier, children, patients and workers have to pass through checkpoints to reach schools, medical facilities and workplaces, and to maintain family and social relations. These checkpoints generally close at night, posing problems in the case of medical emergencies and for expectant mothers, who often leave the area weeks before delivery to ensure access to proper care. Social and family life is also affected, as relatives and friends who want to visit Palestinians in the closed area require difficult-to-obtain visitor permits.

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the Barrier is having a devastating impact on Palestinian life

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Visitor permits

Tens of thousands of farmers have land and water resources located in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line; since the imposition of the closed area in October 2003 in the northern West Bank, they require visitor permits to access their land. To obtain a visitor permit, applicants must satisfy the security considerations necessary for all Israeli-issued permits. They also have to prove 'connection to land' in the closed area by submitting, amongst other official papers, a valid ownership or land taxation document. This is an impossible requirement for many West Bank Palestinians, since the majority of land has not been formally registered and has been handed down by traditional methods which do not require formal inheritance

documentation. These requirements also run contrary to customary farming practices, whereby extended families participate in planting, harvesting and maintaining the land. Tenant farmers and landless labourers are particularly penalised by a permit system where the onus is on the applicant to provide documentary proof of land ownership.

In a 2007 UN survey of 67 affected rural communities in the northern West Bank, village representatives reported that fewer than 20% of those who used to work land in the closed area before completion of the Barrier were being granted permits.5 Even in this restricted allocation distribution is irregular, with some families having more than one permit-holder, others having a single successful applicant – not necessarily the most able-bodied or appropriate – and many families having no permit-holder at all. Those suffering repeated refusals are discouraged from reapplying. The short validity period for permits – generally no more than six months – results in farmers' forced inactivity between the expiry of the current permit and its (hoped-for) renewal.

Barrier gates

For the fortunate few granted visitor permits, access is channelled through one of the 60 or so gates which the Israeli authorities have installed along the length of the Barrier. Of these, only 12 open on a daily basis, generally for short periods in the early morning, noon and in the late afternoon. Another ten gates open on two or three occasions throughout the week, in addition to the annual olive harvest. The vast majority of gates only open during the olive harvest itself, which is inadequate for essential year-round activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilising and pest and weed management. This regime is incompatible with irrigated agriculture and greenhouse production, where the produce requires daily care if it is not to fall victim to disease and rot.

Barrier gates constitute some of the most restrictive checkpoints in the West Bank. Permit-holders must queue for their documents to be inspected and their persons and belongings searched before they are permitted to cross. There are restrictions on the vehicles and materials which are allowed into the closed area. Considered 'visitors', few farmers are granted 24-hour permits to remain in the closed area overnight, and must leave their land before the gate is locked in the late afternoon. To make the best of the limited time available, permit-holders work in summer when the sun is at its height, and in winter queue in the dark and cold before the first gate opening. As the gates are closed and unstaffed between the scheduled opening times, farmers cannot return immediately to the 'Palestinian' side in cases of accident or emergency. The opening hours also penalise 'part-time' farmers, who might otherwise cultivate family holdings after work for domestic consumption or supplementary income.

4 For an assessment of the Barrier's impact on Palestinian access to health, education, religious and economic services and facilities in Jerusalem, see OCHA, *The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities: East Jerusalem, Update No. 7*, June 2007 (www.ochaopt.org/documents/Jerusalem-30July2007.pdf). For more information on the impact in Bethlehem governorate, see OCHA, *Shrinking Space: Urban Contraction and Rural Fragmentation in Bethlehem Governorate*, May 2009.

5 UNOCHA/UNRWA Special Focus: *The Barrier Gate and Permit Regime Four Years On: Humanitarian Impact in the Northern West Bank*, November 2007 (www.ochaopt.org/documents/OCHA_SpecialFocus_ BarrierGates_2007_11.pdf). This figure was replicated in a follow-up survey of the same communities in May–June 2008.

Restricting access to land and livelihoods

Restricted allocation of visitor permits and the limited number and opening times of the Barrier gates have severely curtailed agricultural production. Greenhouses are dismantled and land is converted to lower-maintenance, less perishable but also lower-value crops such as wheat. The Barrier also isolates grazing land, undermining herders' livelihoods. Signs of displacement from rural areas – a concern recognised by the ICJ – are apparent, with young men, particularly the university-educated, moving to other West Bank cities or emigrating entirely. In January 2009, the closed area designation was extended to Ramallah, Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Bethlehem and Jerusalem governorates, raising concerns that the experience of the north will be replicated throughout the West Bank.

Barrier gates constitute some of the most restrictive checkpoints in the West Bank

The way forward

In recent years, the Israeli authorities have taken administrative steps to address some of the humanitarian concerns outlined above. In the northern West Bank, a number of gates which previously operated only during the annual olive harvest now open on a limited basis throughout the week, to allow for seasonal activities such as ploughing and fertilizing. Additional permits are also issued to farming families during the olive harvest. However, the requirements for agricultural workers to obtain visitor permits have become more stringent over the years, limiting the number of Palestinians overall who can cultivate their land. The extension of the closed area and permit regime to other West Bank governorates in January 2009 risks further restricting access to land in the central and southern West Bank.

Regarding the question of the route of the Barrier, which is at the core of the ICJ advisory opinion, the Israeli authorities have relocated certain closed area communities to the 'Palestinian' side of the Barrier. However, these amendments, which are in compliance with decisions issued by the Israeli High Court of Justice rather than the ICJ advisory opinion, leave the rerouted sections of the Barrier within the West Bank, rather than running along the Green Line or in Israel. In any case, the impact of these realignments is negligible compared to projected Barrier construction around the major settlement blocs, in particular the Qedumim and Ariel 'Fingers', which will further fragment the Qalqiliya and Salfit governorates; the encirclement of Ma'ale Adummim settlement, which will compound the separation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank; and construction around the Gush Etzion bloc, which will sever the Bethlehem urban area from its agricultural hinterland.

While Israel has a duty to ensure the safety and security of its citizens in response to attacks by Palestinian militants, this must be in accordance with international law and should not cause long-term harm to the local Palestinian population. The ICJ advisory opinion called on Israel to cease construction of the Barrier, including in and around East Jerusalem, and to dismantle the sections of the Barrier already completed. In line with the advisory opinion, Israel should stop all Barrier construction and dismantle or reroute the constructed sections to the Green Line. Only then will the Palestinian urban and rural communities cut off by the Barrier be able to exercise their rights to freedom of movement, work, education and health and an adequate standard of living. This will also ensure that no Palestinian land and water reserves are isolated between the Barrier and the Green Line.

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Gaza: challenges and adaptation

Rolf Holmboe, Danish Representative to the Palestinian Authority

In recent years, Gaza has suffered recurrent bouts of conflict. In 2006, a major Israeli military operation was launched after the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. In 2007, Hamas took power following a year of rising tension culminating in a short civil war with the rival Fatah movement. Renewed tensions between Hamas and Israel escalated into the Gaza War in December 2008 and January 2009. Despite an uneasy ceasefire, no one believes that the conflict is over, and everyone knows that next time will be worse. Meanwhile, the Israeli restrictions on access and the movement of goods and people have shattered Gaza's economy. This blockade, combined with the fundamental struggle between the nationalist Fatah movement and the Islamist Hamas, has encouraged the growth of Islamic radicalisation. This combination of external and internal instability is changing the very fabric of society in Gaza, making religion the ultimate yardstick for any public or private activity and narrowing the space for individual choice.

The challenge posed by these conflicts makes the humanitarian and development processes much more difficult, disempowers societal development carriers (the middle classes and the private sector) and physically destroys humanitarian and development efforts. It takes

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Children at a computer and Internet training session at a municipal centre for young people in mid-Gaza

function. Likewise, during the Gaza War in 2008–2009 Denmark used project funds to implement an emergency package of humanitarian assistance. Among other things, the project supported the paediatric ward and intensive care unit of the Al Aqsa Martyr's Hospital, the only hospital in the Middle Area. The hospital was taking in five to six times its capacity, mostly children, and referral to the over-worked al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City was hazardous. The project also supplied tools, animals and seedlings to help farmers in the largely destroyed Wadi Gaza municipality to restore their livelihoods.

A project challenged by social struggle
Local government is one of the key battlegrounds in the struggle between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The pressure on municipalities and civil society organisations to conform to the new societal orientation in Gaza is intense. Municipalities – especially non-Hamas ones – have less and less funding and support with which to carry out their main tasks. Meanwhile, Hamas itself is focusing on providing personalised social services, targeted youth work and religious education. The organisation has seen a dramatic increase in its financial capacity. Municipalities are losing relevance as elected service providers for the population, as the politicised 'parallel government' controlled by Hamas slowly takes over their functions. Municipalities are further undermined as donors channel emergency responses through external organisations, and in many cases do not even engage them in decision-making. Neither the Palestinian Authority nor donors provide support for essential municipal service provision, such as water and electricity.

away the very basis for engaging in self-development, when the population remains preoccupied with just making do. The challenge is to adapt humanitarian and development efforts to counter processes of *de-development* in society.

A project challenged by war
Denmark has been implementing a local development project in Gaza since 1999 – the SMDM (Support to Municipal Development and Management). It covers 11 out of Gaza's 25 municipalities, and four of the eight refugee camps in the 'Middle Area' of Gaza, between Gaza City in the north and Khan Younis in the south. The project focuses on developing the capacity of municipalities to build and improve physical infrastructure, improve financial management and planning as well as engage in community development.

The 2006 Israeli military operation hit the Middle Area hard. Basic infrastructure and homes were destroyed. The municipalities had to respond to more immediate and short-term challenges, and their engagement in development priorities became difficult. The project faced a choice: wait until immediate needs had been satisfied, or adapt to bridge the divide between short-term necessity and long-term development. Denmark opted to create a quick 'side project' to assist in the emergency restoration of public services and the rehabilitation of public and private infrastructure, and to help the municipalities to continue to

> local government is one of the
> key battlegrounds in the struggle
> between Hamas and the
> Palestinian Authority

In the light of these changes, the SMDM is placing much stronger emphasis on 'community development'. The objective is to strengthen the positive connections between municipalities and citizens by enabling municipalities to respond to the emerging priorities of the population. If the municipalities do not respond, the politicised 'parallel structures' will, undermining the municipalities in the eyes of the population. Community development in this context encompasses activities carried out through local government units to develop social, cultural and community infrastructure, support social, cultural and community activities and help socially and economically deprived families (known as Social Hardship Cases – SHC).

These activities are often on a very small scale, below $15,000. The focus is on *enablement*: support should allow communities to carry out an activity themselves, not carry it out for them. Their ownership is the key. All work is based on the voluntary contributions of citizens (in Gaza there is a

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strong tradition of community involvement of this sort). In fact, most financial support goes on buying equipment and material that will allow municipalities and community groups to go through with the project. This has enabled municipalities to support rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure, improve medical centres and establish parks. Parks may seem a strange priority, but there are precious few places in Gaza where families can relax, so they are extremely popular. People consistently ask for recreational facilities such as sports clubs, cultural centres (with computer labs allowing access to the outside world) and libraries. Municipalities have also focused activities on women and young people. Both groups face particular challenges: women's freedoms are being constrained, while young people face the highest rates of unemployment in Gaza, and have few options other than crime, militant work or martyrdom if they want to provide for their families. A wide range of small, targeted vocational training activities give people outlets and extra opportunities. Engaging the population in public awareness campaigns on issues of public concern is also high on the priority list, including campaigns to inform children of the dangers of unexploded ordnance and proper environmental behaviour. In many of these projects, NGOs play a key role as implementing partners.

Finally, this work allows municipalities to support struggling families or groups – in particular large households with unemployed parents or war-deprived groups. The assistance has focused on helping women to contribute to their families. Chicken-, rabbit- and beekeeping use locally available resources, and the products are marketable. A simple support package can provide a family of 12 with 400–600 Shekels a month – in many cases the only monetary income the family receives. Other activities focus on ameliorating the situation of war-handicapped or the elderly. Again, local NGOs are key partners in implementing this support.

Conclusions

A key lesson of the work of the SMDM is that outside support to alleviate humanitarian emergencies must be 'owned' by local governments and communities. Communities are always disempowered by the fact of an emergency; the response should not contribute to this disempowerment. Integrating emergency alleviation within existing humanitarian stabilisation or development efforts saves time and increases the effectiveness of the response. Enabling local government to play a key role (for instance by involving municipal councils in decision-making, rather than as direct implementers) re-empowers local governments in a situation of stress and frees capacity to re-engage in humanitarian stabilisation and development activities beyond the here-and-now.

A second lesson in a fragile state context is that building strong and dynamic relations between municipalities and citizens is important in safeguarding the whole democratic system of local government. Municipal/community engagement in community development is therefore complementary to stabilisation efforts as well as development projects, and should be an integral part of

both. The main focus should be on working with elected municipal councils as the central body for the local democratic process, in a way that does not allow for the appropriation of activities by political parties.

The ability of secular, elected municipalities to react to emergency needs and to popular priorities is key. Responding to emergencies through external institutions or NGOs, and not directly with municipalities and municipal councils, may simply disempower local government and thereby inadvertently pave the way for politicised 'parallel governments'. Establishing a strong decision-making structure, whereby communities can submit proposals to municipal councils, for instance through open meetings or petitions, and allowing councils to respond and make decisions within a simple and established framework, has been shown to be a key element in strengthening the democratic processes of local government.

This in no way precludes partnerships with NGOs in implementing activities agreed between municipalities and citizens. In fact, the engagement of NGOs is in most cases highly desirable and necessary, not least because they have implementation capacity and are informed by ideas of fairness and social responsibility. In the SMDM experience, a very fruitful partnership has been achieved between municipalities, the population and local NGOs, allowing both for municipality/community ownership and for the efficient and effective delivery of community development.

