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review

Delivering the goods:
rethinking humanitarian logistics



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Institute



Forced Migration Review

provides a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and internally displaced people, and those who work with them. It is published in English, Spanish and Arabic by the Refugee Studies Centre/University of Oxford in association with the Global IDP Project/Norwegian Refugee Council. The Spanish translation, *Revista de Migraciones Forzadas*, is produced by IDEI in Guatemala.

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from the editors

In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War one of us (Tim) was involved with a mission to evaluate how well a major NGO had responded to the mass displacement of Kurds in the Zagros Mountains. In a northern Iraq warehouse the mission found a million dollars' worth of climatically inappropriate plastic sheeting lying unused. This had not been reported to the agency's HQ. Neither were there plans to send it to a warmer part of the world where it would have been used.



Corinne Owen

This issue of Forced Migration Review is about improving communications between logisticians and programme managers to make such mix-ups a thing of the past. We are grateful to the Fritz Institute for drawing our attention to the importance of humanitarian logistics and for the very generous grant which has made this issue possible. We are deeply indebted to our Guest Editors, Anisya Thomas (Fritz Institute's Managing Director) and Ricardo Ernst (Georgetown University), and to Lynn Fritz for his personal support.

Are you reading FMR for the first time – perhaps having been introduced to us due to the dissemination of this issue through Fritz Institute networks? FMR has a global readership – 6,500 copies are distributed in three languages to 150 countries – and circulates throughout the humanitarian community. We hope that you will remain readers and contribute to ongoing debate and reflection as future FMR issues follow up the logistical challenges set out in this issue.

*FMR needs your support! We currently only have pledges for half the funding we need to maintain our current level of distribution – at a time when our printing and postage costs are rising and the number of agencies and individuals wanting to be added to our mailing lists continues to increase. Subscription income covers only a tiny proportion of the costs of getting this magazine to a predominantly Southern audience. Could we ask those of you who work for humanitarian agencies – both those whose work is profiled in this issue and others of you working under similar constraints and pressures – to contact us to discuss taking out a **multiple subscription** for your HQ/field staff and partner agencies? A number of major agencies already support our work in this manner. Our subscription rates are modest. Please email us at fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk.*

*The theme sections of the **next three issues** of FMR will examine: reproductive health for refugees and IDPs, refugee/IDP livelihoods and reintegration of IDPs. Deadlines for submissions: 1 October 2003, 15 January 2004 and 15 May 2004 respectively. More details can be found on our website at www.fmreview.org.*

With our best wishes

*Marion Couldrey and Tim Morris,
Editors, Forced Migration Review*

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Front cover photos: Local transport in Cambodia · WFP/Jim Holmes

Page 37 photos: (centre) East Timor · WFP/Jim Holmes

(right) Afghanistan · WFP/Clive Shirley

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rethinking humanitarian logistics**



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Why logistics?

by Anisya Thomas

Two decades ago logistics was rarely a subject discussed in the executive suites of large corporations.

Often referred to as **shipping**, the function had a lowly place and logisticians were located in basements and at shipping docks. Today, logistics or supply chain management is recognised as a strategic and value-producing component in the overall operation of commercial organisations. Graduate and doctoral programmes at major universities assure ongoing research that documents and disseminates examples of best practice. There is a professional career path for logisticians, a number of magazines that chronicle their work and a community of peers that shares knowledge in meetings sponsored by organisations such as the Council of Logistics Management (CLM)¹.

Research conducted by Fritz Institute suggests that logistics is central to relief for several reasons:

- Logistics serves as a bridge between disaster preparedness and response through the establishment of effective procurement procedures, supplier relationships, prepositioned stock and knowledge of local transport conditions.
- The speed of response for major humanitarian programmes involving health, food, shelter, water and sanitation interventions is dependent on the ability of logisticians to procure, transport and receive supplies at the site of a humanitarian relief effort.
- Since the logistics department is usually involved in every stage of a relief effort, it is a rich repository of data that can be analysed to provide post-event learning.

Logistics data encompasses all aspects of execution, such as the effectiveness of suppliers and transportation providers, the cost and timeliness of relief efforts, the appropriateness of donated goods and information flows between the field, headquarters and donors. In a relief effort, logistics is the nexus of information for donors, operations managers, finance departments and field relief activities.

Despite being a critical function to the success of relief efforts, humanitarian logisticians are under-recognised and under-utilised in many humanitarian organisations. Often classified as a support function, their roles are confined to executing decisions after they have been made. This places an enormous burden on logisticians who have not been given an opportunity to articulate the physical constraints in the planning process. It also tends to cause tensions with people in programmes as they cannot understand delays and breakdowns in the supply delivery process.

This issue of FMR

Fritz Institute is very proud to sponsor this special issue of *Forced Migration Review* in which the crucial role of humanitarian logistics is discussed in the voices of logisticians who have been part of practically every major relief effort over the past decade. We believe that the perspective of the logistician is a strategic and central component to the planning of effective relief efforts. The articles in this issue highlight the multidimensional challenges facing humanitarian logisticians as well as their ingenuity, commitment and heart as they rise to meet the challenges.

This special issue is organised into four broad sections. It begins with a series of personal observations by practitioners at World Vision, IRC and Oxfam about the state of their field and ideas that can help advance the practice of humanitarian logistics. These include: creating a community of practice, greater investments in technology and preparedness, and pleas for recognition and voice.

Next, it profiles concerted and organised efforts to broaden the role of logistics at the UN, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Food Programme, highlighting progress and delineating some challenges that remain. This section concludes with an example of an innovative logistics collaboration to achieve better coordination among humanitarian



players participating in relief in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The third section discusses dilemmas facing the relief community, such as the GMO issue in southern Africa and its implications for logisticians.

Finally, some practical possibilities for the execution of effective logistics are detailed including some innovative uses of technology.

The people who made it possible

Many have gone above and beyond the call of duty to make this special issue possible. The editorial team at *Forced Migration Review* has been the anchor on which we have all relied. The authors of the articles and those who submitted pieces we could not include deserve special recognition. Their work was done after-hours, often in the field during time they did not have. Ricardo Ernst, my fellow guest editor, has been an able partner responding with feedback from all corners of the globe. The Fritz Institute team, and especially Ivy Cohen, has provided ideas and input crucial to pulling the images and words together. A special thanks is also due to Lynn Fritz whose commitment, philanthropy and vision to further the cause of the humanitarian logistician has made this special issue possible.

Most importantly this issue is a salute to the work of humanitarian logisticians who work each day in countless ways to ensure speedier relief for vulnerable people. Your teams and organisations are enriched by the presence of logisticians. Take one out to lunch today.

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1. See www.clm1.org

The academic side of commercial logistics and the importance of this special issue

by Ricardo Ernst

Logistics, in its conventional definition, is the process of managing the flow of goods, information and finances from the source (suppliers) to the final consumer (customers). The topic has received significant attention in the 'for-profit' or commercial world since it represents today one of the most important sources of profitability. That role belonged for many years to manufacturing and that is why we saw an increase in the spread of manufacturing facilities around the world (e.g. searching for cheap labour).

The global environment that characterises the business world highlights the importance of developing strategies that go beyond the geographical boundaries of one country. Wage-rate differentials, expanding foreign markets and improved transportation break down barriers of time and space between countries and force the logistics function to take on a global dimension. Global logistics is the response to the increasing integration of international markets as firms try to remain competitive. The term 'supply chain management' has been extensively used to depict the new managerial challenge to compete in the marketplace.

The humanitarian world relies on logistics for the same basic reasons. It also requires a process for managing the flow of goods, information and finances from the donors to the affected persons. The fundamental difference with the commercial world is in the motivation for improving the logistics process – going beyond profitability. Most logistics applications in the humanitarian community are the result of 'experience' and *ad hoc* resolution of problems that have resulted in innovative applications of the kind illustrated in this special issue of FMR.

In general, when structuring and analysing the activities involved in commercial logistics, three main processes are included: demand management (customer service and order processing), supply management (procurement, production planning and inventory), and fulfilment management

(transport, distribution and warehousing). In the humanitarian world there are many players that are not directly linked to the benefits of satisfying demand. Suppliers (humanitarian donors) have different motivations for participating (e.g. civic duty and charity) and therefore the performance criteria could be difficult to measure. Customers (those assisted) are not generating a 'voluntary' demand and hopefully will not generate a 'repeat purchase'. However, the basic principles of managing the flow of goods, information and finances remain valid and there is a critical role for logisticians when it comes to managing demand, supply and fulfilment.

It is widely argued that there are many lessons and practices from the commercial world that could be used in the humanitarian world. In fact, the commercial world has developed and implemented numerous applications that have improved their logistics solutions in many significant ways. From an academic perspective we have seen a significant demand from students for more courses on the topic; one of the fastest growing courses in most business schools has been on subjects related to supply chain management. Academic research in this field has also increased significantly, driven by commercial companies' support and the availability of data. In fact, the academic approach has elevated the role of the logistics function by allowing the development of:

- an understanding of the state of the art of strategic management thinking as it applies to firms with global operations
- a capacity for analysing logistics problems on a functional, business and company-wide basis which goes beyond local optimisation into a global view of linkages
- a set of metrics that allows for structured measurement of performance aligned with the overall objectives of the organisation
- an awareness of the organisational structures used in logistics and the strengths and weaknesses of those structures.



It is conventional wisdom that the commercial world is the source of lessons and practices for the humanitarian world. However, articles in this special issue could easily suggest that the opposite is also true. Many good practices implemented in the humanitarian world could be used in the commercial world. The ideal scenario is for the two worlds to work more closely in the exchange of ideas. Organisations and logisticians should be more reflective and push the boundaries of their work.

If it is true that Wal-Mart is the best exemplar of logistics innovations and implementations in the commercial world, it is equally true that WFP, World Vision, Oxfam, the Red Cross and other NGOs have found a way to accomplish results that deserve special attention by the commercial world. Rather than offering a set of solutions, this special issue introduces the perspective of logisticians to the humanitarian world. The Fritz Institute has been instrumental in serving as the bridge between the two worlds. The rewards of cooperation and exchanges could only be beneficial to us all.

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Humanitarian logistics: context and challenges

by Lars Gustavsson

Logistics and supply chain management underpin responses to humanitarian crises.