A final consideration concerns the role of external donors. Ideally, the donor should step back from the decision-making process in community development and limit itself to establishing the proper framework for local decision-making (for instance in municipal councils) and for the allocation of resources. It is also important that municipalities/communities are made responsible for monitoring projects – this is an integral part of the 'process of ownership'. This of course does not preclude donor engagement with processes or activities, as long as the role of elected local government as the responsible body is maintained. Donor engagement could contribute to a high degree of local pride in people's achievements, empowering communities and giving them some hope for the future. When it comes to outside involvement, the donor principle of *least is best* should be followed.

The ability to adapt quickly to integrate emergency responses within development efforts can bridge the divide between emergency and development needs. In Gaza, this is of paramount importance. Strengthening local government and enhancing positive relations between local government units (such as municipalities or village councils) and citizens through 'community development' is one response to the challenge posed by the societal divide, and can be an effective way of safeguarding the democratic system as a whole.

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DEEP: a new approach to poverty reduction

Rafeek El-madhoun, Ibrahim Sourani, Vanessa Farr, Hanna Nakhleh and Dania Darwish, UNDP

Promoting development in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of an ongoing conflict that affects every aspect of Palestinian social and economic life. The prolonged political crisis has contributed to the destruction of the social fabric and has worsened the economic prospects of all Palestinians, plunging many into ever-deeper poverty. The 1948 war, the regional wars of 1967 and 1973, the 1987 and 2000 uprisings and the 2008–2009 Israeli incursion into Gaza have caused repeated displacement and turned many into long-term refugees. In recent years, the territory has been fragmented following the internal Palestinian conflict, which led to the creation of two largely separate entities, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Economic and living conditions in the oPt are poor, with an estimated 43% of the Palestinian population living below the poverty line of $2.30 a day, and about 15% living in absolute poverty. In the second half of 2007, the level of unemployment was 23%, with youth unemployment particularly dire at 36%. Unemployment was most acute in refugee camps and in southern Gaza.[1] The over-riding cause of spiralling poverty and unemployment is the ongoing 'closure regime', which restricts the movement of people and trade within Palestinian areas, into and out of Israel and with third-party markets.

Sixty-one years of occupation have put Palestinians under almost unbearable stress. The majority have spent their savings, sold property and other assets and cut down on their food intake. In response, local and international organisations have launched development interventions to help people retain or regain their economic independence, but most have been unsuccessful because of the top-down approach they have used. People have been targeted via sectors or clusters and excluded from the design, decision-making and implementation process, giving them no opportunity to discuss their problems and how to solve them. For example, women's empowerment programmes are designed and implemented without examining the individual's circumstances or taking into consideration the resources and opportunities actually available to beneficiaries. In addition, such programmes have exacerbated family fragmentation, as the focus on women and thus the exclusion of men (or the reverse in other programmes) does not reflect a family consensus.

1 Figures from *The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for Its Recovery*, Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Number 1, December 2005.

©Ibrahim Sourani, March 2009

Saleh Al Hams working in his newly established Workshops for Washing Machines repair shop in Rafah

This article discusses a new developmental approach specifically designed to address the Palestinian context and overcome the long-term problems produced by the protracted political crisis. This new approach, which aims to assist families to graduate from poverty, goes beyond interventions such as short-term employment programmes and sector-based projects. The 'Sustainable Livelihoods Approach' on which it is based is a dynamic response that supports the development of the family as a unit.

61 years of occupation have put Palestinians under almost unbearable stress

The launch of DEEP

In mid-2007, UNDP inaugurated a pilot programme for chronically poor families in the oPt: the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme (DEEP). DEEP merges Promotional Safety Net activities with microfinance services to create a pathway for poor families to graduate from poverty. The programme also has a capacity-building component for partner NGOs. The purpose of merging the two services is to help deprived families use the grant facility to first build the necessary economic infrastructure and then, through access to microfinance, seek to achieve economic sustainability and independence. DEEP targets the poorest of the poor, people who fall beneath the nationally agreed poverty

line. It starts by providing people with a social safety net to enable them to move out of extreme poverty and reach the 'normal' poverty line, at which point microfinance services can be offered.

DEEP is a four-year pilot programme, funded by the Islamic Development Bank and executed by UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) in partnership with the Palestinian government and 16 NGO implementing partners in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The overall objective is to make 4,000 families economically independent. In addition, support is being provided to 12,000 poor families to enable them to access financial services from micro-finance institutions (MFIs).

The DEEP is unique in that the family-centred approach allows household members to discuss and decide how best to make progress towards greater economic independence. Fieldworkers from NGO partners are trained in sustainable livelihood approaches, with a specific emphasis on the importance of involving participant families in the design, implementation and evaluation of each intervention. They are trained to give families enough time to discuss their needs and priorities according to what DEEP describes as their 'five capitals' (Human, Natural, Physical, Financial and Social), based on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. DEEP considers cross-cutting issues such as the specific needs of different family members: women and men, children, youth and the elderly and people with disabilities. Women, especially those who head households, have been particular beneficiaries of DEEP's focus on capacity-building and economic empowerment. The DEEP modality is much appreciated by beneficiary families as they are involved in every aspect of the process and feel ownership of the interventions designed to help them.

DEEP has its own monitoring and evaluation system, run through a web-based database. Information on family resources, livelihoods and efforts to upgrade businesses is gathered through extensive field visits by NGO partners, to make sure that the goals of the programme are adhered to. Each NGO keeps track of the intervention, providing technical assistance such as training, consultation, psychosocial support, referral and networking with other specialised NGOs that can offer medical, mental health or social services.

The implementation of DEEP in Gaza is facing many challenges due to Israel's closure regime, the lack of raw materials, a rapid increase in prices and an unstable exchange rate. Despite these restrictions, however, DEEP Gaza has begun more than 500 interventions for 950 families. This number is planned to double within the next few months.

People decide

DEEP gives the families who participate in it the chance to choose from a number of employment alternatives, including agriculture, commerce, industry, services, job placements and training. A holistic approach is taken to understand the family from all angles, so that interventions

can be designed as a package based on what the family owns, what it needs and the routes it must take to achieve its goals. Each intervention is given to the family as a one-time grant, with differential financial ceilings ranging from $4,000 to $8,000, determined by the size of family and the type of intervention. Interventions usually include a main activity, with a supporting one to reduce the margin of risk.

DEEP Gaza has begun more than 500 interventions for 950 families

Case studies

Because interventions are individually designed, DEEP employs a wide range of approaches. In one example – a sheep-breeding project – beneficiaries receive a number of pregnant ewes of a breed known to be highly productive, along with vaccination and veterinary services for six months, medication and animal feed. The package includes all the support necessary to help the family gain an immediate income, whilst imposing no financial stress upon them. Following the six-month period, the family should be able to sustain the project from their own income.

Another interesting intervention is a cooperative-based Food Processing Unit. The project is located in Maghazi refugee camp, one of the poorest spots in the Gaza Strip. The beneficiaries are a group of 12 women, each of whom has between five and 12 family members and an unemployed head of the family. A feasibility study and consultation process was completed, and DEEP's field analysts ensured that the unit would be a good income generation activity and business cooperative for all the women. While the partner NGO bought the equipment, the women received advanced training in baking. After the establishment of the unit, the partner NGO helped the group to manage the business, including setting up financial and administrative systems. Currently, the unit is producing cookies, pastries and pies, supplying kindergartens, school canteens and local shops in Maghazi.

UNDP believes that beneficiaries need support and respect as much as they need food and cash

Another beneficiary, Sameer Al Hams, runs a washing machine maintenance shop. As Sameer lacked the technical, financial and management resources to start the business, one of DEEP's partner NGOs worked with him to set up a maintenance shop in Rafah. His income has been excellent, and Sameer has been able to enroll his daughter in university, save money and generally feel much more secure. 'The income earned by your own hand is much

better than any other kind of money,' he says. 'When you work everything tastes better. You can send your children to school and you do not feel like a beggar. I have regained my self-esteem.' Another beneficiary, Naema Al Shenbari, is an entrepreneur who developed her project idea with support from a DEEP partner NGO. She started by opening a small grocery, and has been able to grow the business into a mini-market. Naema, who is managing her project with great skill, has employed her brother to work in the market at a reasonable salary. Her income has been sufficient for her to support her family and even start saving.

Conclusion
DEEP's strategy of helping people to decide on the best means to address their needs, come up with solutions and feel ownership of their income-generating projects represents a new participatory tool for development in both the West Bank and Gaza. The partnership is based on mutual trust and respect between all stakeholders in DEEP: UNDP counts on its partner NGOs, our partners count on families and families count on UNDP and the NGOs. This means that all the stakeholders involved feel commitment to and ownership of their programme. Before they became partners in DEEP, families were not only deprived of access to income, food or shelter, but also of opportunities to voice their views and express their needs in developmental projects. Through DEEP, they are not only improving their livelihoods, but also beginning to perceive themselves differently, as agents of their own well-being.

Beneficiary families note that, although they have been receiving food and cash assistance for years, they feel dehumanised every time they line up to receive it. UNDP believes that they need support and respect as much as they need food and cash. To help these families we must first help them speak out. We need to listen to them, gain their confidence and trust in the services being offered and enable them to understand that DEEP will empower them. Deprived people are oppressed because they do not give voice to their needs, and many have become trapped in a culture of silence. DEEP listens respectfully to poor people and designs interventions which seek to enrich them in a multitude of ways.

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Using cameras to enhance protection and accountability in the Occupied Territories

Risa Zoll, B'Tselem

Humanitarian actors increasingly recognise the crucial importance of linking humanitarian efforts to human rights issues. In the Occupied Territories this interdependence is particularly stark. Israel's policies restricting movement within the West Bank and between the West Bank and Israel, Gaza and other areas are a central factor in the Palestinians' increasing poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, as well as their lack of access to urgently needed medical treatment. The lack of accountability of Israel's security force personnel – both individual and systemic – is a direct cause of high rates of civilian death and injury.

In order to address the overlapping human rights and humanitarian problems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, B'Tselem has developed a new and rapidly growing initiative: distributing cameras to Palestinian families living in high-conflict areas, and training participants as agents for protection and change. With the 150 cameras B'Tselem has distributed to date, the harsh reality of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation has been brought to the attention of the Israeli and international public, providing a tool for protection, deterrence and accountability.

B'Tselem's 'camera work'
In June 2008, B'Tselem camera recipient and trainee Muna Nawaj'ah captured on film four masked settlers attacking three members of the Nawaj'ah family with clubs as they grazed their flock on private Palestinian land south of the Susiya settlement, in the southern Hebron hills. B'Tselem released the footage, sparking a flood of publicity that led to the detention of three of the attackers. Without this video evidence, the family would have remained helpless victims, unable to pursue their livelihood for fear of further attack. Attacks such as this, and other human rights violations that have long remained unseen, have become front-page stories; the Susiya incident, for example, received extensive media coverage both within Israel and internationally, including in the *New York Times* and on the BBC. Israeli law enforcement agencies, confronted with the hard evidence of raw footage, can no longer simply dismiss Palestinian complaints as unfounded. The head of the family, 61-year-old Khalil Nawaj'ah, said: 'The only weapon we have is the media'. This comment reflects the empowerment that the cameras can bring: Palestinians no longer have to stand on the sidelines, but can use the new technology B'Tselem has provided to take non-violent, effective action.

Video footage also attracted widespread media attention and prompted legal action over an incident in the Palestinian village of Ni'ilin in July 2008. B'Tselem publicised film showing an Israeli soldier firing a rubbercoated steel bullet, at extremely close range, at a cuffed and blindfolded Palestinian detainee being held in

place by a lieutenant-colonel. The video clip shows the soldier aiming his weapon at the legs of the Palestinian, Ashraf Abu Rahma, 27, from a distance of about 1.5 metres. A Palestinian girl filmed the incident from her house in the village. B'Tselem collected the footage and immediately forwarded a copy to the Military Police Investigation Unit, demanding that the soldier be brought to justice. B'Tselem also demanded an investigation into the involvement of the officer who was holding the detainee down. Charges were filed against both the soldier and the officer, as a direct result of the irrefutable evidence of the incident.

Cameras in the hands of trained Palestinians have enabled B'Tselem to collect and use footage documenting the range of human rights infringements affecting Palestinians' daily lives. The evidence of repeated and consistent violations challenges Israeli claims that incidents are isolated, and paints a clear picture of entrenched and systematic rights violations, leading to the current humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

An Israeli soldier firing a rubber bullet at a Palestinian detainee, Ni'ilin, July 2008

©B'Tselem Video Department

Deterrence, accountability and protection

B'Tselem's 150 cameras have been distributed in both urban and rural areas, in residential areas near checkpoints and military bases and in selected refugee camps. The cameras are transferred periodically to different areas in accordance with the severity of events and conflict. The cameras are a highly effective way of documenting the severe human rights abuses taking place in the Occupied Territories, acting as a catalyst for change among decision-makers and the Israeli public. The production and distribution of firsthand video accounts make a significant contribution to B'Tselem's efforts to engage policy-makers, the media and members of the general public – creating compelling and irrefutable evidence of the impact of Israel's policies and practices on Palestinians.

The project has also had far-reaching effects within the Palestinian community. Armed with video cameras and extensive training, participants in the project are no longer victims. The video camera empowers its users to take action in their own defence. In one example, a 15-year-old boy from Ni'ilin, who used to throw rocks and resort to violence in the belief that there was no way to change his miserable situation, now picks up his video camera, becomes a journalist and films away. He explains that 'people from the outside see what's going on here', raising hopes for change and improvement. Palestinians' perception of the power of the cameras as a source of protection can best be understood through the insistence of one elderly Palestinian man from the southern Hebron hills, who refused to give up his camera even though it was broken: broken or not, he said, the camera constituted his only defence.

The presence of cameras acts as a deterrent to violence in many cases where Jewish settlers and security force personnel realise they are being filmed. Project footage clearly shows that a camera prevents situations from escalating, because settlers and soldiers fear being held accountable. On several tapes, individuals are seen covering their faces or leaving when they see the camera. Palestinian families living adjacent to Jewish settlements do not leave their homes without taking cameras with them: they act as protection for Palestinians, human rights defenders and humanitarian actors alike.