Whether there is actual or potential large-scale displacement, agencies have to get the right assistance to the right place at the right time at the right cost. The challenges faced in achieving this are many and complex.

i. Meeting reconstruction challenges in Kosovo

After the end of the war, a massive reconstruction programme was needed to provide adequate housing for returning refugees and IDPs. In the immediate post-war period, 100% of the building materials and tools had to be externally sourced from Kosovo's neighbours. Hundreds of trucks had to be mobilised to bring goods to Kosovo and then several thousand trucks, farm tractors with trailers or other light vehicles were needed in country to take these goods to final destination points. The roads had not been built for such heavy traffic; adequate supplies of fuel were not available; storage and transfer facilities had been destroyed or looted; utilities had not yet been repaired; security was still a concern; and trace and tracking systems were often manual. Local staff had to be trained in most of the relevant aspects of supply chain management.

ii. Iraq: speed of delivery

On a Saturday morning in March 2003, I got a call from our regional management team in Amman requesting an urgent airlift of emergency supplies, materials and vehicles. I immediately called our head logistician who proceeded to make calls to our logistics staff in Italy, Germany and the US. By Monday morning bids were being answered. By Tuesday morning the transporter had been selected and mobilised. By Wednesday morning all the goods were prepared for shipment. By Thursday morning

the aircraft was on the tarmac at Brindisi airport. That afternoon it landed with 40 tonnes of goods in Amman and was cleared and off-loaded within a couple of hours. Three transport trucks, 10,000 collapsible water containers and purification tablets, 6,300 blankets and 1,800 plastic tarpaulins were among the goods landed. By the weekend – seven days after the initial phone call – these goods were *en route* to regional destinations in preparedness and readiness for possible influx of refugees from Iraq.

iii. Movement of people from conflict zones

When conflict erupts, large numbers of people often have to be moved out of conflict areas to safe zones – to temporary transit centres, tracing centres, IDP camps and refugee camps. Although this is usually the role of the UN, NGOs and other organisations are often asked to participate. Logistics is critical for a successful operation: to locate and mobilise the large vehicles needed, and to ensure sufficient amounts of fuel, not an easy task when fuel is not available in local markets. In addition all the support needs of the transported people depend on logistics: food, water, sanitation and shelter.

iv. Influx of humanitarian staff

An often under-estimated variable – and formidable logistics challenge – in large humanitarian crises is the movement of staff. How do you get large numbers of relief workers to the field and ensure their safety and shelter without distorting the economies? In the Caucasus as in so many other emergencies, the cost of housing rose ten fold from pre-emergency local costs with the influx of non-local aid workers. The housing supply in Baku was limited. With the arrival of thou-

sands of aid workers willing to pay inflated prices, large numbers of the local population started to move out in order to be able to take advantage of the economic gain from renting out their homes. The ripple effect was that local merchants also raised the cost of services; costs of supplies in the markets rose accordingly, making life very difficult for the local population that stayed. These are just some of the logistical challenges confronted by humanitarian agencies. How successful are they in meeting them?

NGOs have been willing to operate in many places which the corporate sector may shun. Creating and implementing complicated logistics solutions and dealing with 'the last mile' – the leg between the final distribution centre and the beneficiary or client – NGOs have been willing to invest an inordinate amount of time to make things work. They have considerable expertise and experience in movement and accountability mechanisms around food aid and effective use of gifts-in-kind (GIK) from corporate sponsors. Agencies have established or are establishing global and/or regional pre-positioning units capable of delivering critical emergency supplies, materials, vehicles and technical assistance to any place in the world within a short timeframe.

Gaps in NGO capacity

NGOs can and do play a key role in logistics management, particularly at the field level. Much of this is done very well. But systems and approaches are often antiquated. For example, documentation relating to transportation is often produced electronically at point of origin and is often only available on-line. Unfortunately, even though the commercial world is well advanced in full-electronic handling processes, the majority of NGOs typically do not have the electronic infrastructure investments in place. Therefore, access to this information is not necessarily possible along the whole supply chain and

often moves quite early on in the handling process from electronic systems to paper. This typically means increasing the time required to handle information and process a shipment and can lead to reduced efficiencies, duplication of functions, increased inaccuracies in reporting and increased costs.

In today's world of modern technology, greatly improved approaches to logistics and supply chain management and greater access to know-how and information, it is critical for NGOs to learn from the corporate and for-profit sector and incorporate emerging best practice. Their ability to do this, however, has been hindered by a number of factors.

i. Lack of depth in knowledge

Most humanitarian NGOs are rooted in emergency response of one form or another. Many NGO leaders began their careers with a background in the social sciences, development studies or law. NGO leaders tend to be valued 'activists' and few have corporate experience of logistics management.

Humanitarian logistics involves organisational components such as procurement, transportation, warehousing, inventory management, trace and tracking, bidding and reverse bidding, reporting and accountability. In the corporate sector, these components are supported by expert staffing, know-how, IT systems, MIS systems, framework agreements, corporate relationships, infrastructure, standardisation and collaborative initiatives. In the humanitarian world, these key support mechanisms are rare. Much of the essential logistics work undertaken by humanitarian agencies is not industry standard and NGOs could learn a lot from the corporate community.

Furthermore, the humanitarian environment is becoming increasingly complex, requiring a deeper understanding of conflict, security and local, national and international politics. Each year about one in three field staff quits because of burnout. As a consequence, the NGO community and multilateral and international organisations such as the UN agencies and the Red Cross need to focus much more on capacity building.

ii. Funding biased towards short-term responses

NGOs tend to be highly dependent upon grants which are generally geared towards paying for direct project and programme inputs in the field. Projects and programmes are time-bound, often short and under-funded. NGOs live from grant to grant and project to project. This does not

allow for a healthy corporate strategic process to develop as both planning cycles and funding cycles are generally unpredictable. And it does not encourage investment in improved systems.

iii. Lack of investment in technology and communication

Very little capital (from any source) has been invested in the development and implementation of modern management information systems (MIS), information technology (IT) or logistics systems. Most NGOs lack modern 'systems capacity' in just about any category. Most NGOs have indeed also greatly undervalued the role of logistics, supply chain management and integrated systems support. This is an area that, if better valued by senior management, could have a significant financial return on investment. Millions of dollars could be saved each year by simply being able to work more 'smartly' - more efficiently.

For example... Procurement is part of the overall logistics process. An NGO with an organisation-wide capacity to use a common procurement management software programme would be able to see what their top 100 high-frequency or high-cost items were at any given time during the year. Regardless of programme or project location, a common software technology application would enable each user to function independently, making local procurement decisions, while creating and contributing to a global purchasing-power mechanism benefiting the whole organisation. Management would have the information power to be able to negotiate high-volume purchasing agreements with global suppliers, global vendors, manufacturers or distributors. Better still, NGOs could group together as

consortia to gain even higher purchasing-power discounts and framework agreements.

Communication systems are not a core strength for the humanitarian community yet are a critical part of humanitarian operations. In crisis situations, communication with donors, other parts of the organisation and the outside world is vital.

Millions of dollars could be saved by simply being able to work more 'smartly'

Recommendations

i. Enhance knowledge

- What the corporate sector learned 10 to 15 years ago is where many NGOs are today. We need to catch up fast and NGOs cannot do this by themselves. Corporations can greatly assist humanitarian agencies by sharing their know-how, systems and resources. Collaboration should ultimately mean more efficient, more cost-effective logistics operations - to benefit those affected by conflict and disaster.
- Logisticians in the field are often not trained professionals but have developed their skills on the job. Competency-based capacity-building initiatives and mechanisms need to be developed and supported so that humanitarian logisticians' skills and know-how are raised to more professional levels, and supported by appropriate training discipline and accreditation. New employees could be sourced from feeder schools and corporate environments where they might have core professional skills though needing to learn more about the humanitarian context. In addition, there needs to be a greater emphasis on mentoring and coaching within organisations.
- No single agency can single-handedly meet the challenges outlined above. What is required is a much higher degree of collaboration across agencies in the form of workshops and shared specialist pools. It is also important that the sector draw on the brain trust of the commercial sector, particularly in its proven areas of

competence – systems and software, technical and engineering expertise, etc. Corporations could provide their own staff with opportunities to work alongside NGOs. The corporate community could also create a pool of logistics experts available to the humanitarian sector for deployment on an on-call/as-needed basis. Humanitarian demand is often 'seasonal' with need often dictated by the specific requirements of an emergency. Corporate experts could work alongside NGOs in the field in both pre-emergency and during-emergency phases.

ii. Broaden the scope of funding

- Donors need to realise that unless they adopt an actively hands-on approach to changing organisational logistics management funds will often not be used as efficiently as they could be. The current donor practice of funding projects and programmes does not enable NGOs to tackle this problem. Donors need to take ownership of the problem and broaden their scope of funding to include serious investment in logistics management, IT and MIS systems.
- Potential for using goods-in-kind is not being exploited. The corporate sector often has excesses in inventories, product over-runs and over-supply, often driven by unforeseen market demands or changing fads. These can be put to good use by NGOs but NGOs need to establish a list of criteria that such goods must pass before acceptance/use.¹

iii. Invest in technology and communications

- NGOs must come to grips with the important role that logistics and supply chain management can play. Senior managers need to recognise that there are great savings to be made by consolidating and standardising a host of often scattered logistics functions. Middle management must invest time and energy in order to persuade senior leadership.

Food distribution in Afghanistan

- A key area of concern that needs a collaborative contribution by both private sector and NGOs is that of global communications. One idea would be for a consortium of NGOs to work with the private sector, drawing on their resources, expertise and knowledge in radio, satellite, licensing and hardware. One outcome could be a communications unit to serve the wider humanitarian community during a large-scale disaster.
- It is one thing to have logistics plans, logistics software and logistics staff in place. If communications issues are not also addressed, however, today's manual non-integrated style of dealing with logistics will continue – and the logistics chain will remain incomplete and inefficient.

Recent initiatives

Various articles in this issue highlight some recent initiatives, such as UNJLC [pp11] and ALITE [pp17].

Other developments include the establishment of a Humanitarian Logistics Council² to heighten the visibility of the sector and stimulate improved logistics management. It brings together key logistics managers in the humanitarian sector with the aim of encouraging collaboration, integration, standardisation, synergy and joint product development.

World Vision has established pre-positioning units in three places:

Denver, US (primary focus serving the Americas); Brindisi, Italy (primary focus the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa); Hanover, Germany (a smaller unit serving diverse logistical needs). World Vision's unit is designed to deliver supplies worldwide within 72 hours; for more details, contact the author [email below]. IFRC and WFP are each establishing four regional pre-positioning units [see articles on IFRC and UNJLC].

World Vision is working with other NGOs and Fritz Institute to a) identify who is doing what, b) map current and future capacity needs and c) explore where collaboration is possible, where shared investments could be beneficial and what educational and training provisions are needed. World Vision International is also working with donors such as the government of Australia and the Australian Ministry of Education to create competence-building and certification initiatives which are being shared with affiliates in the Asia Pacific region; it is planned to expand this initiative globally by 2005.

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1. World Vision procures GIK based on 'critical needs lists' identified by its international and domestic offices. Criteria for procurement include detailed information regarding the donation, its value and whether donor will cover freight cost, any restrictions (eg specified recipient country) and requests for publicity.

2. Established in 2002 by the Fritz Institute.



A logistician's plea

by John Rickard

As a logistician, have you ever first learned of a new project when the purchase requisitions appeared on your desk? Or received a vehicle request 20 minutes before it was urgently required?

If so, take comfort from knowing that you are not the first. Unfortunately you are unlikely to be the last. At best, scenarios like this reduce support functions to a constant state of 'fire-fighting' - inefficient, frustrating and stressful for all concerned. At worst, project implementation can be delayed and people suffer needlessly.

To some degree, in almost every agency and nearly every situation, this scenario is not uncommon. There is indeed a myriad of internal and external factors affecting our ability to plan and coordinate: poor or unreliable local infrastructure, rapidly changing market conditions, poor communications and security, fluid population movements, over-worked staff, short donor lead-times for proposals, donor regulations, institutional memory, inter-agency relations, staff turnover, staff capacity and so on. These factors do make it difficult for managers to plan and coordinate. The problem is that in response, rather than review those elements that we can control, managers tend to de-prioritise the whole planning and coordinating process.

Not so long ago, smaller projects were often implemented by managers wearing several hats - such as 'project manager', 'administration and logistics', 'Country Representative' and 'finance'. Given the scale of the operations, this was generally manageable and, given the limited number and the proximity of staff, planning was almost automatically coordinated. However, recent projects involving dozens of expatriate and local staff have involved expenditures of millions of dollars. Yet despite the multiplication in complexity of our responsibilities, we seem to have neither set priorities nor made plans to make essential changes and modernise the management, administrative and collaborative structures that would allow

us, as organisations, to plan and coordinate our expansion.

At field and organisational levels we see programmes structured into Projects, Administration, Logistics and Financial Support (or minor variations thereof). This evolution is necessary to manage large programmes effectively but I would argue that our basic mentality of being led by project implementers has not changed. Information flows can be - and are - initiated, maintained and stopped by projects - the latter normally from oversight, overwork or inexperience. We may think of ourselves as integrated when in fact our projects and their support services are 'stove-pipe' in structure and mentality. The support functions are often considered as appendages rather than integral elements of the whole.

How many times have managers stayed up alone into the small hours to submit a proposal before the morning deadline? More often than we would probably care to admit. Are proposals routinely reviewed by Finance and Logistics staff? No. The results can range from insufficient funding solicited for warehouse infrastructure to unrealistic lead times on necessary equipment or supplies (and therefore delayed project implementation).

Coordinated planning is also impeded by a general lack of understanding of what good logistics does and can offer: improved efficiency, contingency plans, accountability and reduced cost. This creates a catch-22 situation. Logistics are not included because managers are not sure what additional value they add... logistics requirements are not fully met, resulting in fire-fighting.... managers see logistics struggling (rather than seeing the underlying problems) and conclude that, for subsequent proposals, a logistics review is not advantageous....

This is not an exercise in assigning blame, rather one of highlighting the realities of operating under already difficult circumstances, within structures that do not insist on or fully value the integration of all players in the operation.

As a community, however, we are not unique and therefore do not necessarily have to learn all new tricks the hard way. Many of the concerns and constraints facing humanitarian logistics mirror the substance of discussions in the private sector 15 years ago. There, technological advancements in parts of the manufacturing and retail sectors had made their core activities almost as efficient as they could be - the only area remaining that could yield improved service and/or reduced costs was that of how these companies interacted with their suppliers and how they got their products to market. This is supply chain management - what many of us call logistics.

Underpinning it all should be a solid flow of information within an integrated team

Concluding plea

Planning and coordination need to be seen as essential rather than merely desirable. We need investment in systems - and investment in the integration of our systems and structures. We need to hold consultation in high esteem, both internally and externally, and we need to seek advice from experts. Given the will, the investment, today's technology and the private sector's best practices, there are significant improvements in efficiency to be made by the donor and aid community. Underpinning it all should be a solid flow of information within an integrated team, throughout project planning and implementation. It seems simple and rather obvious, yet it struggles to gain acceptance.

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Towards improved logistics: challenges and questions for logisticians and managers

by Donald Chaikin

Effective programmes require efficient support functions. Logistics is a key support function and needs to be incorporated into planning and management decisions from inception to close-down.

Logistics questions affect timescales, appropriateness of supplies, methods of implementation, asset management and many other aspects integral to programme management.

The Fritz Institute's Humanitarian Logistics Council initiative [see pp37] to bring together logisticians is useful and productive. What we need now, however, is to **expand the discussion forum** to include management. Could this be a next step for the Council? In addition, logisticians themselves need to put time and effort into explaining and promoting the role of logistics within their organisations, making management more aware of the advantages - financial as well as technical - of logistics being fully integrated into their planning process.

Agencies need **logisticians with management experience**. Field logisticians are relatively easy to find but there is only a very small pool of management-level logisticians. One of the problems is that individuals - such as logisticians - get pigeonholed and it is hard for them to break out into management. Individuals in all disciplines need to be given the opportunity by agency managers to be encouraged/trained for management roles.

We need more **professionalism** in the sector - and for that professionalism to receive greater recognition. Certification may help in this (though proven hands-on experience remains essential), particularly in some regions where certification is culturally held in greater esteem. There are only a few logistics courses in Europe. The best ones are run by Bioforce¹ in

France - but in French and therefore not accessible to many. We need similar courses in other languages.

Agencies need to develop **emergency preparedness plans** in country - plans that include logistics. These should include developing local sources of supplies and agreeing specifications. Oxfam's logistics department is currently working with its eight Regional Management Centres to build up a database for each region. This resource should be shared among agencies.

Cooperation should be encouraged in other areas as well. Oxfam GB and the International Rescue Committee have collaborated on the development of an **IT logistics system** which has proved to be effective, fairly inexpensive and relatively painless to get underway. It was designed to support Oxfam/IRC's specific needs but other agencies such as Save the Children UK and the UK NGO Merlin have since expressed interest in it. It can be used off-line - an essential attribute if it is to be used effectively in many of the situations in which Oxfam's staff and

partners have to operate.

Are regional/global **pre-positioning units** necessary and/or desirable? They may prove useful in some cases but their usefulness may be restricted by shelf-life constraints; they may also require considerable financial investment, particularly where bonded warehouses have to be used. Agencies usually have some warning of impending emergencies and are often even able to get equipment out to the field in advance. Even in unexpected emergencies, Oxfam can activate charter flights within 24 hours and get emergency equipment from its warehouse near Oxford to any location within 2-3 days. If necessary, however, could agencies make use of the pre-positioning units of WFP, IFRC and World Vision, for example?

As head of logistics for Oxfam over the past six years, one of my key challenges has been to get the organisation to recognise logistics as a vital support function that needs to be incorporated into planning and management decisions. We've taken many steps in the right direction - but many challenges remain.

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1. See www.bioforce.asso.fr

Food aid in Malawi.



UN Joint Logistics Centre: a coordinated response to common humanitarian logistics concerns

by David B Kaatrud, Ramina Samii and Luk N Van Wassenhove

Typically, humanitarian agencies tend to underestimate the importance of logistics.

It takes only a glance at a typical humanitarian logistics planner's checklist to understand the range and depth of information required to optimise operational effectiveness and cope with the variety of bottlenecks that may hinder humanitarian response at the outbreak of a disaster. The difficulties of completing such a checklist are compounded when large-scale complex emergencies involve a multitude of actors. How many organisations in the humanitarian community are ready to meet such challenges, let alone in a cost-effective and efficient manner?

Under-budgeting for logistics management capability means that already stretched logistics staff are unable to properly compile vital information needed to adequately develop a logistics strategy. In addition, agencies may not have the skills, human resources and time to liaise, coordinate and negotiate effectively with other stakeholders – the military, host governments, neighbouring country governments, other humanitarian organisations, donors and logistics service providers.

As far as the UN system is concerned, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) may not always have the requisite technical skills for the level of logistics coordination which most emergency operations demand. The need for a specialised form of inter-agency coordination mechanism to deal exclusively with logistics issues in increasingly complex operational environments and to make the best use of limited and expensive resources led to the establishment of the UN Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC).

The UNJLC

Originally conceived as a short-term emergency response facility, the UNJLC was born out of the humanitarian response to the 1996 Eastern Zaire crisis which demanded intensified field-based coordination and pooling of air assets among UNHCR, World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF to deliver relief assistance to refugees stranded inside Eastern Zaire and to transport those returning to their place of origin. This intensified coordination was necessary for the duration of the crisis in order to optimise the use of expensive aircraft by

planning, prioritising and controlling the movement of critical food and non-food items and returnees.

Since then the UNJLC has been deployed in other large-scale disasters – the Balkans, East Timor, Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan and Iraq – where intensified inter-agency logistics coordination was required.

Although it began in an *ad hoc* manner, the UNJLC was formally recognised by the UN's inter-agency humanitarian policy-making body in early 2002 and placed under the custodianship of WFP, the UN's largest logistics actor. Thus the UNJLC is able to draw upon WFP's extensive logistics resources to meet a wide range of logistics challenges. When deployed, the UNJLC is integrated into the UN's response coordination structure on the ground. The UNJLC is configured to support two response models: inter-agency logistics coordination only or coordination plus asset management, such as a donated fleet of aircraft.

The UNJLC approach underlines the need to preserve and respect each and every agency's logistics system. By viewing the humanitarian effort as a 'modular' system, it seeks to enhance and strengthen individual logistics systems, develop synergies across agencies and improve efficiency for the humanitarian community as a whole. For example, the UNJLC – without interfering in an agency's established air chartering arrangements – can facilitate the pooling of limited airlift capacity with the aim of matching eventual excess capacity with outstanding demand.