Through the project, B'Tselem has also made progress in promoting greater accountability by forcing the military and police to open investigations into specific incidents. In the West Bank, bureaucratic obstacles can deter victims of abuse by settlers or soldiers from lodging complaints. Over the past year, however, video footage has been increasingly used to force the army and police to open an investigation or to arbitrate equitably where they would have previously dismissed Palestinian claims. Footage of violence by settlers and soldiers has generated widespread public discussion regarding the rule of law.

B'Tselem has also succeeded in airing the project material on major Israeli and international news networks, exposing audiences worldwide to previously unseen footage. While human rights advocates and humanitarian actors have long relied on moral appeals to direct the media's attention to pressing issues, B'Tselem now serves as a source of objective, high-quality material for television reporters, film-makers and even bloggers.

Finally, the initiative has also served to empower individuals and communities, not least women and young people, who have taken the lead in being trained and using the cameras.

Previously isolated families now take part in regular support meetings, and community networks have developed. Beleaguered families now see footage they shot on local and international television channels. As an extension of B'Tselem's efforts to establish video documentation and advocacy as a permanent tool for the Palestinian community, Palestinians are being taught how to review footage and identify material to use, enabling families to act as independent advocates.

Law enforcement officials the world over are charged to serve and protect, a mission honoured more in the breach than in the observance by Israel's security forces with regard to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinians armed with cameras, trained in their use and in documentation techniques, have stepped in to fill this breach, and are succeeding in calling the attention of law enforcement agencies and the public to rights violations. In this way, through the accumulation of a strong body of physical evidence highlighting the effects of Israel's policies and practices, the human rights and humanitarian context in the Occupied Territories can begin to change.

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Community-based child protection in the Gaza Strip

Dominique Sbardella, Save the Children

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with 1.5 million people concentrated in an area of only 365km². More than half of these people are children below the age of 18, of whom 69% are refugees. Violence has had an appalling impact on Gaza's children. Between 2000 and 2008, over 600 were killed in conflict-related violence; another 300 died in Israel's military offensive, Cast Lead, in December–January 2009.[1] Some 50,000 were displaced.

Child protection in Gaza

Starting in 2006, Save the Children and its partner organisations have carried out a number of qualitative participatory assessments in the villages of Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Shejahiya, Bureij, Magazi, Qarara, Khoza and Al Shoka. The main objective of the work has been to identify emerging child protection risks as a consequence of the armed violence in Gaza, and its impact on children's lives. The assessments have also identified the traditional methods used by parents and other care-givers to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Through a participatory exercise, children identified the main protection risks they face at home, in schools and in the wider community. Two main child participatory tools have been used: the Child Protection Map and the Matrix and Ranking of Child Protection Risks. First, the children drew on maps of their villages what they considered to be the day-to-day risks they faced, then listed all the protection risks identified on the map, wrote them in a Matrix, ranked the identified protection risks and discussed causes and possible responses.

Most of the children said that domestic violence had increased. They indicated that their parents were more nervous and reacted more violently towards them whenever they were disrespectful or disobedient. This they related to the worsening economic conditions facing

1 See Defence for Children International, Palestine Section, http://www.dci-pal.org.

their families. Unemployment and the loss of job opportunities have led to economic hardship and frustration within families, increasingly expressed as verbal and physical violence towards children and women.

Children also noted that violence among their peers, in the form of bullying or fights, had become more common. During discussions, children stated that every child had joined a 'gang' as a means of self-defence. Children reported that their role models were Palestinian fighters because 'they are the only ones doing something to protect us from the war and the occupation'. They also said that they believed that no one was really interested in protecting them, and that teachers, local organisations and politicians had only their personal interests in mind.

most of the children said that domestic violence had increased

The findings of these consultations were discussed later with parents, teachers and other school personnel, health workers, religious leaders and extended family leaders, municipal employees and other professionals, such as police officers, doctors, professors, company directors and members of community-based organisations. Although most of the adults were surprised by the children's answers, they agreed with what they had said. The adults explained that their role as parents and care-givers had become more difficult as their children were more rebellious, disobedient and difficult to control. Parents noted that, because they had less income and could not prevent recurrent outbreaks of violence, their children no longer respected them or believed that they would be able to protect them. Parents and other community members felt that political rivalries had also created tensions and even conflict within communities. Parents also highlighted feelings of isolation and

helplessness. Parents defined 'child protection' as security, access to services such as health and education, the end of the occupation and jobs to ensure that children have food, clothing and other necessities. At the same time, care-givers admitted that violence towards children had increased, and they were aware of the negative impact of physical and verbal abuse on the development of the child.

Supporting community-based child protection

Following these consultations, Save the Children Sweden and its partner organisation, the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), began supporting community-based child protection groups in three villages in the south of the Gaza Strip, Al Shoka, Khoza'a and Qarara.[2] These communities, which are located along the eastern border of the Strip, were selected because they have been heavily affected by armed conflict. The main source of income for families in these communities used to be agriculture and labouring work in Israel, but since 2005 Palestinian workers have not been allowed to cross into Israel for work. Meanwhile, intensified conflict from 2006 resulted in the destruction of citrus groves and agricultural land by the Israeli army. Save the Children and PCDCR already had a presence in the three targeted locations, and the good relationship the agency enjoyed with these communities was another factor influencing the choice of location.

With the support of Save the Children and PCDCR a Child Protection Committee was formed in each community, involving influential community members, representatives from community-based organisations, primary health clinics, schools and the police and religious leaders. Following a brainstorming session focusing on the causes of violence against children, the committees highlighted the need to intervene in the domestic, school and peer spheres through awareness-raising and capacity-building, by establishing a monitoring system to detect children at risk of or already affected by violence, and to create a referral mechanism. Young adults were chosen for training to help them raise awareness of children's rights, child protection risks and the negative impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation on children's cognitive, emotional and physical development. In addition, children from the three communities, supported by the members of the Child Protection

A Palestinian child in Gaza

©Save the Children

Committees, were asked to identify trusted individuals in the community to act as focal points for receiving children's reports and concerns and providing advice and guidance. Referral mechanisms linking the committees to health clinics, schools and other organisations were also established, both for referral purposes and to strengthen coordination between care-givers and service providers.

Within each committee, two sub-committees were established, one comprising fathers and the other community workers. The fathers' sub-committees are responsible for mediating between students, teachers and parents (as fathers are traditionally in charge of a child's education), for example preventing or intervening in cases of conflict or where a child drops out of school. The community workers' sub-committees are involved in case management, and are focal points for children and parents using the referral mechanisms.

the sub-committees agreed to develop and pilot community-based emergency preparedness plans

Following Operation Cast Lead in early 2009, a new assessment was carried out by the child protection committees. This highlighted the need to enhance the capacity of families to protect their members during emergencies, and support for the sub-committees to identify children and adults psychologically affected by the conflict. Many families still live close to the Israeli border, but leave their homes every night to stay with relatives in villages or

2 Save the Children defines a community-based child protection group as 'a collection of people, often volunteers, that aim to ensure the protection and well-being of children in a village, urban neighbourhood or other community, for example an IDP camp, temporary settlement or migrant population ... Community based child protection groups can also link with mechanisms at the district or provincial level'. Save the Children, *An Inter-agency, Multi-country Assessment of Community Based Child Protection Groups*, unedited paper.

other locations considered safer. Every adult and child interviewed during the assessment expressed feelings of constant insecurity and powerlessness, as well as a desperate need to develop strategies to ensure that children and women at least can find refuge in safe shelters.

In response to the needs expressed, the sub-committees agreed to develop and pilot community-based emergency preparedness plans. Commitments were made to actively involve all community members in identifying the main protection risks and possible solutions, to identify and use resources available within their communities and to involve other national and international humanitarian organisations. Emergency sub-committees were subsequently established and trained in emergency preparedness planning and response by Save and its partner, PCDCR. The sub-committees have identified three main scenarios for which communities need to be prepared: conflict, floods and epidemics. Accordingly, they have developed a plan to ensure the preparedness and protection of every community member, with a special focus on the most vulnerable, including children.

The plans, which are largely the same for the three communities, allow for further capacity-building of community focal points on primary health care, the distribution of first aid equipment, information and communications networks, evacuation plans for schools and other public services, tracing mechanisms for separated families and care for orphaned children and those separated from their parents or main caregivers. In the near future, the emergency plan will be discussed with organisations such as UNRWA, the ICRC, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, UNICEF, the Save the Children Alliance and national organisations. Children are to be actively involved, with capacity-building tools in areas such as first aid, disaster risk reduction and mine risk education. Children's sub-committees have been established in each community to increase participation in the decision-making process within the Child Protection Committees, to improve communication between children and decision-makers and to ensure a more child-friendly approach to protection issues.

It is too early to evaluate the impact of the Child Protection Committees and the activities implemented in terms of reduced levels of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Nevertheless, ongoing monitoring indicates that the committees have succeeded in encouraging and facilitating more open discussion about child protection risks, children's rights and the responsibilities of government, care-givers and other duty-bearers, and in supporting families and communities to protect their children. Examples include the active involvement of religious leaders in awareness-raising activities, such as discussing the importance of respecting children's rights during Friday prayers, the regular participation of professionals from the three communities in individual case management meetings and the development of emergency preparedness plans.

Conclusion: first steps

The work outlined here constitutes only a first step towards a functional and effective child protection mechanism in the Gaza Strip. To be effective, community groups need to be integrated and coordinated with the national child protection system at all levels. Yet in the Gaza Strip, a national child protection system, in terms of governmental action towards the prevention, detection and response to violence against children, does not exist. Judicial and welfare services have been severely disrupted, which means that civil society has been the main body seeking to support child protection by raising families' and children's awareness of children's rights and protection strategies, providing services, monitoring children's rights and advocating on child protection with national and international actors. That said, there is a clear lack of effective coordination between local organisations providing support to children and adults and, as a consequence, an effective referral system is still not in place, and reliable data on child rights violations is not available.

Save the Children and PCDCR believe that, to achieve long-lasting changes in the lives of children, community-based child protection committees will have to be supported and strengthened over the long term. Ensuring children's rights to protection necessitates not only the establishment of community-based mechanisms for prevention and response, but also changes in the attitudes and practices of individuals and communities. PCDCR has prioritised its interventions in the three targeted communities, to ensure that it will be able to accompany the committees through the years, expanding and supporting their work. Save the Children is engaged in a four-year strategy which aims to strengthen the national child protection system. It is the strategy of Save the Children, PCDCR and the committees to link the national social welfare system to community-based mechanisms.

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Internal displacement in the occupied Palestinian territory

Karine MacAllister and Karim Khalil

Although internal displacement of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is at least as old as the occupation itself, it has only recently become a subject of concern among national and international organisations. There are several reasons for this. For some, displacement was either not clearly understood or viewed as too sensitive an issue, as its underlying implications would entail a more direct confrontation with Israel as an occupying power. This would call upon the international community to address, not only the humanitarian effects of the occupation, but also an Israeli policy that, as noted by International Court of Justice, is illegally manipulating the demography of the oPt. There was also reluctance to address an issue viewed as outside the parameters of existing mandates, which confined UN agencies to reporting on and responding to the humanitarian situation in the oPt, rather than addressing the policies causing displacement.

Moreover, for many international and national NGOs the patterns of displacement, in their severity and consistency, revealed an undeclared Israeli policy of forced displacement, for the purpose of divesting Palestinian ownership guaranteed under international law, and in doing so placing at risk the notion of a two-state solution.

Internal displacement in the oPt

Numerous studies by NGOs and the UN have recognised displacement as a result of a vast array of Israeli policies, including house demolitions and the denial of building permits, forced evictions and land confiscation for settlement expansion and related infrastructure, the construction of the Wall and its associated closure regime and the revocation of residency rights in Jerusalem, along with military operations and settler violence.[2] Under international human rights and humanitarian law, Israel as the occupying power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has the primary responsibility for safeguarding Palestinians from arbitrary displacement. In fact, Israel is the primary perpetrator of arbitrary displacement and forcible population transfers.

According to the Palestinian NGO BADIL, an estimated 120,000 people have been displaced over the last four

Members of a family threatened with eviction, Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, April 2009

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decades.[3] Accurate data on the scale of displacement is, however, scarce, and there are significant information gaps. No one knows how many IDPs there are or their geographical distribution, and the protection concerns they face have not been clearly identified. Generally, displacement occurs near Israeli settlements and related infrastructure, military zones in the West Bank and the 'buffer zone' along the boundaries of the Gaza Strip, as well as around areas of Wall construction. Others have been displaced due to military operations, and have sought temporary shelter and protection with relatives, in public buildings or in schools, either until the violence ends or longer-term accommodation with relatives or host communities becomes possible. Displacement entails loss of access to land and property, undermines families,

1 See Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Arab Occupied Territories, A/HRC/7/NGO/71, CARE International, the Norwegian Refugee Council, DIAKONIA, Doctors Without Borders, Premiere Urgence, the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD), MA'AN Development Centre and the Comitato Internationale per lo Suiluppo dei Popoli (CISP), 25 February 2008.
2 NRC-IDMC, 'Occupied Palestinian Territory: Forced Displacement Continues', 10 September 2008, p. 1. See also OCHA, *The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank*, July 2007.

3 This is a cumulative figure of persons displaced since 1967. The figures are estimates only based upon anecdotal evidence and estimated population growth rates since 1967. This figure does not include the estimated 40,000–70,000 still displaced as a result of events in Gaza in December 2008 to January 2009. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolition has estimated that over 24,000 Palestinian houses have been destroyed since 1967. ICAHD, *Statistics on Housed Demolitions*, 4 July 2009.

restricts access to social welfare and livelihoods and inflicts wide-ranging physical and psychological damage, including trauma and anxiety.

Responding to internal displacement

Over the past few years, international actors have increasingly come to recognise that forced displacement is taking place in the oPt. Local and international NGOs have played a considerable role in lobbying the international community, particularly the UN. In 2003, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the oPt warned of the effects of the Wall in causing displacement.[4] The following year, the ICJ concluded that the Wall was illegal under international law and was altering the demographic composition of the oPt.[5] UNRWA, UNDP and OCHA (which began operations in 2000) have all addressed the problem of displacement. In February 2009, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was for the first time called upon to monitor and report on human rights violations, including arbitrary displacement.[6] In March 2009 the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs, Walter Kalin, declared that Israel's occupation had resulted in the large-scale, arbitrary displacement of Palestinians.[7]

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an estimated 120,000 people have been displaced over the last 40 years

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In line with this growing recognition of displacement, pressure has increased for a more coordinated and comprehensive response. In November 2007, the Inter-Agency Protection Sub-Working Group on Forced Displacement (DWG) was established under the Protection Working Group, led by OHCHR. The DWG is currently under the Protection cluster, which is chaired by OHCHR with the support of OCHA; the cluster was adopted in the oPt in March 2009. The DWG has a broad membership, including UN agencies, international and local (Israeli and Palestinian) NGOs and donors. The working group aims to ensure an effective and transparent inter-agency response to different phases of displacement (before (preventive), during and post), enhancing the analysis and collation of information and encouraging the international community to address forcible and arbitrary displacement.[8] The DWG is currently chaired by OCHA.

UNWRA and UNDP have undertaken projects of shelter reconstruction and repair on behalf of displaced

Palestinians (refugees and IDPs). UNWRA also provides emergency humanitarian assistance, including emergency shelter, cash assistance, food and housing kits. The agency makes no distinction between refugees and non-refugees during a crisis, though once the emergency response scales down aid is generally provided only to refugees. ICRC has responded to the immediate emergency needs of IDPs, and has also undertaken projects which are preventive in nature. Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs have been active in researching and publicising instances of arbitrary displacement. Several NGOs, including NRC and human rights organisations such as the Jerusalem Aid and Human Rights Centre, the Society of Saint Yves, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and BIMKOM, provide legal aid and assistance. Other NGOs, such as the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), have sought to assist communities by providing a physical presence to deter or reverse displacement, as in Hebron and Bil'in, Yanoun and Al Aqaba in the West Bank.

Evaluating responses to displacement

There has been a notable rise in awareness of forced displacement, and responses have become more coordinated. However, there are constraints and a number of shortfalls. The lack of protection for Palestinians in the oPt, including IDPs and those at risk of displacement, is probably the largest challenge facing the DWG, along with the lack of accountability of perpetrators. The operational environment remains constrained by the Israeli legal regime and policies of occupation. As the occupying power, Israel is the *de facto* if not *de jure* authority in the oPt. Organisations that do not comply with Israeli laws and regulations risk criminal prosecution or expulsion. Furthermore, most donors will not fund projects which do not respect Israeli military laws and regulations. The UN, NGOs and human rights organisations have faced harassment, intimidation and criminal prosecution.

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No one UN agency has the capacity to protect Palestinian IDPs and those at risk of displacement, and until recently no one agency was specifically mandated to address internal displacement and seek durable solutions. The Cluster Approach may address this gap by consolidating inter-agency responses under the cluster lead, but its effectiveness is yet to be determined. Under the cluster mechanism, internal displacement falls under OHCHR's mandate, with support from OCHA. However, OHCHR has limited capacity and resources.

There are also key limitations in efforts to prevent and respond during the various phases of displacement. No full profiling exercise has been undertaken to determine

4 Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied by Israel since 1967, Commission on Human Rights, Sixtieth Session, E/CN.4/2004/6, 8 September 2003, p. 1.
5 *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion*, ICJ Reports 2004, p. 136, para. 122.
6 Human Rights Council, Resolution A/HRC/S-9/L.1/Rev.2, 12 January 2009, para. 11.
7 Human Rights Council, Tenth Session, 10 March 2009.
8 Inter-Agency Protection Sub-Working Group on Forced Displacement, Strategy paper (draft version), February 2008.

the number, location and protection needs of IDPs. Currently, the response to internal displacement in the oPt is mainly confined to the emergency phase during which displacement occurs. Few organisations monitor the situation of IDPs in the months following displacement, and programmes targeting IDPs in the post-emergency phase remain limited. The mid- and long-term response is generally limited to shelter reconstruction, although NGOs are paying greater attention to livelihoods, psychosocial support and legal matters.

In the majority of cases where displacement is foreseeable, the DWG and other relevant actors are often unable to prevent it. Although national and international NGOs and UN agencies are active in publicising the problem and raising awareness, the impact of this work on deterring displacement is still unclear. Evaluating the impact of preventive advocacy is difficult. The DWG maintains an emergency warning system of impending situations of forced displacement, which it communicates via its network and to donors and other members of the international community, but demolitions and evictions continue, despite efforts by NGOs and other actors to delay or annul eviction orders.

There are certainly considerable constraints in searching for durable solutions based on the individual and preferred choice of the IDP, such as return and property restitution. Restitution or return in the West Bank has largely been confined to areas under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction (Areas A and B), whereas most displacement is confined to Area C and East Jerusalem. In Gaza, Israeli sanctions on construction materials mean that reconstruction projects for over 15,000 housing units remain at a standstill, and return to the status quo ante is unlikely. For the vast majority of Palestinians displaced in the West Bank and Gaza, the return of those forcibly displaced remains tied to the reversal of policies of occupation which entail their displacement.

Conclusion

Although the DWG has been a leading actor in promoting the mainstreaming of internal displacement responses within international agencies, UN-mandated institutions and the international community more broadly remain reluctant to contextualise the problem and address its root causes, because doing so is perceived as politically sensitive. The international political climate has played a significant role in explaining the hitherto conservative nature of the response, with little diplomatic pressure exerted on Israel to address displacement, and particularly to prevent or put a stop to the policies causing it. Ultimately, the humanitarian community has limited power in the face of Israeli intransigence. The presence of humanitarian actors is tolerated in so far as they mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the occupation, without having the clout to contest the nature of the occupation or the policies of arbitrary displacement taking place under it.

There are a number of ways in which the response to internal displacement in the oPt can be strengthened. First and foremost, the international community, particularly donors, must make a commitment to addressing displacement and its root causes, and challenge Israeli policies which cause displacement and restrict and limit the humanitarian response. This should include supporting and building institutional capacity within UN agencies, NGOs and the Palestinian Authority, in particular in mainstreaming displacement responses. The lack of a comprehensive profile of displaced communities in the oPt continues to limit agencies' ability to respond adequately to protection needs. This gap should be addressed. Finally, in the absence of international political will efforts to raise awareness of the problem and mitigate the impact of displacement on Palestinians should be further supported and encouraged by the international community.

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Solving the risk equation: People-centred disaster risk assessment in Ethiopia

Tanya Boudreau

Network Paper 66, June 2009

We live in a world buffeted by hazards. Some 85% of the world's population resides in areas affected at least once in the past 30 years by a major earthquake, tropical cyclone, flood or drought. In the last 20 years, well over two million people have been killed by natural disasters. The total number of people affected each year has doubled over the last decade. For these people, it is not a question of *whether* major hazards will occur, but *when*.

With so many of the world's people so close to the edge, an active disaster risk management system, capable of both corrective (current disasters) and prospective (future potential disasters) risk management is essential. In Ethiopia the system has to be especially sensitive, able to detect when even a small shock might result in catastrophe. This paper argues that the information and analysis system recently established within the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture represents a substantial new opportunity for people-centred disaster risk assessment. The national livelihoods database provides the capacity to understand the diverse vulnerabilities of populations and to mathematically link these to hazards. The paper also discusses several methodological and conceptual advancements relevant to disaster risk reduction, including multi-hazard risk analysis, survival and livelihoods protection thresholds and seasonal tools for analysing intra-annual variability.

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

When there are no statistics: Emergency Nutrition Programming in Eritrea

Nik Bredholt, Laura Donkin and Caroline Muthiga, CAFOD

Famine and drought pose a regular threat in Eritrea, along with the rest of the Horn of Africa. Consecutive years of drought, high food prices and the global economic downturn all suggest that hunger and malnutrition levels are high. However, unlike in neighbouring countries no reliable national nutrition statistics are available to show this. There have been no comprehensive nutrition surveys since 2005, and World Food Programme (WFP) general food distributions have been suspended since 2006. The activities of international NGOs are restricted.[1]

In August 2008, CAFOD was alerted to a poor rainy season by its local partner in Eritrea, and warned that the deteriorating nutritional situation in 2008 would continue to worsen until the next harvest in November 2009. Unable to conduct a nutrition survey or obtain statistics from others, CAFOD was faced with the question of how to justify a response in the absence of reliable data. Knowing that humanitarian capacity was severely limited and that general food distributions would not be allowed, the agency nonetheless decided to establish a supplementary feeding programme.

This article explains the challenges of operating in an environment where there are no statistics, and how the resulting programme provided CAFOD with a clearer understanding of the context and supporting evidence of the nutrition situation in Eritrea.

Using the evidence available

The evidence that is available paints a dismal picture of the humanitarian situation in Eritrea. In 2008 the *kremti* rains failed, and as a result people harvested very little or nothing during October and November. A September 2008 forecast by the European Union's Joint Research Centre (JRC) estimated 2008 cereal crop production at no more than 200,000 MT, barely 30% of the country's total annual needs. The next main harvest will not be until October and November 2009. Access to water is very poor; only 32% of the population have access to a safe supply. Pastoral areas have also been badly affected due to the lack of pasture for livestock grazing.

Local food prices have escalated and Eritrea is top of the list of countries most vulnerable to high global prices.[2]

Malnourished mothers and children in Asmara queue to receive their monthly food ration

©Laura Donkin

Commodity prices are very high, many food items are unavailable in the markets and the cost of livestock has dropped in relation to the price of grain. An estimated two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line, with rates as high as 80% in rural areas. Military mobilisation has depleted the productive labour force, leading to a reduction in the range of household earning opportunities and limiting the income of many households to that of a soldier's salary, just $20 per month. With the traditional staple food, *teff*, costing around $8 a kilo, it is an impossible luxury for the majority of households. Even its cheaper replacement, sorghum, is $2 per kilo.

Government policy is another factor. General food distributions have been suspended to vulnerable groups in favour of food or cash for work. Access to food is tightly controlled. Farmers are required to give a certain proportion of their harvest to the government, and the government forbids the transport of food between

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1 For an overview of the difficulties facing NGOs in Eritrea, see 'Eritrea: How Bad Is the Food Crisis Really?', 12 June 2009, IRIN, http://www.reliefweb.int.
2 According to the FAO, Eritrea is top of a list of 22 countries that are particularly vulnerable to the impact of global food price rises due to a combination of high levels of chronic hunger (75%) and its status as a net importer of food and fuel. See http://www.fao.org/isfp/isfp-home/en.

regions. The harvest collected by the government is allocated to its fair price or rationing scheme, whereby each family is able to purchase a fixed quantity of basic food and fuel items at a lower price. The ration varies according to availability; the current quota for a family of five is 10kg of sorghum and 2.5 litres of oil. This supply is both insufficient and unreliable, but because people are unable to legally purchase more than the ration they are forced to buy what they can on the black market, at much higher prices.

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local food prices have escalated

The operating environment for humanitarian agencies in Eritrea remains unpredictable. Fuel is in short supply and therefore rationed. Vehicles require permits to travel. It is difficult for international staff to get work permits. NGOs are unable to import food items, including oil. If imports are possible an import tax of 18.5% must be paid. NGO operations have been reduced, with the suspension of some programmes and the closure of others; 32 international agencies have withdrawn from Eritrea, and only five remain. UNICEF and WHO are the only international actors managing nutrition programmes in Eritrea (these programmes are implemented by the Ministry of Health).

Under these conditions, it is reasonable to expect that nutrition is severely affected, particularly among the most vulnerable groups. In February 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported that 2 million Eritreans required food aid, and that an estimated 75% of the population was vulnerable to inadequate nutrition.[3] According to UNICEF, malnutrition underpins over 60% of under-five mortality in the country, with acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea the main causes. Malnutrition among women of childbearing age is put at 38% nationally, and 53% in the most drought-affected regions.[4] According to a recent UNICEF report, rates of acute malnutrition in Anseba and Gash Barka provinces were above 15%; by February 2009, admission rates to therapeutic feeding centres were already two to six times higher than in 2008. Although comprehensive data is not available for 2009, food prices have risen, the harvest has been poor and the political and economic context has not improved. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the nutrition situation has not got any better either.

The supplementary feeding project
On the basis of this analysis of the food crisis, the challenges of the operating environment and available funding, CAFOD decided to initiate a three-month pilot supplementary feeding programme (SFP) from November 2008 to January 2009. It was hoped that this pilot would demonstrate that CAFOD could operate effectively and enable the gathering of information to present a case to donors for a larger, longer SFP.

3 'The Drought and Food Price Situation in Eritrea', FAO Presentation on behalf of UNCT Eritrea, 10 February 2009, Nairobi.
4 UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2007, http://www.unicef.org/har07/index_37429.htm.

The pilot project was supported by the Ministry of Health and local government authorities. It was implemented by local partners in Barentu, Debub, Northern Red Sea and Anseba Regions, through 22 distribution sites in villages and health clinics. The project provided a monthly supplementary food ration to nearly 7,000 moderately malnourished children under five, approximately 3,000 malnourished pregnant women in their third trimester and malnourished lactating mothers of babies up to six months. Beneficiaries received 9kg of supplementary food (DMK) per month. DMK is similar in nutritional value to CSB or UNIMIX, and is produced in Eritrea. It is made from a cereal base (sorghum and millet), chickpeas, peanut paste and mineral mix. The ration would normally include oil, but as oil could not be imported or procured locally it was decided to increase the monthly ration from 7kg to 9kg in order to meet the recommended calorie intake, though it was recognised that the proportion of fat was too low.

Community screening
The local partners identified target areas based on consultation with the Ministry of Health at national and local level, UNICEF, local health services and community leaders. A quota system was used to determine the number of beneficiaries in each area. In the absence of a national nutrition survey, CAFOD recommended that field partners screened all children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers in each target area before the first distribution, to identify and register beneficiaries. The mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) of all children under five was taken; those under 13cm were weighed and measured. Those with a weight for height (WFH) measurement below 80% were admitted into the programme. Those below WFH 70% were classified as suffering from severe acute malnutrition and referred to therapeutic feeding centres. A MUAC measurement of under 23cm was used as the cut-off point for pregnant and lactating women.