To best fulfil its coordination mandate, the UNJLC sets up a host of temporary satellite offices around a regional coordination office established for the duration of the emergency. Without its own permanent staff, the UNJLC depends on voluntary agency secondments. These satellite offices serve as a) logistics

A typical humanitarian logistics planner's checklist

Status and availability of in-theatre infrastructure assets, installations and services

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airfields | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ports & barges |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airport off-loading equipment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel depots |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Airport warehouses | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Primary roads | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Country-wide warehouses |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bridges | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Truck fleet |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Railways | |

Status of and accessibility to overland corridors and border crossing points

- All the above along the border crossing points, plus
- Customs clearance procedures, duties
- Visa requirements

information collection nodes and b) coordinating bodies for local, inter-agency logistics activities. Where logistics bottlenecks affecting the common humanitarian effort are identified, the satellite offices prepare and implement a collective response to eliminate the impediments. When required, UNJLC officers also help frame logistics-related policy issues affecting humanitarian logistics operations. With the disappearance of bottlenecks, the satellite offices are demobilised.

Information platform

Throughout a crisis, the humanitarian logistics planners' need for information and data analysis is enormous. No single agency in a large-scale emergency has the resources to cover vast areas in continuous evolution in terms of status of infrastructure, accessibility, availability and prices. Acting as an information platform in support of agency logistics planners, the UNJLC gathers, collates, analyses and disseminates relevant information from and among humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors. This includes spatial information in the form of GIS (Geographic Information Systems). Agencies can then optimise their activities in terms of response, cost and stock pre-positioning. In addition, the UNJLC can help avoid wasteful competition among and duplication within humanitarian organisations.

At the outset of the Afghan crisis, for example, UNJLC developed a crisis-specific website containing relevant information for logistics planners. The website became increasingly comprehensive with the systematic feedback received from site visitors. Through the website, logistics planners had immediate access to updated and reliable information on planned strategic and regional airlifts; corridor and in-country infrastructure installations and assets; transport rates; agency stock positions; contact details of the logistics personnel of the various agencies; status of corridors and border crossings; customs information; and any common UN passenger air service and commercial airline schedules.

Addressing logistics bottlenecks

Logistics bottlenecks may result from the actions of neighbouring states,

recipient governments or military forces in control of such assets as warehouses or fuel depots. Individual agencies usually do not have the resources to engage in simultaneous negotiations in multiple locations with different actors. Even if such resources were available, it would be the least cost-effective and efficient option if the issues at hand were of common concern.

By performing these tasks on behalf of the whole community the UNJLC augments the overall humanitarian logistics capability. It was thus able to streamline and hasten the transit and movement of humanitarian cargo and personnel from Afghanistan's neighbours and enter into negotiations with local customs, rail, port and border authorities on issues related to customs clearance, duties and visa requirements.

During the Afghan crisis, the northern corridor constituted a bottleneck for the humanitarian community. The Uzbek corridor, through the border city of Termez, was the only economic alternative as it had a port, rail connections and asphalted roads on both sides of a bridge over the Amu Darya

river. However, in 1998 it had been closed down by the Uzbek government. To address this bottleneck, a UNJLC operation was set up in Termez to provide a logistics interface between local authorities and humanitarian agencies.

UNJLC Termez speedily negotiated an agreement with the Uzbek authorities for the transport of humanitarian cargo by barge to Afghanistan and established a system to prioritise and schedule barge cargo. The UNJLC then focused its efforts on negotiating the opening up of the bridge for relief items and personnel. Appropriate clearance procedures were agreed with the Uzbek customs authority and surface transport resumed between the two countries. The resulting available capacity was more than enough for the planned humanitarian requirements. The logistics bottleneck disappeared and with it the need for intensified coordination. After the establishment of an efficient local inter-agency logistics coordination structure, the UNJLC Termez office was closed.

Lack of adequate storage facilities constitutes another critical and recur-



ring logistics constraint for humanitarian agencies as they move into a country or a new region. To address this, the UNJLC often brokers exchange agreements between agencies in need of storage facilities and those who have them, coordinates sharing of storage space and liaises with military or local civil authorities in possession of these assets in order to speed up their transfer to humanitarian organisations.

Host country logistics service providers are another important set of actors that can either facilitate or constrain the operational effectiveness of humanitarian logistics operations. Only a common negotiating platform can help humanitarian organisations exercise their collective bargaining power. During the Afghan crisis humanitarian agencies unknowingly engaged in wasteful competition by bidding up the price of transport to secure access to truck capacity in Herat. The cargo transport cartel resulted in a 300% price increase over a six-month period. After conducting a technical study on the Afghan transport sector, the UNJLC presented a transport price proposal intended for use by all agencies. By threatening to

bring in a UN trucking fleet in the event of non-agreement and publishing agreed rates on its website, it put an end to the price hike. Overall, millions of the humanitarian community's dollars were saved.

Need to 'de-conflict'

Humanitarian response in military environments is complicated. Security concerns usually result in the temporary evacuation of humanitarian staff and overshadow relief operations throughout the crisis. Operations in such environments create an operational dependency on bordering countries' infrastructure. Contrary to natural disaster environments, during military interventions the military often assumes de facto control of common services, assets and transportation infrastructure such as airfields, warehouses and transport corridors equally required by the humanitarian organisations. The 'de-conflicting' of humanitarian and military activities operationally dependent on the limited infrastructure calls for a 'legitimated' coordinated effort. As was the case in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the UNJLC often takes on this coordination and 'de-conflicting' role in support of UN humanitarian operations.

At the outset of the hostilities in Afghanistan the country's airspace, under the de facto control of the US-led Coalition, was closed to humanitarian air operations. After intense negotiations with the Coalition forces, the UNJLC arranged corridors for humanitarian air operations and successfully increased the number of landing spots for humanitarian cargo at various key airfields in country. Likewise in Iraq, after the conclusion of the war, the UNJLC opened up the Iraqi airspace for humanitarian operations.

An evolving concept

The humanitarian community needs to respond to the increasingly dynamic and demanding emergency operational environment by developing more timely and specialised forms of inter-agency coordination. Since its inception, the UNJLC has provided a temporary support structure to operational humanitarian actors in those emergency environments requiring intensified coordination and pooling of logistics assets, including both natural disasters,

such as the Mozambique flood response, and complex emergency environments, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The relevance of its services has ensured a high level of voluntary cooperation from the participating agencies in terms of staff (secondments) and information sharing.

Since its first deployment, the UNJLC's coordinating role has expanded to encompass various stakeholders including the donor community. For example, to help the development of a common UN strategy for the vital rehabilitation of Afghanistan's road network, the UNJLC embarked on a number of infrastructure survey projects. After assessing Afghan road conditions and traffic capacity, it helped the humanitarian community develop proposals for donor and Coalition funding. By organising rehabilitation seminars, it facilitated interaction between the parties and helped prioritise and speed up repair interventions.

The recent experience of UNJLC deployments has underscored the dynamic and flexible nature of the facility. In Afghanistan, the UNJLC supported two major non-humanitarian activities requiring considerable logistics planning and execution. As government and institutions had 'disappeared', the UNJLC contributed to the logistics operations of the Loya Jirga process that led to the election of the new Afghan government and to the currency exchange exercise involving the collection and destruction of 4,000 MT of old bank notes and the distribution of 800 million new bank-notes.

The UNJLC concept has continued to evolve, responding to new demands and learning from experience. It is taking on board the lessons learned from each crisis. It has addressed the problem of delayed deployment decisions, an issue faced during the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, through the newly established Activation Protocol.¹ To ensure the availability of sufficient start-up staff, it has conducted training sessions for agency logisticians. To date, UNJLC has run two training sessions for agency/NGO logisticians: one in Brindisi (September 2001) and one in Copenhagen (November 2002). Another two sessions are tentatively scheduled for late 2003. Lastly, to be able to run as it hits the ground, it



UN convoy in Angola.

has taken the necessary measures to ensure the availability of the minimum equipment through the establishment of standardised 'fly-away' kits.

The UNJLC is now able to provide a range of logistics coordination services from the preparedness to emergency response phase as well as assessment of existing inter-agency logistics coordination mechanisms for on-going emergency operations. As it continues to establish itself, the UNJLC's principal challenges relate to:

- properly diagnosing the logistics situation to identify the most appropriate UNJLC response and ensuring that all concerned parties are fully aware of this role
- being careful to avoid the trap of 'coordination for coordination's sake' and striving to provide added value in the overall logistics response effort of a given emergency
- being sensitive to the absorption capacity of agency logistics staff and designing its information management and dissemination structures accordingly. In this regard, the UNJLC must recognise that in the emergency context inter-agency data is imperfect and information management is rarely well structured. Emphasis will continue to be placed on developing new information management techniques and technologies in support of logistics planning functions.
- giving due attention to explaining its role clearly to all stakeholders at the field and headquarters levels (being a relatively new emergency response mechanism, the UNJLC's mandate is not widely understood)
- making every effort, after deployment, to obtain continual feedback from its main users on the most appropriate services, information and assistance they require from the UNJLC.

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1. The Activation Protocol provides a guideline for the inter-agency consultation process leading to the activation of a UNJLC (whether it is required, its size, duration, resources required, mobilisation procedures, etc.). More info on the guideline is available at: www.unjlc.org/home/core/download/UNJLC_Concept%2018_Feb_2003_AnnexD_Activation.pdf

This article and the following article on the IFRC draw on the following INSEAD case studies:

by *Ramina Samii and Luk N Van Wassenhove*:

- 'The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC): The Genesis of a Humanitarian Relief Coordination Platform', INSEAD case study 02/2003-5093.
- 'UNJLC: The Afghanistan Crisis', INSEAD case study 02/2003-5092. www.fritzinstitute.org/images/FI.pdfs/UNJLC%20afghanistan.pdf
- 'Logistics: Moving the seeds of a brighter future (UNJLC's second year in Afghanistan)', INSEAD case study, 2003.

by *R Samii, L N Van Wassenhove, K Kumar & I Becerra-Fernandez*:

- 'IFRC - Choreographer of Disaster Management. The Gujarat Earthquake', INSEAD case study 06/2002-5032.
- IFRC - Choreographer of Disaster Management. Preparing for Tomorrow's Disasters', INSEAD case study 06/2002-5039.