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village-based rapid screening provided a clear indication of the nutrition situation

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Without a full nutrition survey, it was not possible to establish global or severe acute malnutrition rates. However, the village-based rapid screening, which covered 20,725 children, provided a clearer indication of the nutrition situation. In Anseba zone, of the 9,012 children screened 0.2% were severely malnourished and 20% moderately malnourished. At the start of the project, 517 severely malnourished children in Gash Barka Zone were registered, which is an extremely alarming figure. Although feedback and registration documents from staff suggested that this was correct, CAFOD had no access to the region to verify this.

Factors indicating a food crisis
The supplementary feeding project targeted nearly 10,000 malnourished children and pregnant and lactating mothers. CAFOD conducted a review of the project in January 2009,

and the agency continues to request feedback from partners. CAFOD believes that the following factors all point to a food crisis in the areas where the project was implemented. As far as we know, no other agencies are providing supplementary feeding in these areas.

- The SFP was carried out during the three months after the annual harvest period, which is when people usually have the best access to food. It was therefore likely that the food security situation would continue to deteriorate until the expected rains in July.
- During the review we found that, just a few months after the harvest, some households had already started to adopt coping mechanisms to deal with food shortages. These included selling family assets (mainly livestock), travelling long distances to harvest wild fruits and berries and reducing the frequency of meals and the amount of food consumed.
- During the three-month programme, high numbers of beneficiaries travelled long distances, some from areas outside the region of operation, to be registered in the SFP. In some areas, moderately malnourished children and mothers who met the admission criteria had to be turned away due to limited resources.
- The majority of severely malnourished children identified were unable to access therapeutic feeding services due partly to a shortage of services in certain areas, and practical constraints which prevented mothers from seeking medical care for their children.[5] As these children were not receiving any treatment, the SFP had little choice but to admit them despite the fact that it could not provide adequate treatment.[6]
- Analysis of the end of project data reveals low cure rates and a longer length of stay compared with other SFPs. At the end of the project a significant number of children and mothers were still moderately malnourished and in need of continued supplementary food rations. At the

end of the SFP in January 2009 there were still 2,381 moderately malnourished and five severely malnourished children in Debub, and 1,786 and 234 respectively in Gash Barka. SFP distribution staff attribute this to the lack of additional food sources within the family and the sharing of the DMK ration. Feedback from beneficiaries confirmed that families had shared DMK as they had little or no access to other food sources. The data and beneficiary feedback indicate that beneficiaries were using DMK as their main food source, rather than as a food supplement.
- At least 50 more severely malnourished children were admitted to health centres between January and April 2009. In Debub zone, 98 severely malnourished children were identified in mid-March 2009, but clinics were unable to admit them due to a lack of TFC supplies. Based on our knowledge of the constraints communities face in accessing TFC services, we believe that many more severely malnourished children have not sought or received treatment.
- During the latest Vitamin A campaign, conducted in early May 2009 by the Ministry of Health, at least 8,486 moderately malnourished children were identified; they have no access to treatment.

Conclusion

CAFOD believes that a food crisis persists in its areas of operation in Eritrea. In the present situation, it is difficult to see how the food security situation can improve, even if rains are adequate. It is reasonable to assume that this may also be the case in other areas where data does not exist, as many of the causes of food shortages are nationwide and there are no other large-scale SFP programmes and no general food distributions. With general food distributions prohibited, there is a strong argument for continuing and expanding supplementary feeding programmes. CAFOD has secured funding to continue the project until April 2010 and is seeking further funds to increase its scale and duration. We believe that the learning and data from the supplementary feeding project itself provides a better overview of the nutrition situation and is a strong justification for further donor funding.

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5 The majority of beneficiary households are headed by women. It is difficult for women to stay in the clinic for the duration of the therapeutic treatment or to travel long distances to collect the therapeutic food every week from clinic-based out-patient therapeutic services.

6 During the review, it was noted that, in order to prevent malnourished children from deteriorating and to reduce the incidence of malnutrition, it is necessary to provide communities with nutrition services closer to their homes. Since then, the local partner has successfully advocated for an out-patient TFC at Engherne clinic.

Protection and humanitarian space: a case-study of the UN Mission to the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT)

John Karlsrud and Diana Felix da Costa

In Chad, government forces, rebels, militias and ethnic groups frequently clash. A number of inter-related factors are in play in the violence, including scarce natural resources such as land, livestock and water, historical grievances and the inequitable distribution of economic resources, the proliferation of arms and weak democratic processes and state institutions. Refugee and IDP camps

in eastern Chad have become increasingly militarised; recruitment campaigns including the forced recruitment of children are commonplace among all parties to the conflict, and the camps are allegedly used as rear bases for rest and recuperation by rebel groups of both Chadian and Sudanese origin. In all, an estimated 260,000 refugees from Sudan and 70,600 from the Central African

Republic are living in eastern Chad. A further 171,000 Chadians have been displaced. The need for humanitarian assistance has been enormous. Insecurity prevails and violations of basic human rights are frequent and systematic. Meanwhile, although cross-border raids by Sudanese *Janjaweed* militia and ethnic conflict have become less frequent in recent years, the security environment for the humanitarian community has deteriorated as a result of increased banditry.

The international community responded to the ongoing violence in Chad by authorising the deployment of a UN civilian and police mission, MINURCAT, and a European military force, EUFOR, to protect refugees, IDPs and humanitarian workers and widen humanitarian space. In addition, an 850-strong Chadian police/gendarme force – the *Détachment Intégré de Securité* (DIS) – has been trained and mentored by MINURCAT.[1] The decision to establish a military force – EUFOR – under separate command was taken when it became clear that Chad would not accept a UN force. While this presented coordination difficulties, on the positive side EUFOR could mobilise, deploy and develop bases much faster than a traditional UN force and provide protection by presence more rapidly. On 15 March 2009, after one year of operation, authority over the military component of the mission was transferred as planned from EUFOR to MINURCAT.

MINURCAT and protection

The protection activities of MINURCAT include regular military patrols and escorts, training and mentoring of the DIS to providing security in refugee and IDP camps, as well as population centres, and deploying human rights, political and civil affairs, gender and other civilian officers to the field to monitor the situation and support intercommunity reconciliation initiatives, all geared towards creating safe and secure conditions for the return of refugees and IDPs.

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the mandate of peacekeeping missions has become more proactive

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With the adoption by the UN General Assembly in 2005 of the 'Responsibility to Protect' principle, the mandate of peacekeeping missions has become more proactive and has gradually expanded to include the protection of civilians, as well as UN personnel and humanitarian workers. MINURCAT is the first UN peacekeeping mission with a *comprehensive* protection mandate. While this is a laudable development it also poses some new challenges. With this expanded mandate, missions must also reflect more deeply on how they relate to national security institutions, which have the primary responsibility for civilian protection. Chad possesses a plethora of security

1 The DIS was initially named *Police Tchadienne pour la protection humanitaire* (PTPH), but was renamed to reflect the composition of the force, of which half are from the Police and half from the Gendarmerie.

actors. National forces include the *Armée Nationale du Tchad* (ANT), the *Gendarmes*, the Police and the DIS. Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive security response to the spectrum of threats present in eastern Chad, while maintaining the integrity and neutrality of protection activities, is a significant challenge.

The military force should provide a safe and secure environment in eastern Chad, patrolling main roads and deploying at short notice to protect civilians threatened by *Janjaweed* and other militias. However, one of the main challenges has been banditry, which EUFOR was initially not calibrated to respond to. This forced a fundamental rethinking of how the military should respond to threats in the area. It became clear that what was needed was a mobile and flexible force more reliant on light vehicles for patrolling and helicopters for rapid deployment. MINURCAT's concept of operations has been reconfigured accordingly. However, the force is currently at 48% deployment of the mandated 5,200 soldiers, and only three out of 18 military helicopters have been deployed. In the absence of forces and helicopters, MINURCAT has provided military escorts as a temporary measure to ensure continued humanitarian operations, but this is a compromise that both humanitarians and the mission would like to discontinue. Most of the force is scheduled to arrive before the end of the year; Bangladesh has pledged to send another three utility helicopters.

The DIS meanwhile is intended to strengthen security at IDP sites, refugee camps and population centres. The DIS is a new element in the UN peacekeeping context, representing the first time that a national security force has become integrated into and accountable to a UN mission. So far, the DIS has had a positive impact in the east. It is now deployed to all stations and posts in eastern Chad, and feedback from the humanitarian community indicates that it is providing security. The DIS will continue to improve its performance with further training. Although there was a surge in hijackings, assaults and robberies in the first three months of 2009, DIS officers have made a number of arrests, including of military personnel. Some serious disciplinary cases involving the DIS have emerged, but national authorities have been quick and firm in dealing with them.

The DIS is funded to the end of 2009 from the MINURCAT Trust Fund, with contributions totalling €21 million, but funding for 2010 is still not secured. MINURCAT has equipped the DIS with vehicles, uniforms and side-arms, and is building police stations in six major towns and police posts in 12 refugee camps. Despite initial delays, 850 DIS officers have been trained and deployed to eastern Chad. UN Police provide in-service mentoring support at a ratio of one UN officer to every three DIS colleagues. MINURCAT and national authorities have worked to secure the significant participation of women in the DIS, and currently women make up around 10% of both the DIS and the UN Police (81 out of the total of 850), enabling the force to better communicate with women in the camps.

The UN Police and the DIS are part of a comprehensive strategy to tackle impunity. In the judicial sector, MINURCAT,

together with UNDP and the European Commission, is working to support the government in an effort to strengthen the judicial and prison system by establishing mobile courts, training judges and prison personnel and supporting the revision of the judicial and penal systems. One challenge has been frequent escapes by prisoners caught by the DIS, underscoring the need for improved prisons and a comprehensive approach to tackle impunity. Prosecutors and judges who have been deployed to the east have received death threats and have in some cases refused to stay, and their security remains a major concern.

MINURCAT has also been tasked to assist authorities in promoting and implementing local-level reconciliation in eastern Chad, aimed at improving inter-community dialogue and restoring traditional protection mechanisms disrupted by the increase of violence. This includes supporting customary conflict management and resolution institutions, which in many rural areas have been the only existing structures for regulating disputes and protecting communities, while also extending the presence of the state into these areas.

MINURCAT has also been tasked with assisting in local-level reconciliation in eastern Chad

UN agencies and NGOs are also undertaking protection activities in Chad. A protection cluster has been established for coordination purposes in the capital, N'Djamena, and in Abéché in eastern Chad. Sub-clusters have also been set up in smaller towns in the east. Human rights and civil affairs officers represent MINURCAT in the protection clusters. MINURCAT liaises with the humanitarian community on a weekly basis through meetings hosted by OCHA. The SRSG, the Force Commander, the Police Commissioner and UN Security are present to ensure that humanitarians' security concerns are dealt with comprehensively.

Summary

Since January 2009, humanitarian organisations have repeatedly been forced to scale down or suspend their operations because of violent incidents. The combination of a wide proliferation of arms, local resentment due to the inequitable distribution of humanitarian aid skewed towards refugees and an ample supply of material resources and money from the international community has created fertile ground for widespread banditry, targeting humanitarians in particular. Coupled with the lack of a programme to rid eastern Chad of arms, this puts the onus on the providers of security. The successful work of the DIS, in cooperation with MINURCAT and national forces, is of paramount importance for the continued operation and presence of humanitarian agencies.

The international community must reflect on the nature of the threats faced in situations such as in Chad, and calibrate their response accordingly, both in terms of security support and funding. Being the central pillar of the mission, the DIS should not have to rely entirely on voluntary contributions from donors. UN member states should revise the rules for assessing UN mission budgets to include interventions such as these. MINURCAT has taken into account some of the lessons learned from the cooperation with EUFOR and deployed a more mobile military force.

The DIS has the potential to be a seed for wider security sector reform (SSR) in Chad. In April 2009, an EU delegation visited Chad to assess opportunities for SSR. This is encouraged by the government of Chad and may create an entry point for other capacity development programmes in the security and governance sectors. Conversely, the UN has only a mentoring and advisory role with regard to the DIS, and no executive authority. This means that the UN cannot guarantee the impartiality of the DIS. Some have argued that this is a significant risk to the impartiality of the UN itself. This will remain one of the main challenges facing the mission.

The deployment of a multidimensional presence also had its advantages and disadvantages. EUFOR could deploy much faster than a traditional UN force and could rapidly establish bases and stabilise the situation in the field. This should form a model for future cooperation between the UN and the European Union. However, there is a need to improve the framework for cooperation between the two entities to enhance coordination and information-sharing mechanisms.

On the civilian side, MINURCAT is intensifying its efforts to promote inter-community dialogue. This is instrumental to the successful implementation of the larger recovery programme recently agreed between the government of Chad and the UN. It also has the potential to create a more community-based movement for peace and political participation in eastern Chad. Only by addressing poverty, developing state capacities, extending basic services and supporting income-generating efforts can a sustainable foundation be built for long-term peace and development. Long-term civilian protection requires a political solution. MINURCAT's mandate is exclusive to the east of the country. As has been repeatedly emphasised by the UN Secretary-General, the sources of conflict and insecurity in eastern Chad will only be addressed through an inclusive and comprehensive national political process.

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Making the tough calls: decision-making in complex humanitarian environments

Ashley Clements and Dr Edwina Thompson

We are not certain where the line is between being practical – and therefore liaising with the local power base – and taking a principled stand. World Vision staff survey, April 2008

In a world where very few NGOs are perceived to be neutral by the beneficiary population, the urgency of good policy thinking cannot be overstated. World Vision staff survey, March 2008

The world of the humanitarian worker has changed. It has grown more insecure and more complex in recent decades. As we strive for greater professionalism, accountability, adherence to standards and improved quality across the industry, we also require more rigour in terms of our decision-making abilities and processes. This article provides an update on progress in applying the 'HISS-CAM' tool, developed in 2008 as the result of a World Vision study into NGO staff engagement with military, police and other armed actors.[1] We and other agencies have found that the lessons from this research do not stop with armed actors and militaries. Rather, they point more broadly to the need for better analysis and appropriate decision-making processes to meet the specific challenges of today's operating environments.