The central role of supply chain management at IFRC

by Bernard Chomilier, Ramina Samii and Luk N Van Wassenhove

The Gujarat earthquake was a watershed for IFRC and more specifically for its Logistics and Resource Mobilisation Department. It was the first time that all IFRC's preparedness tools, mechanisms and practices, developed to better manage emergency supply chains, had come together.

The Disaster Relief Emergency Fund allowed operations to be swiftly initiated. The arrival of a Field Assessment Coordination Team 48 hours after the disaster helped gauge relief requirements and develop plans for resource mobilisation. The quick deployment of the Emergency Response Units allowed relief activities to be swiftly kicked off. The relief mobilisation table¹ and the commodity tracking system helped mobilise, organise and coordinate the arrival of relief supplies. This together with IFRC's code of conduct limited the arrival of unsolicited goods. And finally the frame agreements with key suppliers ensured the quality of relief items and their prompt delivery at competitive prices. Three days after the Gujarat earthquake, IFRC's response plan was already in full swing. In the next 30 days, the IFRC's Logistics and Resource Mobilisation Department (LRMD) organised the delivery, by 45 charter planes, of 255,000 blankets, 34,000 tents and 120,000 plastic sheets, plus other relief items for some 300,000 people.

What was behind this level of response and coordination, unimaginable just five years before? IFRC had, after all, faced great difficulties in responding to Hurricane Mitch that hit a number of Central American countries in late 1998. During that emergency, it had failed to coordinate the relief contributions of the donating National Societies; its technical staff and relief delegates had arrived on the disaster scene far too late; its specialised equipment was only

deployed at the eleventh hour; and basic supplies took weeks to mobilise and distribute to the population.

The major lesson learned from Hurricane Mitch for IFRC was the need to work hard during disasters but even harder between disasters. It was agreed that two elements of disaster management have to be mastered before the right goods arrive at the right place at the right time: disaster preparedness and disaster response. The lead role taken by the LRMD was what made the difference during the Gujarat earthquake. The LRMD had geared up its supply chain preparedness, a pre-condition for effective simultaneous planning and execution.

Supply chain management: improvements

i. Organisational structure

Traditionally IFRC's logistics and resource mobilisation unit's activities were centred on the purchasing function. Over recent years, however, the role of the unit expanded to include all relevant supply chain activities from planning and warehouse management to training and reporting. In 2000 IFRC went through a major restructuring exercise that led to a clear separation between on-going development programmes and disaster management and coordination. During this restructuring, the enhanced profile of logistics was formally recognised and the unit was upgraded to a department. Improvements introduced over this

period of time focused on operational and process preparedness and standardisation of all processes and activities including procurement procedures.

IFRC's standardisation efforts, frame agreements, code of conduct and a basic commodity tracking system helped expedite mobilisation and delivery of relief goods during the Gujarat earthquake. The frame agreements with international and local suppliers for key relief items such as blankets and plastic sheets drastically simplified the procurement process. These agreements specify the good's price, quality and delivery requirements; in addition they oblige suppliers to stock at their own premises a certain level of inventory.

ii. Unsolicited goods

IFRC's code of conduct² regulates private sector cash and in-kind donations. By setting standards that include ethical and operational issues, the Federation retains the right to refuse certain donations and thus avoid goods being pushed through its network. The newly institutionalised commodity tracking system of the LRMD helps contain the arrival of unsolicited goods. The system – still to be refined – enables IFRC headquarters as well as the field staff to monitor, in real time, who is sending what, with what means, where and when.

Compared to the Bangladeshi earthquake some ten years ago this system allowed for a drastic improvement. During the earlier crisis, a substantial amount of time and energy was spent on the management and disposal of unwanted goods constituting 95% of all goods received. In the case of Gujarat, the amount of unsolicited goods was kept as low as 5%. The system also allowed IFRC to provide donors with reliable information on the status of goods required, mobilised and on site.

iii. Emergency Response Units

What worked particularly well during the Gujarat earthquake was the deployment of the newly developed Emergency Response Units (ERUs) with specialist equipment and personnel. There are four generic types of ERUs: logistics, health care, telecommunications, and water and sanitation. Six were requested by the LRMD for the Gujarat crisis: three in the health care area (referral hospital, emergency unit and basic health care), one logistics, one telecommunications and one water and sanitation. Within days of the Gujarat earthquake, a combined referral hospital comprising 310 beds, a basic health care unit, an emergency clinic and over 100 specialist personnel was deployed. The specialised water and sanitation unit supported these units. A telecom unit operational within three days from the quake established a communication link between all units involved.

Typically activated before the arrival of the other ERUs and relief items, the logistics ERU is instrumental in building the appropriate operational environment around relief activities. Based on the relief mobilisation table and the conditions of the local infrastructure, this ERU estimates the need, size and number of required tent warehouses and determines the optimal erection site. It obtains special agreement (tax exemption for the imported goods) before clearing the goods through customs and arranges for the transportation (trucks, fuel, drivers, insurance, etc) of the goods to warehouses.

Support for supply chain management

These developments within IFRC's supply chain management were supported by improvements in its preparedness in terms of human resources, knowledge management and finance.

i. Human resources

IFRC's improved level of human preparedness allowed it to respond promptly to the Gujarat earthquake. IFRC has developed its field assessment and coordination capability by establishing a Field Assessment Coordination Team (FACT) composed of experienced Red Cross/Red Crescent disaster managers, trained in

specific areas such as relief, logistics, health, nutrition, public health and epidemiology, water and sanitation, finance and administration. The LRMD is represented on the FACT through a logistics expert.

FACT is deployable within 12-24 hours for up to six weeks anywhere in the world. Its mandate is to carry out rapid field assessment immediately after a disaster, recommend and activate an appropriate relief operation, and ensure coordination with dozens of actors. Before the establishment of FACT, each donating and host country National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society used to send its own assessment team with obvious cost and coordination implications.

In order to build and maintain a core pool of about 200 experts from which FACT staff can be drawn, IFRC conducts FACT training sessions around the world. These sessions aim to impart a consistent methodology and build team spirit and a common pool of expertise. The training programmes are supported by on-the-job training.

ii. Knowledge management

IFRC is currently developing a Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) to ensure that the existing knowledge within the IFRC and its network of National Societies is captured, codified and made accessible to staff at large. In an emergency, IFRC needs to assemble and disseminate information on the geography, climate, population, food habits, living conditions and customs, infrastructure, duty customs and regulations of the affected region. One of the features of DMIS is the identification and creation of links to relevant websites that hold this type of key information. Immediately after the Gujarat earthquake, IFRC - using its DMIS - consulted a number of websites holding relevant information on the region in order to estimate the size of the affected population.

iii. Finance

One of the oldest tools available at IFRC is its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund. The Fund is called upon immediately after a disaster and before the issuance of a disaster-specific appeal. It provides seed money to initiate a speedy response on the ground - such as fielding FACT members, down-pay-

ments for initial supply purchases and deployment of ERUs. The Fund allowed IFRC to be the first humanitarian organisation to reach Gujarat and activate its disaster-specific emergency supply chain. This in return had a direct impact on its resource mobilisation capability and response outreach.

Challenges remaining

To further improve the level of supply chain preparedness and response time, IFRC's LRMD has implemented an end-to-end humanitarian logistics planning and tracking system in collaboration with the Fritz Institute [see article by Lee pp34] which includes an automated and standardised 6,000 item catalogue. Together these improvements will allow greater coordination in a relief operation between logistics and finance, information technology, donor reporting and disaster operations.

However, like other relief organisations, the IFRC continues to face challenges in several areas including obtaining funds for disaster preparedness and capacity building, identifying optimal structures for coordination between headquarters and the field, and clearly defining the role of the secretariat in relation to those of the National Societies.

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1. A Relief Mobilisation table is a list of relief items plus quantities thereof that the IFRC believes are required to address the needs of an emergency. IFRC prepares and circulates this table among its National Societies in order to raise funds and/or in-kind contributions. The table helps to minimise unsolicited goods and as National Societies commit to the provision of an item, the table is updated and made accessible to them all.

2. See www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct



The World Food Programme: augmenting logistics

by Peter Scott-Bowden

There are two distinct categories of emergencies – those for which you are prepared and others for which you are not.

As response teams take stock of unfolding news and events, humanitarian agencies have to plan for emergencies in an extraordinary range of operating environments and geographical locations. Planners who focus on logistical challenges are often in a better position to provide effective assistance.

With operations in over 80 countries, the World Food Programme (WFP) has become one of the largest providers of assistance to both refugees and IDPs. Whilst acknowledging that there is no common definition of logistics, augmenting logistics is about providing extra resources to meet operational requirements. Over the years WFP has developed both preparedness and response measures for supporting and augmenting its operations.

ALITE

Over the last eight years, WFP has developed a specialised unit to augment its field operations with a variety of support services. The Augmented Logistics Intervention Team for Emergencies (ALITE)¹ is specifically tasked with addressing logistical preparedness as well as providing key operational support during emergencies. This includes developing logistics capacity assessments, rapid

response equipment, standby arrangements, civil military cooperation guidance and inter-agency work on the UN Joint Logistics Centre concept.²

ALITE strengthens WFP logistics activities by working closely with field logisticians and programme, resource, telecommunications and procurement officers to apply standby capacities, develop operational plans and, where necessary, design special intervention projects. ALITE's goal is to provide a range of rapid and effective emergency services to support WFP field operations, primarily through increased resource availability. It is also responsible for the operational management of the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Brindisi, Italy. This facility is used by both UN agencies and NGOs to store programme supplies available for immediate distribution to beneficiaries and operational support equipment for responding agencies and NGOs.

WFP often needs to establish its own infrastructure for field operations including offices, warehouses and all the equipment for a supply chain system. In such circumstances, the Country Office can augment its own operation by drawing on reserves stored in UNHRD and can build up the

infrastructure to establish both operations at the country office and sub-office levels. The pre-fabricated buildings are flat-packed and pre-wired and come with office equipment and sleeping quarters. One Hercules C-130 can transport about six of these 'packs' – and while a forklift is preferable at the destination it is not essential.