The tough calls
Drawn from World Vision's experience over the past year, the following three examples are typical of the types of 'tough calls' confronting aid workers.

In Afghanistan, a convoy carrying 500 tonnes of food was dispatched to meet the needs of pregnant and lactating mothers and children under two years of age. En route, 10 tonnes of rice was seized from the convoy by a disgruntled ex-commander. After consulting local leaders, he agreed to return the commodities and retreat on the condition that the World Food Programme (WFP) established operations in his area. The request was reasonable given the clear need for humanitarian assistance in that area, and if World Vision – as WFP's implementing agency in the area – were to accept this offer, staff security might improve and access to the original target population might increase. But what would be the implications for the agency's independence? And would the office be showing that it could be manipulated for political purposes? In this case, World Vision suspended the dispatch of further convoys to the province, and consulted with the local authorities and police in the areas concerned. Rather than accepting the offer of a police escort, the World Vision logistics team decided to explore an alternative option that involved outsourcing the transport of food through local contractors.

1 See Edwina Thompson, *Principled Pragmatism*, World Vision International, 2008, www.worldvision.org.uk/upload/pdf/Principled_pragmatism.pdf.

In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, assessments conducted by World Vision staff confirmed widespread reports that fear of attacks by armed actors was the primary protection concern among women and children. While inter-agency initiatives to address this issue were being developed through the protection cluster, these were not sufficiently advanced to implement immediately. With funding available for this work, World Vision faced a decision – whether to initiate an individual agency response utilising the legal knowledge and skills of experienced protection staff, or wait for the inter-agency initiative to become operational. Key questions included whether engaging directly with actors such as the national military and police through training would enhance World Vision's legitimacy or detract from it in the eyes of the local population. What would be the risks to the organisation's perceived impartiality? And how would the organisation mitigate any potential negative impacts? In this case, World Vision decided to develop training modules in domestic and international human rights law, International Humanitarian Law and other humanitarian principles, focusing on the responsibilities of government authorities to protect civilians. The agency also formed community protection committees.

> ## how should operational humanitarian agencies navigate these complex environments and make these tough calls?

In Darfur, World Vision was approached to manage food distributions in a displacement camp. Large numbers of children were suffering malnutrition and were in need of urgent medical and nutritional assistance. There was concern, however, that aid entering the area could be appropriated by one of the parties to the conflict. The use of armed escorts to protect food convoys was raised in a coordination meeting, but allegations of abuse of the local population by the military, as well as resource constraints among the police, made any offer of support from the government problematic. It was decided that the only viable solution for protecting the convoys was to coordinate movements with UN peacekeeping troops. No other agency was prepared to provide assistance to the camp, which was deemed too dangerous to reach. Should World Vision service the camp? How compelling was the need? What would be the implications of association with the UN? And would it be possible to ensure adequate protection of staff? In this last case, World Vision decided to proceed with the use of UN armed escorts. Over the following months, it was the only major international agency providing assistance

(including food, WASH and health services) to the camp and its host population.

Despite the apparently satisfactory outcomes in these examples, it is clear from a due diligence perspective that the decisions made could have benefited from greater transparency, inter-agency consultation and documentation to ensure that key issues were considered.

Responding to the tough calls

So how, then, should we as operational humanitarian agencies navigate these complex environments and make these tough calls? We argue that the key to solving this problem is adhering to our humanitarian principles; these are what set us apart from other actors sharing our operating space, and provide us with the legitimacy we need to sustain our engagement. The difficulty of translating principles into practice, however, is well known among agency staff. The notion of impartiality, for example, is widely accepted by NGOs, but what does it look like on the ground?

In the face of growing risks and a more complex operational environment, we require a greater capacity for decision-making and on-the-hoof reflection, which takes into account both the principles at the core of our identity and the contextual realities and needs we seek to address. This was the reasoning behind the initial development of 'HISS-CAM' (see Box 1). The concept can be depicted as a kind of balancing act – providing agency staff with a framework for balancing the ethical considerations ('principles') and tactical choices ('pragmatism') that are necessary to fulfil the humanitarian imperative (see Box 2). The three-step 'CAM' process is depicted as the fulcrum through which the humanitarian team can effectively weigh operational choices against principles to determine the best course of action. 'HISS-CAM' stops short of providing an 'answer' to a given problem, but instead offers a framework for arriving at a decision after careful consideration of key issues and potential mitigating options.

We have found that this step-by-step approach of breaking down complex decisions improves the likelihood

Box 1: The 'HISS-CAM' tool

Humanitarian imperative
Impartiality and independence
Safety
Sustainability
Compelling aim
Appropriate, adapted, adequately informed
Minimal negative impact

that vital areas are taken into consideration, such as the perceived impartiality of an organisation, the safety and acceptance of staff and the sustainability of programmatic interventions. Again, the aim is not to provide prescriptive guidance, but rather to help build staff confidence and capacity in making difficult decisions.

'HISS-CAM' was originally designed as a tool for equipping staff with the ability to determine appropriate levels of interaction with armed actors in areas that are considered to fall within the category of 'exceptions to the rules'. Such exceptional and often unpredictable circumstances could involve situations in which either military engagement in a traditionally humanitarian activity seems necessary in order to save lives and alleviate suffering, or where the environment obliges humanitarian actors to interact with armed groups, often at the risk of jeopardising staff security and invoking negative perceptions of the organisation. As can be seen in Figure 1, 'HISS-CAM' links directly to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s 'continuum of engagement', which describes the spectrum of possible interactions between humanitarian and military operations. These range from co-existence to co-operation. Our policy added a fourth 'C' (curtail presence) to provide entities with the option to suspend engagement altogether, even if only temporarily whilst strategies are revised.
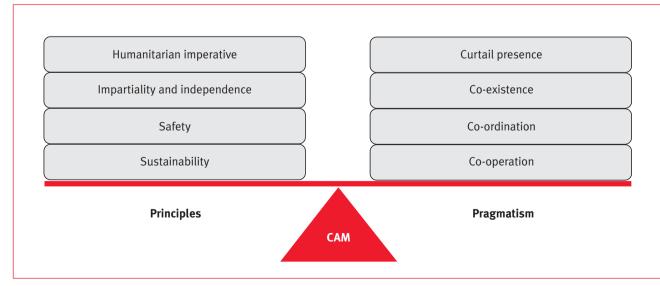
Figure 1: The balancing act

When making decisions about how to proceed, or when reviewing a current mode of operation, the action is measured against the four key sets of principles listed under the banner of 'HISS'. The first two elements – adherence to the humanitarian imperative, and impartiality and independence – are derived directly from the Red Cross Code of Conduct. The last two concepts – security and protection, and sustainability – are practical considerations connected to the 'Do No Harm' principle. Within the context of development work, which is underpinned by long-term considerations that aim to assist communities to overcome poverty and injustice, any compromise of these principles clearly requires the highest level of justification and a consideration of mitigating options.

From our experience, not only has 'HISS-CAM' proved helpful to staff in making more transparent, accountable and considered choices for engagement with military and other armed actors, but it also offers a platform for collaborative decision-making that incorporates essential elements of humanitarian best practice and codes of conduct. Its field applications have shown that the tactical choices laid out in OCHA's continuum of engagement can be substituted for a range of other operational questions, such as entry/exit to an area, engagement/non-engagement with a group or proceed/do not proceed with an operational choice. The tool also provides a format for documenting the reasons for reaching a particular decision, which can then go towards future organisational learning and ultimately help to improve the quality of humanitarian work. To date, 'HISS-CAM' has been applied by World Vision in at least 16 field situations in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Caucasus (see Box 2).

Looking ahead

'HISS-CAM' introduces transparency and rigour to the decision-making process, and an opportunity to consider critical elements which might not otherwise feature adequately. At its simplest level, the tool can prompt agency staff to re-evaluate the constraints of their contexts; something which is frequently neglected in dynamic, high-pressure environments.

The ability to use 'HISS-CAM' as a collaborative tool – both within a field operation and between agencies – offers a potentially new level of inter-agency collaboration, which seems increasingly relevant in complex environments. This shared approach has been applied in the recent Sri Lanka crisis as a way for multiple agencies to discuss issues, review past decisions and reach shared agreement on the appropriate actions to be taken. We see many more opportunities to use and develop the tool further, and

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Box 2: Putting it into practice

The following is a list of practical applications of 'HISS-CAM' conducted by World Vision staff:

- **Afghanistan**: Acceptance of grants; outsourcing transportation of assets to third parties
- **Georgia**: Distribution of ready-to-eat meals and Humanitarian Daily Rations supplied by the US government during the conflict
- **Myanmar**: Use of military assets in the Cyclone Nargis response
- **Somalia**: Options for continued programme viability in south-central regions
- **Sri Lanka**: Humanitarian access in Vanni province; humanitarian support to internment camps; advocacy to armed group forcibly taking products from the agency's agricultural farm

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would encourage other agencies to seek out opportunities for inter-agency collaboration, particularly when decisions are critical to our security and our ability to operate in emergencies. Not only does a tool like 'HISS-CAM' have the potential to facilitate communication within different offices and between agencies, but it also assists in bringing local staff into discussions, building their capacity to think as a humanitarian and communicate their ideas in a joint platform. A further benefit during the response phase of a disaster is that the tool can connect local staff better with visiting international staff, who convey operational realities to donors and the public in fundraising centres.

There is no way to guarantee 'good' decisions in complex environments – a multitude of variables and risks and a lack of information will certainly continue to plague the decision-making process. We can, however, make *better* decisions, and we should strive for the best possible course of action given the constraints. 'HISS-CAM' has begun to provide one answer to our dilemma of how to put our principles into practice, by allowing humanitarians in some of the world's most chronic and complex crises to make more considered, transparent, consultative (and yet rapid) decisions under pressure.

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Media and message: communicating crises

Joanna Matthews

Humanitarian agencies rely heavily on the media to raise awareness of crises and generate income. For the media, however, the driving force is the search for a story. Despite

levels of death and destruction far outstripping the acute crises which seize the headlines, chronic emergencies such as civil wars and ongoing famines are neither

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immediate nor spectacular enough to warrant extensive coverage. Millions have died in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), making the conflict there the deadliest since the Second World War, dwarfing the combined death-tolls of all the other high-profile natural disasters and acts of terrorism of the past decade. In contrast, the Indian Ocean tsunami, which caused 187,000 deaths, received more media attention in the first six weeks after it struck than the emergencies in the DRC, northern Uganda and Darfur combined over a whole year.[1] The result of this media blitz was that, by February 2005, the international community had donated $550 per person affected by the tsunami, compared to just $9.40 for each person affected by conflict in the DRC. The Charities Aid Foundation in the UK estimates that donors gave around £1 per head less to other charities in 2004/5 than they would have done had it not been for the tsunami appeal – equivalent to £48 million (around $80 million) diverted from other causes.

A quantitative survey of press coverage reveals that, in terms of column inches, acute disasters attract significantly more attention in proportion to their actual severity than long-term crises, with a strong correlation with the amount of money donated by the public. But issues of quality as well as quantity seem to play a key role in this process. A content analysis of a representative sample of UK newspaper coverage from the Indian Ocean tsunami and the war in DRC reveals a number of trends that can be seen as either 'positive' or 'negative', i.e. likely to encourage or deter donations.

acute disasters attract significantly more attention in proportion to their actual severity than long-term crises

'Positive coverage': the Indian Ocean tsunami
The tsunami represents a disaster so apocalyptic in its scale and so fertile in its media applicability that it provides a paradigm for 'positive' coverage in terms of the issues that excite the media and consequently encourage the British public to 'dig deep'. A 'Wave of Death', it 'tore children from their parents' arms'. As a natural disaster that showed man pitted against the elements, the tsunami provided a politically neutral story of universal interest. The poignancy of the disaster was increased by its timing; it struck on Boxing Day, which meant that the media could tap into seasonal philanthropy, emphasising that, 'as Britain wallows in the excesses of Christmas, Britons should direct their wallets eastwards'. Unusually for natural catastrophes, it was a story touching Western interests as developed countries mourned their own lost citizens and were brought closer to the realities of disaster. Human interest is a key factor, and emotive stories of Western loss were a powerful feature of the

coverage; *The Times* reported the loss of three members of film director Richard Attenborough's family, underlining the indiscriminate terror of the wave, engulfing celebrities and ordinary folk alike.

The response of the public soon became a story in its own right as Britons gave at a rate of £1 million an hour. The press congratulated the public on its altruism, *The Sunday Times* saying that 'the British public should be feeling a little better about itself this morning'. This fervent philanthropy and self-congratulation in turn perpetuated the discourse of 'them' and 'us', in which the West is portrayed as 'expert, the holders of life-saving knowledge, providers and saviours', while the Indian Ocean countries are depicted 'as chaotic, foolish and as recipients and victims'.[2] Though not political in its origins, the story acquired political endorsement as the nation's leaders responded to the public mood, with British Prime Minister Tony Blair promising that the UK government would surpass whatever the general public contributed. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the tsunami generated a wealth of dramatic, terrifying images from holidaymakers and photojournalists alike.

When looking at the aspects of the tsunami that provoked this spate of media attention and this outpouring of aid, it is hard to disentangle the motivations of the media from the motivations of the British public, as the press will always choose to report primarily on what they know will interest their readers. But it is undeniable that the discourses of disaster used in the tsunami struck a powerful chord, stimulating unparalleled charitable giving.

'Negative' coverage: the conflict in the DRC
Meanwhile, events that happen to the world's poorest people in countries that are off the Western 'radar' may simply be ignored by the media because they do not contain enough of the positive triggers discussed above. But 'negative' coverage may also take the form of exposure that is in some way hostile or critical; rather than focusing on the facts of a crisis and the humanitarian toll it exacts, it concentrates instead on damaging stereotypes of countries, criticisms of governments and other agencies, evocations of guilt or allegations of corruption.