In addition, WFP has now built up its own ICT support unit named FITTEST (Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency Support Team). Besides its work for WFP, FITTEST provides a growing role in the provision of inter-agency secure telecommunications. Recent deployments of equipment include those during the large-scale emergencies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the past three years, WFP has carried out extensive work to strengthen its logistical preparedness and capacity. The overall goal has been to improve rapid response facilities so as to allow timely delivery of food aid in both sudden- and slow-onset emergency situations.

Augmentation through partnership

To complement its emergency response, WFP has developed agreements over the years with 'standby' partner organisations – organisations that it can call on to guarantee additional capacity in key vulnerable regions. These agreements have been updated with a view to streamlining

the approach and procedures to be followed whenever standby partners are deployed. This is becoming increasingly pertinent to issues such as war risk insurance and liability/indemnification and associated responsibilities.

The standby partners can be classified into three categories: governmental entities, NGOs and donors from the private sector. They may provide individual experts and/or deployed service packages which comprise both staff and equipment. Opposite is a table which illustrates some of the service package deployments made since 1999.

While most agreements have focused on logistical expertise, some standby partners also have members on their rosters with expertise in other skills such as needs assessment, food security, nutrition, security and mine awareness/clearance. WFP can deploy such assets fast, having developed Standard Deployment Procedures (SDPs) with its partners. More importantly, WFP has built relationships of trust and mutual understanding. Training is critical to this success, along with joint evaluations of past deployments.

Because of the diversity of areas and complexity of environments in which WFP is called upon to make interventions, ALITE is frequently asked to develop the means to support WFP's core operational mandate through collaborative partnerships. For example, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD - Fondation Suisse de Deminage) provided expert advice and technical assistance to WFP. It undertook mine risk education for staff (both theory and practical training exercises) and demonstrated the impact that mine awareness can have on WFP operations. This effort, in coordination with the UN Mine Action Service, played a crucial role in securing transport corridors as well as clearing offices and warehouses for WFP during the early months of the Iraq operation in 2003.

During the 2001-2002 Afghan emergency, a mountaineering and avalanche control team from CARE Canada contributed to major efforts to keep the Salang Tunnel open. This team prevented avalanches of snow and ice from blocking vital supply routes into remote areas in Afghanistan. Such interventions

Standby support to WFP Ops 1999 - 2003	Country/region (list not comprehensive)
Base camp (office, living accommodation)	Afghanistan, Kosovo, East Timor, Mozambique, Iraq
Telecommunications teams	Balkans, East Timor, Iraq
Mobile bakery	Albania, Kosovo
Boat teams	Mozambique
Avalanche control unit	Afghanistan
NBC ³ training teams	Iraq, UAE, Cyprus, Kuwait
Mine Action teams	Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Sudan
Trucking fleets	Afghanistan, Balkans, Palestinian Territories, Eritrea, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho
Road and bridge rehabilitation teams	Angola, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Turkmenistan

enabled WFP and other humanitarian agencies to transport crucial supplies to those stranded by the conflict. One additional positive outcome was that it stimulated the reactivation of the local economy through opening transport routes and the movement of people displaced by years of war.

Other examples include:

- rescue boat operators deployed in Mozambique to assist in flood relief efforts
- Swedish Rescue Services Agency international convoy teams deployed in Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Palestinian Territories
- ICT support teams (from the Norwegian Refugee Council and Danish Refugee Council) deployed in most regions, working closely with WFP's FITTEST team, co-ordinated in Dubai
- UK's Department for International Development air operations specialists
- Red R Australia logistics officers deployed in Iraq
- Swiss Humanitarian Assistance engineers deployed for road and infrastructure rehabilitation
- TPG experts deployed to assist in air support of operations in southern Sudan.

Private sector partners

In meeting the challenge of developing new business processes, WFP has taken the initiative of building relationships with the private sector. This involves examining ways in which the private sector can assist WFP in meet-

ing its challenge of feeding people across the world. Although not all businesses are a paradigm for effective practice, WFP receives support from organisations such as TPG - the Dutch-based international mail, express and logistics company (previously known as the TNT Post Group).⁴

TPG, through its TNT logistics division, initially identified three short-term logistics areas where it could support WFP. The UNHRD warehouse (soon to accommodate other agencies) needs to grow significantly. TPG will support its expansion and analyse its efficiency and effectiveness in order to determine optimal layout and stock availability. TPG is also looking at a number of smaller projects, including evaluating warehouse management systems, assessing the global warehouse infrastructure and determining key logistics performance indicators.

TPG also played a significant support role in the southern Africa emergency operation as well as more recently in the Iraq operation. However the relationship is not just about moving supplies between A and B; it is perhaps more importantly about forging greater links and understanding between commercial experts and those within the public sector, and about exchanging ideas, practices and new business concepts. One of the first private sector companies to provide surge capacity support was Ericsson with the deployment of a telecommunications team to Afghanistan, which provided mobile

telecommunications not only for WFP but also for the other emergency relief agencies operating there.

Drawing on the success of the UNHRD model, WFP is now developing a 'four-corner' concept in collaboration with TPG. This will involve establishing strategic response depots to cover the four quarters of the world. The centres will provide storage capacity and act as staging areas for response. This concept does not necessarily involve large stockpiles; much of the stocking will be 'virtual' - with the focus on rapid local procurement capability. WFP and UNHCR have also agreed shared access to each agency's 'Long Term Agreements' with suppliers, increasing procurement capabilities. WFP aims to draw upon both commercial and public sectors, and is in close contact with IFRC and UNICEF who are developing similar modules and strategies.

Lessons learned

Recent feedback from standby partners (in the Afghanistan operation) and internal discussions have highlighted a number of issues for WFP to tackle:

- For new standby partners, WFP must provide clearer, more transparent overall guidelines of operation. In a large-scale emergency, partners have to learn fast. WFP has in the past provided complex, generic training tools. Training and learning tools must, however, be simple and specific to the operation.
- WFP - as other agencies - deploys staff/partners to increasingly insecure areas yet has few medical/safety experts to support those deployed. This needs to be addressed.
- WFP's capacity for learning lessons from field operations needs to be enhanced. The military conduct rigorous 'lessons learned' exercises

and WFP could learn from their approach.

- WFP could learn much from the commercial sector in terms of knowledge transfer.
- WFP's donors have recently demanded greater operational coordination. WFP has responded by developing a competencies matrix of its standby partners which has proved extremely helpful. In Iraq, one third of the emergency personnel deployed in support of the WFP operation came from among the 15 standby partners. Without detailed knowledge of their capabilities, this would not have been possible. While WFP continues to address this issue, it is also asking the same question of the donors - coordination is required on both sides.

Continuing challenges

- **Integrated planning:** Contingency planning is successful when it is an integrated undertaking to identify gaps and requirements in the supply chain process. Building relationships with partners takes investment - in time and money. It must be done thoroughly with clear parameters and procedures. Fast response demands trust, especially when security is an issue.
- **Capacity building:** WFP avoids bringing into a region 'outside' transport assets wherever there is indigenous capacity. Increasing efforts are being made to support sustainability and when the operation is nearing completion, 'transition strategies' are implemented to support transfer of knowledge and skills to those organisations and entities staying behind. Much more needs to be done. The next major challenge for the 'Northern' NGOs and agencies alike is to expand their network and invest in building flexible structures within regions.

Frequently, at huge cost, assets are flown half way around the world to supply urgent supplies.

Questions should be asked about the cost benefit of such strategic responses. Donors too should question their own 'justification' for such deployments. Augmenting logistics should maximise the tenet 'small investment, large gain' and do all it can to develop regional capacities. Such relationships can yield benefits for the donors through efficient utilisation of their resources and can also build links with and between Southern countries.

- **Public versus commercial sector:** Agencies will have to be careful, at the beginning of each relationship, to agree ethical practices and to clarify which areas of their work require support/involvement and which do not. It should be recognised that both commercial organisations and relief agencies will have their own agendas - and their own accountability requirements. Though they may share areas of commitment to humanitarian needs, the commercial versus humanitarian principles need careful examination and navigation. And relief workers need to be persuaded that commercial practices can be useful. How do we encourage the 'we have always done it this way' person to adapt to new technologies/methods?

Within the humanitarian community, as within the corporate sector, 'logistics' may be redefining itself. Supply chain management with concrete data - on what is available or what is not - may improve programme allocation and in turn maximise benefits for beneficiaries. Equally, developing an integrated approach helps to bridge divides within and between organisations.

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1. ALITE was established in 1995 by Ramiro Lopes da Silva (current Humanitarian Coordinator for the UN in Iraq) and David Kaatrud, Coordinator, UNJLC. See www.wfp.org/operations/logistics/contingency_planning.html
2. See article on UNJLC on pp11
3. Nuclear, Biological and Chemical training.
4. See www.tpg.com/wwwenglish/community/movingtheworld/



UN convoys in Afghanistan are preceded by snow-clearing teams and/or an Avalanche Control Unit, provided by Canadian standby partners.

Logistics under pressure: UNICEF's Back to School programme in Afghanistan

by Paul Molinaro and Sandie Blanchet

For the last eighteen months in Afghanistan, UNICEF has been involved in one of the largest education operations in the history of the organisation.

The first stage of the Back to School (BTS) programme sought to enable 1.78 million children in the war-ravaged country to return to school by the end of March 2002. Since then, an additional two campaigns have been undertaken, reaching 1 million children in September 2002 and 4.5 million in March 2003. The evolution of these operations has had three main effects:

- It has raised the profile of the logistics profession within UNICEF. The organisation now recognises the need to further strengthen its in-country logistics operations.
- It represents a new approach to supply and logistics operations in general, by recognising that such operations can be an important and useful vehicle for building local capacity and assisting national institutions in making the transition from emergency to development. This also helps to prepare those same institutions for coping with future emergencies, where supplies and logistics will always be a huge element in response planning.
- It has shown that large-scale education interventions can be an immediate element of an emergency response, and not be limited to post-crisis reconstruction. In Afghanistan, the response to restart education for all was one of the first interventions led by the Interim Administration and the international community.

Genesis of the BTS operation and early errors

Initial planning began in early December 2001 and was inevitably a challenging experience in light of the

complexity of the local situation and of the operation itself. At this time the war in Afghanistan had only just ended and the new transitional government had not yet been agreed upon. UNICEF staff were also in the early stages of deployment. The first logistics staff arrived in Pakistan on 1 December to be confronted by the more pressing issues of providing nutritional, health and winter supplies, and establishing logistics systems to move and monitor them. Critical elements of the procurement section, the education section and the nascent logistics sections were all operating separately; information flow - within and between the Afghan office and the support offices in New York and Copenhagen - was restricted, hampered not least by the lack of reliable and available communications in a country with little infrastructure.

UNICEF Supply Division had to identify, procure, assemble, pack and distribute thousands of educational kits for children living in a country where the human and financial resources and infrastructure had been seriously weakened by years of war. Looking at the volume of supplies in question it became obvious that UNICEF was facing one of the most daunting challenges it had ever faced and was clearly confronted with major difficulties in dealing with the magnitude of the operation. Ten thousand boxes, providing teaching/ learning materials for 800,000 children, were flown in from the UNICEF warehouse in Copenhagen. But it was far from enough. It was also apparent that the supplies being ordered from Pakistani suppliers would not be sufficient to cover the requirements - which were constantly changing due to uncertainties about the numbers of Afghan schoolchildren (starting at around 1 million then jumping to 1.5 million,

then to roughly 1.8 million). By the end of December UNICEF faced a two-and-a-half month deadline (for a 23 March school opening) to receive, pack and distribute the supplies. Based on supplier promises of a six-week lead time for delivery, UNICEF planned to begin operations on 15 February against a distribution plan that had yet to be written, with data that was not readily available, and implemented by human resources and a logistics infrastructure that were still being developed.

Staffing

In January the country office had only two logistics personnel in place, one in Islamabad as coordinator, and one in Peshawar, on the Pakistan/Afghan border. UNICEF was drastically in need of extra personnel. However, when the new government announced that Back to School would be one of the pillars of its reconstruction programme, the operation took on an immediate political dimension. UNICEF made a public commitment to providing the necessary supplies before 23 March 2001 and immediately deployed senior staff to the field. The BTS operation reshaped itself, taking on a stronger logistics focus and requests for resources originating from the logistics office now carried far more weight.

The senior human resources apparatus in New York that covered South Asia was temporarily relocated to Islamabad to facilitate and expedite recruitment for BTS. By mid February, BTS Logistics had recruited 11 logistics officers who between them had had field experience in almost every major complex emergency since Bosnia in 1992.

Distribution planning and Nowshera logistics base

The first priority was to develop a distribution plan that, though complex, was coherent and easily



Nowshera packing centre

understood. For the purposes of planning, education programme officers had no real distribution data to work with except a 1999 UNESCO survey. Planning was therefore finalised by taking the 1.8 million student figure that UNICEF had actually procured for, and dividing this figure by the population percentages for each region, thus giving us an idea of how many kits were needed where. For language breakdown UNICEF sought local expertise and settled on an average Dari/Pashto percentage split for each province. This was a critical element for text book distribution. For teacher numbers UNICEF took its student figure and divided by 35 and for schools it worked on a figure of 1 per 70 students.

The first key element in the distribution network was the establishment of a major logistics centre where bulk supplies could be received, packed into kits and dispatched. A packing centre was established in the North West Frontier Province town of Nowshera which belonged to the National Logistics Cell (NLC), a government organisation staffed by Pakistani military officers and civilians. NLC subcontracted all labour (guards, packers and loaders) as well as catering services. Workers were employed on two shifts, the shop floor supervised by warehouse staff flown in from Copenhagen. In less

than two months, the Nowshera warehouse produced 50,000 educational kits at a rate of two boxes per minute. In addition, smaller warehouses in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan produced over 10,000 kits, 400 recreational kits and 600 school tents.

Kit design

UNICEF's Education section provided the original list of items that were to be given to students, teachers and schools. Logistics section translated these lists to 'kit form' and were given leeway to change items or item numbers in order to make the exercise logistically feasible. A generic Grades 1-6 kit was designed so that this could be prioritised in order to meet the 23 March deadline, as well as the Teacher and School kits. Any specialist components would follow later. This made the task logistically possible. In addition to the kits, UNICEF procured some 6 million textbooks to be distributed simultaneously. These were made up of 86 different titles in two languages and including Teacher guides.

Distribution

The hubs in this case were Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar, locations with UNICEF offices, logisticians and warehouses.

Each hub covered a number of provinces and received total kits for the combined provinces. In general, UNICEF supplied transport from hubs to drop zones but this was not always the case. In Kabul, peacekeeping personnel from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were used to ferry to drop zones and to individual schools. In Mazar-e-Sharif, the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) organised helicopters to drop zones. Beyond drop zones, UNICEF provided cash either to district education officers or to UNICEF-hired distribution assistants. This cash funded transport by smaller vehicles, private cars, donkeys and porters and also allowed UNICEF to set up some 250 small storage facilities at district level. In other areas of Afghanistan UNICEF was able to work with NGOs, such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. In each case, mode of transport was left to the logistics officer at the hub. With Afghanistan being so geographically diverse, a 'one mode fits all' system was not attempted.

Problems encountered

Procurement:

1. Issues arose over the quality of some supplies procured locally, due to the short lead-in times and the high volumes being requested.
2. Local suppliers were often optimistic about delivery dates, causing frequent stock-outs on the packing lines and forcing UNICEF to take urgent measures, such as hiring additional aircraft to transport delayed items from nearby countries.
3. Supply lead times were underestimated on some occasions.

Distribution:

Afghanistan was still in an emergency phase and it was the end of winter. The infrastructure (both human and physical) had been destroyed by years of war. The logistics involved in distributing the kits embraced technological extremes - from aircraft and helicopters to taxis, wheelbarrows, donkeys and porters. Hundreds of trucks were used to transport the kits to Kabul for onward distribution to provincial centres. UNICEF staff were in daily contact with almost 100 suppliers and manufacturers to track progress and identify problems. Thousands of health workers involved in the national immunisation network were mobilised to help distribute kits. Countless obstacles were encountered: obtaining exemption

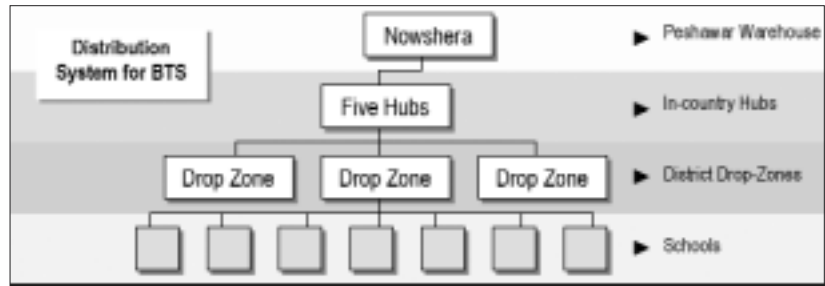
certificates; getting customs clearance on time; negotiating demurrage and port storage charges; flooded roads; identifying local focal points and ensuring that they were ready to receive the supplies and simultaneously coordinating operations in several countries.

Capacity building

One of the objectives of BTS was to help build capacity in Afghanistan's Ministry of Education. In July 2002, UNICEF identified a disused and badly damaged former industrial centre that already belonged to the Ministry of Education and had been the centre for school furniture production. UNICEF spent \$50,000 on rehabilitating what is now called the Ministry of Education Logistics Centre. In addition, six UNICEF warehouses were handed over to the Ministry to form the nerve centre of the supply and distribution operations for schools across the country. Under the supervision of UNICEF Supply Division staff, the new workforce - all Afghans - was trained in warehouse management, the use of databases and basic health and safety. UNICEF installed a classroom at the warehouse, equipped with 20 computers, and provided on-site literacy classes.

One sensitive issue was the employment of women in the warehouse. UNICEF wanted to ensure that at least some of the 200 new jobs would be accessible to women. According to local custom, women could not work in the same room as men so the ware-

The basic distribution chain was designed as follows:



houses were divided with simple plastic sheets, so that women could work on the production line with the required level of privacy.

Conclusion

Lessons have been learned, sometimes the hard way. New ideas have been tried and adopted. Iraq will be the first time the BTS model will be exported outside Afghanistan and there are already marked differences in how UNICEF is planning to proceed.

The supply operation for education in Afghanistan, especially the logistics centre in Kabul, represents a new approach to emergency logistics. The objective is to assist countries in transition to bridge the gap between emergency and development by building national capacity so that a country becomes self-sufficient in the planning, production and distribution of educational or other supplies.

When a commitment is made and key personnel deployed and with backing from the highest levels, UNICEF can move incredibly fast and effectively.

In the case of Afghanistan, UNICEF pulled out the stops in order to make things happen. The institutional elements that allow such a high impact project to occur can have ripple effects throughout an organisation. In the case of UNICEF, BTS has put logistics operations back on the map. Recently there have been high level discussions on how logistics professionals are supposed to fit into future frameworks. Entwining UNICEF's recognised ability in procurement with a new approach to logistics augurs well for an operational future that can only be described as predictably unpredictable.

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For more information, visit UNICEF's Afghanistan Back to School website at www.unicef.org/noteworthy/afghanistan/bts. Details of the School in a Box concept are at www.supply.unicef.dk/emergencies/schoolkit.htm



Coordination in the Great Lakes

by George Fenton

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of the most inhospitable, insecure and operationally complex countries of the world in which to deliver humanitarian relief.

Due to the civil war that has raged there from 1998, at least 3.3 million people have either been killed or have died of hunger and disease - more people killed in any war since the end of World War II¹. Huge numbers of Congolese civilians have been displaced. According to the Global IDP Database, over 2.5 million out of a national population of some 50 million are now internally displaced. In 2002 alone, over 500,000 people were displaced, mainly because of intensified violence in the north-eastern Ituri and eastern South Kivu regions. The aid organisation, World Vision, is attempting to provide emergency shelter and water for over 50,000 people who fled from atrocities perpetrated by rebel groups near the town of Bunia. However, due to insecurity, supply convoys have been delayed on the Uganda/DRC border for up to two weeks.

The scattering of so many people across such a huge area while conflict continues would make the problems faced by logisticians difficult enough in a country with good roads and air connections. In DRC, however, decades of under-investment, exploitation, corruption and neglect have left the nation's infrastructure in a pitiful state.

The war has also caused the country to be divided de facto into different territories, further eroding what commercial, economic and physical links there once were. According to Refugees International, lack of access due to insecurity and poor infrastructure makes the DRC the most expensive country in the world in which to deliver humanitarian aid².