Unlike the act of God of the tsunami, the DRC conflict is often presented as somehow self-inflicted, a convoluted and confusing conflict impervious to outside understanding. As *The Guardian* put it, 'both groups are armed by the same master, Rwanda ... it's hard to see why they're fighting'. The military nature of conflict in the DRC has been emphasised by the British media, a trait which may discourage a more generous response from the public. In situations of conflict, civil society often clamours for a political response, such as intervention to end the war, over a humanitarian one; as a result, if the media plays up the conflict and disregards the humanitarian needs it creates, charitable giving is likely to be less generous.[3]

1 Reuters Foundation AlertNet, *Factsheet: Alertnet Top 10 'Forgotten' Emergencies*, 2002, http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefre-sources/111038817665.htm.

2 T. Skelton, *Representations of the 'Asian Tsunami' in the British Media* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, Asian MetaCentre Research Paper Series, 2006).

3 C. Nursey, 'The International Tsunami Response: Showcase or Circus?', *Humanitarian Exchange*, 32, 2005.

The discourse of corruption and brutality also serves to cultivate a negative stereotype of Africa as a continent beyond hope and help. Rather than encouraging sympathy, it may simply reinforce what one commentator has called 'afro-pessimism' – a post-colonial perception of a homogenous block of uncivilised people incapable of self-government.[4] In addition, it can pander to a sort of morbid fascination with a part of the world which is disjointed from us in the West, geographically and culturally. In this sort of coverage, civilians are reduced to nameless extras, lurking in the shadows while Western aid workers or celebrity tourists occupy centre stage.[5] In other words, Africa has become an image of disaster. We have come to expect it, and our expectations are reinforced by the media; when through bafflement or boredom we fail to respond, media coverage declines still further.

Conclusion

However independent-minded we like to think we are, it is indisputable that the media shape our perceptions of many issues, and that knowingly or unknowingly we absorb the information and opinions which they feed us. We rely on the media to keep us up to date with the ever-shifting patterns of disaster, conflict and poverty in our high-speed world. If journalists produce a particularly stirring story, we may feel moved to make a charitable donation. Yet editors do not prioritise crises according to humanitarian need or objective levels of severity, but rather by stories, by images, by drama. They select stories based on their experience of what sells papers, and what the British public wants to read. The under-reported crises across the world relating to poverty, to civil war, to fractious politics and, arguably, to all things African, however devastating, fail to 'tick the right boxes'. So begins a vicious spiral whereby crises get relegated to the league of 'forgotten emergencies': lack of coverage, lack of awareness, lack of public sympathy, lack of financial support.

It should be stressed that this is not a criticism of the British media. Rather, it serves to demonstrate the mobilising effect that their coverage has on the mass consciousness of Britain, and to suggest that the public, aid agencies and the media themselves should be more aware of the power of that effect. Every party needs to adopt a level of responsibility, and move to improve relations and communications. From the public perspective, we perhaps need to analyse more carefully the way in which we respond to acute disasters, and recognise that, however commendable and urgent our generosity, it rarely provides a sustainable solution. We also need to be aware of the limitations of relying on one source of information, and look elsewhere for explanation and detail, both from aid organisations and specialist humanitarian media outfits and from all the new sources of information made available by digital technology. On the part of aid organisations a further effort is needed to improve relations with the mass media in terms of supplying current, comprehensive human-interest updates on crises that need a response from the general public – as well as news on any positive outcomes that have emerged and sustainable solutions that have been implemented. In-house media and professional marketing campaigns are also essential in order to harness a response from a public bombarded with choice and anaesthetised by disaster.

It is difficult to fully disentangle who is responsible for the often conspicuous discrepancies between humanitarian need and media coverage. What is clear, however, is that, in a world littered with disasters, and with increased access to media, from traditional newspapers to online news 24 hours a day, there is an imperative need for accurate, responsible, transparent and trustworthy reporting systems. It may transpire that, however much information the British public are given about the relative severity of particular crises, they will still be more reluctant to donate money for long-term, sustainable, humanitarian causes than for acute emergencies. How to change that particular mentality will be the next big challenge.

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Military responses to natural disasters: last resort or inevitable trend?

Charles-Antoine Hofmann and Laura Hudson, British Red Cross

States are increasingly contributing military assets in humanitarian emergencies. As a result, the humanitarian community has paid growing attention to civil–military relations, culminating in a series of guidelines and research activity and more frequent interaction on the ground. Most of this work has focused on complex emergencies. The subject is undoubtedly more contentious in conflict settings, where blurring the lines between humanitarian and military actors can compromise neutrality and independence, restricting humanitarian access and increasing security risks. It is also relevant in responses to natural disasters, for two reasons. First, many recent large-scale disasters have occurred in contexts of ongoing conflict or violence, which means that some of the issues encountered in complex emergencies also apply. Second, many governments are gearing up for a greater military role in disaster response, and military involvement, whether national or international, is likely to become more frequent.

A German military helicopter transporting relief items for the Pakistan Red Cross and IFRC following the earthquake in 2005

This article is part of an ongoing research project conducted by the British Red Cross to examine civil–military relations in natural disasters, with specific reference to the experiences of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Desk-based case studies and interviews conducted so far focus on four recent operations in which the Federation was involved: the tsunami response in Aceh (2004), the Pakistan earthquake (2005), floods and a cyclone in Mozambique (2007) and the Haiti hurricane (2008). Some of the main findings are highlighted below.

Military involvement in natural disasters

While the involvement of the military in relief operations is not new (think of the 1948–49 Berlin airlift, for example), military engagement in relief activities has grown since the early 1990s. Military resources were used in response to the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, and after Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998. More recently, the US military supported the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the UK military was brought in to help tackle floods in Britain in 2007 and huge numbers of Chinese troops were deployed in the aftermath of the earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008. Following the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, domestic and international military actors mounted the largest humanitarian helicopter airlift ever seen. Regional alliances too are paying growing attention to the role of the military. Initiatives are currently under way in the Asia-Pacific region, largely in reaction to the tsunami. NATO is playing a growing role in disaster response, for example in the US Katrina response and the Pakistan relief operation in 2005.

There are various factors driving the growing interest of the military in responding to disasters: assisting relief efforts can improve the military's image and provide training opportunities, and may also be a way for the military to diversify their role at a time when armed forces globally are experiencing budget cuts. With an increase in the incidence of natural disasters, national and foreign militaries can be expected to play a bigger role – particularly in large-scale disasters, where the capacity of humanitarian organisations may be stretched.

> **various factors are driving the growing interest of the military in responding to disasters**

Humanitarian actors view these developments with a wary eye. In the US, the NGO consortium InterAction has raised concerns about the newly established US Command for Africa (AFRICOM), whose tasks include supporting humanitarian assistance. Growing interest within the

European Union in deploying civil defence and military assets outside EU territory has prompted similar concerns. Critics of the military's involvement in relief claim that it is inefficient, inappropriate, inadequate and expensive, contrary to humanitarian principles and driven by political imperatives rather than humanitarian need.

Guidelines on civil–military relations in natural disasters

The *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief*, known as the Oslo Guidelines,[1] state that, whereas the involvement of domestic military forces is often a first resort due to lack of capacity elsewhere, the use of foreign military assets must be a last resort. These guidelines also clearly affirm the primary responsibility of the affected state for providing humanitarian assistance on its territory, and state that foreign military and civil defence assets must complement (rather than supplant) existing relief mechanisms. The final authority over the use of foreign military assets clearly lies with the affected state: for instance, the Indonesian government accepted a good deal of foreign military support, but put a 90-day limit on deployments. The principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship affirm 'the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action', and require states to ensure that military assistance is 'in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations'.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has its own guidelines on relations with the military. The key principles are as follows:

- While maintaining a dialogue with armed forces at all levels, components of the Movement preserve their independence of decision-making and action.
- All components of the Movement ensure that they act and are perceived as acting in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular independence, neutrality and impartiality.
- Each component draws a clear distinction between the respective roles of military bodies and humanitarian actors, paying particular attention to perceptions locally and within the wider public.
- The use of military assets by a component of the Movement – in particular in countries affected by armed conflict and/or internal strife/disturbance – is a last resort solution, which can only be justified by serious and urgent humanitarian needs, as well as by the lack of alternative means.
- The Movement does not use armed protection.

Nature of the dialogue and interaction with the military

Depending on the context, the form of engagement between military and humanitarian actors varies, ranging from keeping a safe distance to much closer levels of collaboration, sometimes with recourse to military assets.

Developing good personal contacts with the military has proved valuable whatever level of coordination is required. For example, despite a desire to publicly distance themselves from the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Federation staff developed discreet personal contacts. This helped the Federation access important security information and increased MINUSTAH's understanding of the Red Cross' concerns.

Military assets as a last resort

The principle of last resort is key for the Red Cross. Perceived as a useful 'safeguard' from an operational perspective, it can, however, be hard to apply in practice. Indeed, it implies that programme managers should explore every available option before making an informed decision. In rapid-onset situations, pragmatism often prevails and good judgement is generally sufficient to assess whether realistic alternatives are available.

In Pakistan, there was a clear justification for the Federation to use military assets, primarily air transport. Similarly in Aceh, the rapid deployment of military helicopters from the region was vital: waiting for civilian planes would have resulted in severe delays and additional loss of life. A more difficult question concerns when to revert to civilian capacity after the initial surge period has passed, particularly as military assets are usually perceived as a 'free good'. While this holds true from the perspective of an aid agency, costs are always borne by the state. Ultimately, using military assets may have implications for the overall humanitarian aid budget, and it is generally accepted that military assets are usually more expensive than civilian ones. It should be noted that some governments, including the UK, make entirely separate allocations for military expenditure associated with humanitarian relief and state aid budgets. Over time, however, this might skew aid financing, effectively reducing funding to aid budgets.

Armed escorts

In all four of the case studies, the Federation abided by its rule of not using armed escorts. For example, the Pakistani military asked humanitarian convoys to use armed police escorts in the North-West Frontier Province. This was resisted by the Federation. In Aceh, government forces initially denied the Federation access to some locations thought to harbour supporters of the separatist Free Aceh Movement, unless staff were accompanied by armed military escorts. Further negotiations enabled the Federation to proceed alone and without incident.

Public perceptions

In all of the case studies, Federation staff considered public perceptions of the Movement's independence and neutrality when deciding on levels of coordination with the military. For example, in Haiti the Federation sought to avoid direct public engagement with MINUSTAH. Privately, however, it coordinated with MINUSTAH when organising a distribution to ensure that MINUSTAH troops were available to respond if security became an issue. This cautious approach may have helped the Federation to

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1 *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief*, OCHA, November 2006.

reach some areas after the hurricanes in the south-east of the country, whereas access was blocked for the UN.

Conclusion: challenges and opportunities for humanitarian actors

Many humanitarian actors understand that the military can play a legitimate and at times vital role in supporting humanitarian relief efforts. Given the growing involvement of military actors in relief activities, humanitarian organisations have an opportunity and, some argue, a responsibility to engage more strategically with the military in order to limit the risks inherent in their involvement and maximise the potential benefits to the disaster response system and affected populations. The question for humanitarian organisations is no longer whether to engage with the military, but rather how and when to do so.

> many humanitarian actors understand that the military can play a legitimate and effective role in supporting humanitarian relief efforts

Issues to consider

- Civil–military relations currently occupy a marginal place in the humanitarian sector. Apart from the ICRC, which due to its mandate must address the issue carefully and consistently, most organisations have very little – if any – capacity in this domain. Yet interaction with the military – both national and international – is likely to become more common. Humanitarian personnel need training, which should include familiarisation with military operating styles and terminology and operational guidance tailored to specific contexts or scenarios.
- At the policy level, agencies should be working to influence military doctrine and explain their concerns, and support the dissemination and implementation of existing guidelines and the development of improved tools. The recent British Armed Forces doctrine publication on Disaster Relief Operations benefited from consultation with agencies, even changing its title from 'humanitarian relief operations' on the basis of agency advice. This engagement should not be limited to the military, but should extend to governments, who decide the roles the military will play in disaster response.
- With the military's growing interest in supporting relief interventions in foreign countries, it is crucial for states that are prone to natural disasters to ensure that they have a proper understanding of key rules and principles, such as the Oslo Guidelines. Preparedness should be improved through the development of national disaster

2 See http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/idrl/index.asp.

plans and training activities. The Federation's International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) programme can play an important role here, by supporting governments to strengthen their domestic legal and policy frameworks for disaster response.[2]
- Finally, dialogue and coordination within the humanitarian community is badly needed. While most debates focus on civil–military relations in countries such as Afghanistan, where conflict is the defining feature, very little attention is paid to the growing role of the military in natural disasters and the implications for humanitarian actors and the principles that underpin their work.

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PRACTICE AND POLICY NOTES

Measuring the socio-economic impact of post-disaster shelter: experiences from two Red Cross programmes

Simone van Dijk and Alexander van Leersum

Post-disaster shelter programmes aim to meet urgent and immediate housing needs. Although evaluations have highlighted short-term benefits and have helped to improve programme design and shelter options, little attention has been paid to the longer-term socio-economic impact of these interventions. Following an initiative of the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), two long-term studies on post-disaster shelter programmes were conducted in collaboration with Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) in the Netherlands. The first considers the long-term socio-economic impact of a shelter programme implemented in 1999–2001 in Vietnam. The second covers a Transitional Shelter (TS) programme implemented by the IFRC and others in Aceh, Indonesia.

This is a standardised methodology for measuring long-term impact, making comparisons between different post-disaster housing programmes more accurate. It is our belief that such a standardised research methodology can give valuable insights into shelter impacts, helping organisations to formulate sustainable shelter responses which consider both immediate and long-term needs.

Research approach

Post-disaster housing programmes are very context-specific. Housing design and implementation must take into account key economic, social, political, environmental and cultural factors, including how households make their living. Thus, analysing the impact of such programmes requires a flexible and context-specific approach. This need is typically answered by embracing a qualitative approach, such as indepth household interviews and group discussions. Although we acknowledge the value of qualitative methods, the case studies below are analysed in the belief that the long-term impact of housing can be better understood when combining qualitative approaches with quantitative tools of analysis, using a standardised research approach. By agreeing on and using a standardised research approach and indicators, it is possible to determine the impact and effectiveness of different shelter programmes.

Both studies discussed here are based on a research approach which includes a focus on social as well as technical factors, a comparison between beneficiaries of the shelter programme and non-beneficiaries, qualitative and quantitative data, objective and subjective indicators and a focus on socio-economic impact over time. For the latter it is best to analyse housing conditions, and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of households at different points in time (e.g. before/just after project implementation and several years after project termination). In the Vietnam case study, it was necessary to reconstruct baseline data for households in 2000. For the study in Aceh, baseline data was collected in 2008, soon after the project ended; the intention is that, four or five years from now, new data will be collected and compared with the baseline information.

'Starter houses' in Vietnam

In 1999, tropical storms and floods struck the central provinces of Vietnam, destroying 55,000 houses and badly damaging hundreds of thousands more. In collaboration with other Red Cross societies, the Vietnamese Red Cross developed a storm-resistant starter-house, consisting of a galvanised steel frame and metal roofing system, positioned on a steel-reinforced concrete foundation. Beneficiary households were responsible for finishing and expanding their houses. In subsequent years, for example, beneficiaries could replace the bamboo mat walls used immediately after the disaster with masonry wall-infill, or even extend the houses. Some 20,000 houses were constructed between 1999 and 2001.

The absence of baseline data was a significant obstacle to determining the socio-economic impact of the shelter programme. Although the initial selection procedures and criteria for identifying beneficiaries were available, wider socio-economic household data was not recorded. In addition, to measure the impact of the shelter programme, it was critical to identify a comparison group which had not received shelter support but had (back in 2000) similar characteristics to the beneficiaries (average age and number of household members, sources of income, level of income, geographical location, etc.). These problems were addressed by analysing secondary data, such as government poverty maps from 2000. In addition, interviews were held with key informants, including community leaders and local Red Cross officials involved in the project in 2000. Semi-randomised sample procedures were applied to select beneficiary and non-beneficiary households. Finally, 94 beneficiaries and 159 non-beneficiaries were interviewed. Household interviews covered objective data, such as housing conditions, but also recall questions regarding changes in living standards since 2000. This research approach – in particular having a comparison group and applying basic statistical analyses – provided valuable insights into socio-economic impact.

Impact of the shelter programme in Vietnam

Overall, beneficiaries were satisfied with the 'starter house', especially its good resistance to storm damage. In case study interviews, respondents also noted that house maintenance and repair costs were considerably lower than before the programme. In a few cases, community leaders reported that these costs had dropped to zero. However, it was still not clear whether these maintenance and repair costs were really different for the comparison (non-beneficiary) group, and if so, whether the difference was substantial.

A starter house built by the Vietnamese Red Cross in Huyen Ky Anh, Ha Tinh province, Vietnam

©Alexander van Leersum (2006)

Data analysis indicated that the difference was indeed statistically significant and that the house maintenance and repair costs for beneficiaries were a third less than those of non-beneficiary households. Qualitative interviews indicated that, as a (secondary) effect, beneficiary households were able to spend more money on food, education and health. The quantitative analysis indicated that beneficiaries were more satisfied with their current houses and had more diverse diets than the comparison group. On average, beneficiary households could afford two meat-meals a week, while non-beneficiary households could afford just less than one. Beneficiary households also possessed more consumer goods, such as rice cookers, than non-beneficiaries.

Transitional shelter programme in Aceh, Indonesia

The tsunami of December 2004 displaced over 550,000 people in Aceh. The IFRC and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reacted by implementing a transitional shelter programme.

From August 2005 to December 2007, almost 20,000 transitional shelters were built, targeting people still living in tents or shacks. The objective of the programme was to 'fill the gap' between emergency shelter, such as tents, and permanent houses. By providing steel-framed houses with wooden walls, floors and metal sheet roofs, the transitional shelter programme aimed to improve living conditions for a two- to four-year period, giving beneficiaries the opportunity to rebuild their permanent homes and livelihoods. To determine whether the programme did indeed improve socio-economic conditions and thus helped people to rebuild homes and livelihoods, a comparison was made between 300 households that had lived in transitional shelters for a period up to four years, and 300 households that had not. Both groups were already living in permanent houses when the study was conducted, which made it possible to make a good comparison.

The data gathered was used to create a baseline. This sketches the social and economic situation of households now, making it possible to compare the two groups. The data will also be useful for a possible further study in four or five years' time. When data is collected at two different points in time it is easier to measure actual impact.

Impacts of the transitional shelter program in Aceh

Analysis of the quantitative data shows that the transitional shelter programme has had a strong social impact and a slight economic impact on beneficiaries. The majority of households that have lived in a transitional shelter evaluate the influence of the shelter on their lives as 'very positive' or 'positive'. Furthermore, the baseline data shows that, even after moving to permanent houses, large numbers of beneficiaries still use the transitional shelters either as additional living space or as business premises. This demonstrates that transitional shelters are not just a temporary post-disaster housing solution, but are a valuable asset which can be used by beneficiaries to further improve their lives. It is however important to note that the positive impact is only maintained when a household lives in the transitional shelter for a relatively short period, which means that transitional shelter should be a short-term housing solution. This is mainly because transitional shelters do not have enough facilities to allow a family to live in them for a long period of time. Follow-up research should tell us more about when this positive impact starts to decrease, and the maximum period that a family should live in a transitional shelter.

Conclusion

The Vietnam case study clearly illustrates that basic quantitative research tools can be a valuable addition to personal stories and narrative reports. Quantitative analyses comparing beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have served to substantiate and fine-tune assessments of the actual socio-economic impact of the housing intervention. The study on the Transitional Shelter programme in Aceh highlights the value of analysing and comparing different types of intervention. It has indicated some of the diverse and dynamic ways in which beneficiaries use the shelter they receive, and how the intervention impacted on their lives in the immediate and intermediate term. The study has generated valuable baseline data, which can be used for follow-up research. By applying a standardised methodology, comparison between programmes becomes a more realistic proposition. Standard long-term impact evaluations can also help organisations to develop a more sustainable shelter response strategy that corresponds to immediate and long-term needs.

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PRACTICE AND POLICY NOTES

A grassroots perspective on risks stemming from disasters and conflict

Annelies Heijmans, Ifeanyi Okechukwu, Annemarie Schuller tot Peursum and Regine Skarubowiz

Aid agencies are increasingly concerned with addressing disaster risk reduction in situations of conflict or chronic political instability. However, the interplay between disaster and conflict and the specific impact on people's livelihoods are still poorly understood. What impact does chronic conflict have on social relations and on people's livelihoods, and do recurrent disasters further contribute to tensions and divisions, or do they offer opportunities to strengthen social cohesion? To find an answer to this question, we need a better understanding of what affected people do, what survival strategies they adopt and what kind of assistance would be relevant and appropriate to reduce the negative impact of disasters and conflict.

This article discusses issues to consider when programming aid in areas affected by both conflict and disasters, based on grassroots experiences from Afghanistan, Burundi, Nigeria, the Philippines and Sudan. People engaged with local communities in these countries presented their views at a panel facilitated by Mary Anderson at the World Conference on Humanitarian Studies in Groningen on 4–7 February 2009.

Local institutions matter

A focus either on disaster risk reduction or conflict prevention simplifies local realities and will make aid programming less effective. Disaster and conflict outcomes are inter-related. However, how and to what extent they are so depends on local institutional arrangements: the rules, laws, traditions, values, norms and organisations that govern or regulate people's behaviour. These include power relations, which govern who sets the rules, who benefits from them, and who is excluded.

To understand the impact of both disasters and conflict on local communities and people's livelihoods, it is crucial to explore local institutions and how they have changed over time. This means exploring institutions which regulate:

- the maintenance of social order;
- the handling of dissent and conflict;
- access to and control of resources for securing livelihoods;
- social protection;
- the management of collective resources;
- the implementation of gender and household policies; and
- community survival strategies and solidarity with the most vulnerable people in the community.

The importance of local institutions was a key insight gained by Cooperation for Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), an Afghan NGO working with eight villages in Balkh province. Balkh is prone to floods and drought affecting the availability of water in a 10km-long irrigation canal used by all eight of the villages. During the spring, floods damage houses and crops in the upstream villages, while downstream villagers depend on these floods for irrigation water. Upstream villagers lobby for flood protection measures, while downstream villagers oppose them because such measures stop them from accessing water during the spring. Tensions between upstream and downstream villages have increased since 2001, when the Taliban were defeated. Under the Taliban, water was distributed according to land size, an approach which helped keep tensions over water in check. After 2001, however, local government positions were seized by elites who changed the water distribution rules to favour upstream villagers, with whom they are closely affiliated. As a result, from March to October upstream villagers take all the water, closing the gates to prevent water flowing to downstream villages. Consequently, the prolonged drought in 2006–2007 in these areas forced downstream villagers to diversify their livelihood strategies. Young people opted to join armed groups, whose activities are linked to the broader conflict in Afghanistan. In this case, communities depending on the same irrigation water need to renegotiate the rules governing water distribution to better deal with drought, to reduce tensions over water and to prevent youth from taking up arms.

Affected communities are not passive victims

While it is generally recognised that local communities actively respond to and cope with disasters, in war contexts they are often portrayed as passive victims. Case studies show, however, that these people actively participate in making war or peace. Droughts in Afghanistan and Southern Sudan put pressure on scarce resources. Such conditions cause people in Southern Sudan to attack adjacent villages and cattle herds, while in Afghanistan people engage in the war economy as an alternative option to earn an income. Such harsh circumstances in combination with conflict can further be exploited by external militia to suit wider political and military interests. Although the decision to take up arms is often triggered by disaster, and influenced by limited livelihood options and the wider conflict context, local residents can also decide to resist violence and make peace. Instead of focusing on the issues that trigger war or encourage peace, it is important to explore how people act in the face of conflict, approaching them as active and creative individuals.

Engage with 'friends, enemies and responsible state actors'

Efforts to reduce disaster risk and stop violence locally draw on the social and organisational skills of community

members and their ability to engage with a wide range of actors. Examples from Nigeria, Southern Sudan and the Philippines show that grassroots early warning systems not only warn people of potential danger or disaster risk, but also encourage – in fact they require – the involvement of those who initiate risk reduction or peace efforts, those potentially involved in violence and acts that increase people's vulnerability and actors whose responsibility it is to maintain law and order and provide safety and protection. Typically, local leaders or local NGOs play a facilitative role.

disaster and conflict outcomes are inter-related

In Southern Sudan, natural disasters such as seasonal flooding exacerbate poverty because they destroy livelihoods and displace people. Subsequent shortages cause conflict and intensify cattle raiding as a way of securing livelihoods among the agro-pastoralist Nuer and Dinka tribes. In turn, clashes over grazing land and water destroy livelihoods, cause insecurity and increase people's vulnerability to future droughts or floods. To reduce disaster risks, World Vision encourages people to form disaster preparedness committees tasked with reviving indigenous early warning systems for rainfall and winds. World Vision also provides tools to improve drainage systems and dykes to protect people's crops. Young people, who were the perpetrators of attacks, are made responsible for the construction and maintenance of the dykes. In this way, cattle raids have been reduced as young people are given opportunities to improve their community's livelihoods. In order to enhance cooperation between hostile communities, World Vision has provided training on non-violent conflict resolution, organised peace conferences and helped local leaders to settle disputes peacefully. To ensure lasting reconciliation, local institutions seek support from the National Peace Commission and government officials to work out ethnic and political power struggles.

In post-conflict Burundi, recurrent natural hazards increase people's vulnerability. Drought and resulting food shortages in 2006 caused people to migrate, putting pressure on host communities' land and resources. Humanitarian organisations started food distributions, but these only increased conflict between the displaced population, residents and repatriated Burundian refugees, as some groups were served while others were excluded. To reduce tensions, the Burundian affiliate of the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) facilitated a process of community dialogue. Representatives from conflicting parties – men, women and young people – exchanged views on the tense situation, its consequences and possible solutions. Through negotiated dialogue, community representatives worked out a 'community social contract' containing commitments to address the needs of vulnerable groups, enhance social cohesion and ensure the sound management of natural resources. A peace committee formally signed the contract and monitored compliance, and an action plan was developed to combat land degradation and enhance food security. Confidence and social cohesion among the various groups improved and agricultural production increased as a result of improved water management and the adaptation of agricultural techniques appropriate for drought-prone areas.

Implications for aid programming

When aid agencies seek to support local communities affected by both disasters and conflict, they first need to understand how people have historically made a living under these difficult conditions. This includes exploring the economic, social and political linkages between combatants and civilians in order to understand what people do, their motives and risk perceptions. The next step is to explore the crucial institutions in the community, and how they relate to the wider socio-economic and political context.

The cases described here show the relevance of strengthening community institutions like early warning systems, social contracts and Spaces for Peace. They highlight people's organisational and political abilities and their capacity to engage with a broad range of actors including those committing violence, at and beyond grassroots level. Local conflicts are often intertwined with larger and geographically wider social and political dynamics. Likewise, disaster vulnerability connects local conditions to the macro-context and economic, social and political processes in society. Therefore, efforts to reduce the risks stemming from disasters and conflict will only become effective when people at the grassroots build institutional linkages horizontally with other communities facing similar problems, and vertically with government officials, members of parliament or other decision-makers who can be held accountable for improving safety and protection, or who can influence policies that avoid creating new risks and mitigate the impact of existing ones. To maximise effectiveness, it is important that aid agencies recognise the inter-regional and even international dimensions of the issues which they intend to address locally. If they do not do so, they will fail to find durable solutions to the issues underlying local disaster and conflict vulnerability. Reducing risks stemming from the interplay of disasters and conflict requires above all a long-term commitment both from people at the grassroots and from supporting agencies.

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