Hopes of a gradual improvement in the situation have been raised by the signing in April 2003 of a peace agreement between the Kinshasa government and the largest rebel groups. Efforts are under way to restore commerce throughout the Congo and reopen commercial links. If peace is maintained, this could lead eventually to the integration of Congo's disparate regions, bringing benefits for logistical operations.

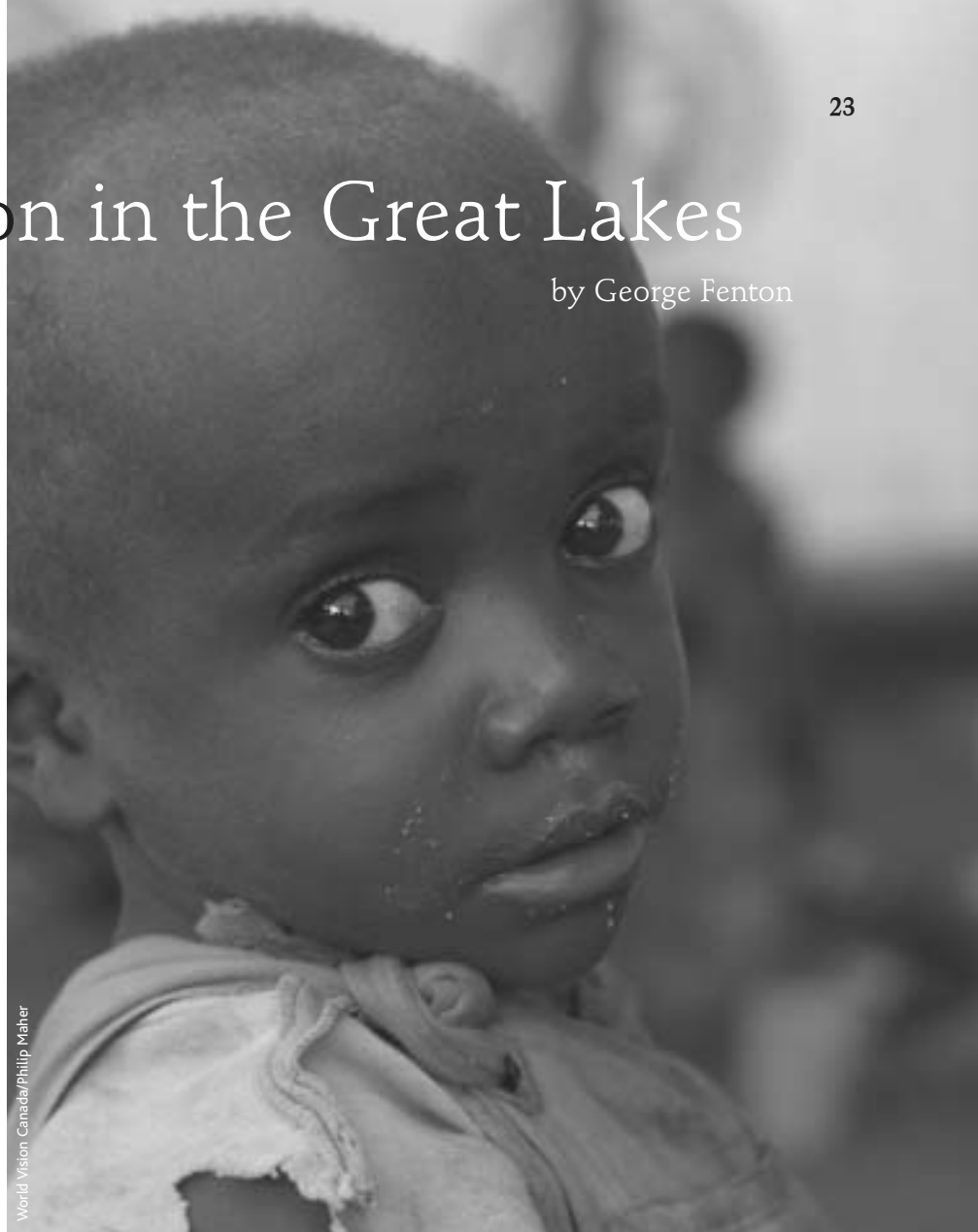
Lack of teamwork

The increased frequency and magnitude of emergencies throughout Africa, and particularly in the Great Lakes Region, have created a need for aid organisations to improve their logistics capability and capacity. While some organisations have risen to the challenge and are beginning to recognise the value of inter-agency coordination and collaboration, others still tend to regard logistics as an unfortunate - though necessary -

expense rather than an important component of strategic management.

Many humanitarian organisations appear to be at a similar stage in their approach to supply chain management as the commercial sector was in the 1970s and 80s, when personnel engaged in logistics were underpaid and poorly trained. Many businesses, realising that significant financial savings can be made through the implementation of efficient controls, now take logistics very seriously indeed. In addition, the outsourcing of key tasks such as procurement to experienced service providers often allows a company (or organisation) to focus on its core expertise. These issues are just as salient for aid organisations as they are for the supply chain operations and skilled logisticians of the commercial world.

Problems of inter-agency coordination are often most evident in the initial, frantic stages of response to a humanitarian emergency when aid



World Vision Canada/Philip Maher

agencies often fail to make the effort, or simply find it too difficult, to collaborate effectively. In addition to the logistical problems of coordination, it is a sad reality that all too often emergencies trigger a huge scramble among aid organisations for donor money to support their own relief initiatives. This is often to the detriment of valuable coordination. Sometimes little attention is paid to what other agencies are doing amid single-minded approaches to maximise marketing opportunities.

Donors can perpetuate this problem, tending to distribute money to favoured organisations, and are often guilty of failing to coordinate among themselves and with the wider aid community. There appears to be a need for donors to promote better emergency preparedness and collaboration, not only among aid organisations but also among themselves.

Partly as a result of the failure within aid organisations to address logistical issues in a professional manner – their focus being more on humanitarian need – rifts have sometimes developed between logistics and programme management functions. This has led to a need within many organisations to find ways of ‘selling’ the importance of logistics, ultimately to ensure the success of humanitarian activities. In addition, there appear to be few established common standards and systems – for relief supplies, for example – and a very wide variety of approaches to the provision of logistics services. Unless action is taken to rectify current logistical inefficiencies, improve coordination and ensure good operating standards, aid organisations will continue to waste millions of dollars.

Moves to improve coordination

Realising that better coordination is vital, some aid agencies are beginning to come together to find ways to pool resources, prevent operational overlap and boost efficiency. An Emergency Preparedness and Response Working Group has been formed for the East Africa and Great Lakes Regions: a first step in improving **practical** collaboration and information exchange in key areas between aid organisations at a regional level. The group, which currently has 17 members comprising NGOs, international organisations and UN agencies, was formed in Kenya in 2002 under the auspices of the United

Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA wanted to encourage better inter-agency collaboration due to concerns over the many logistical constraints on humanitarian operations that exist in central and eastern Africa.

Regional Logistics Managers from World Vision International and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies established the core group and jointly chair meetings every two months. Four technical sub-groups have been set up to discuss initiatives on emergency preparedness logistics, human resource development, joint response capacity and telecommunication technologies. The aim of the group is to develop joint solutions to some of the many practical difficulties all members face when providing humanitarian aid, primarily to people within the East Africa and Great Lakes regions.

For example, the group is currently working on:

- developing innovative and potentially money-saving initiatives such as the sharing of procurement services (joint supply/framework agreements) and the sharing of logistics resources such as charter flights, personnel and contingency stocks. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society in Kenya recently offered to loan some of its emergency stocks of shelter materials to member agencies so that they could respond quickly to the DRC crisis.
- establishing joint emergency preparedness and response training events. In July, staff from several member organisations attended a series of security management courses in Nairobi. Other joint

courses are planned, covering subjects such as disaster preparedness and logistics management.

- improving the utilisation and compatibility of key tried and tested logistics systems. Some systems used by, for example, commercial transport companies have been found to be suitable for the management of humanitarian operations.
- contributing to the development of common standards (such as the Sphere Project³) and specifications for emergency equipment. Can agencies agree to collectively purchase shelter materials that are branded with multiple logos and printed statements conforming to certain relief standards?

The core working group has found that, although they meet primarily to discuss and share technical information, perhaps the greatest value comes from personal and professional contact with a variety of colleagues. This brings greater knowledge of partner organisations and better understanding of ways in which organisations, as well as donors, can better collaborate and coordinate during a crisis. The group's greatest hope is that their efforts should complement existing structures and avoid the need to constantly ‘reinvent the wheel’, leading to better, cheaper and more efficient logistical operations.

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1. According to a recent report from the International Rescue Committee: ‘Mortality in the DRC – Results from a Nationwide Survey’, April 2003: http://intranet.theirc.org/docs/drc_mortality_iii_exec.pdf
2. Refugee International ref: www.refintl.org/cgi-bin/ri/country?cc=00003
3. Sphere Project: www.sphereproject.org



IDPs from Bunia build new shelters near the village of Eringeti, Ituri province, DRC.

Lean logistics: delivering food to northern Ugandan IDPs

by Margaret Vikki and Erling Bratheim

Uganda's 17-year civil conflict entered a new phase in mid 2002 when the Ugandan army launched Operation Iron Fist and entered southern Sudan with the objective of finally wiping out the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The operation had only limited success. Intent on vengeance, the rebels slipped back into northern Uganda. Atrocities, attacks on civilians and soldiers, abductions and burning of houses ensued. As a result, most of the population of northern Uganda is now internally displaced, concentrated in 'protected villages' with extremely limited access to food and water and entirely dependent on food distribution through the World Food Programme. In the depopulated countryside agricultural production has ceased and markets have closed. Movement of people and goods is greatly restricted. People who originally grew some food to supplement WFP rations are now not able to sustain their livelihoods without help from the international community.

Regardless of how the tragedy unfolds, IDPs are likely to remain extremely vulnerable and heavily dependent on food distribution for the foreseeable future. If the insurgency continues into 2004, IDPs will be forced to remain in camps and the need for food distribution will persist. Should security improve to the point where IDPs can begin returning to their former homes or resettle elsewhere, there will still be a tremendous need for assistance due to the severity of disruption to agriculture. At least one productive harvesting season will be needed to improve the food security situation. It is likely that, during the initial return phase, the majority of the population will still want to sleep in camps for security reasons. Most of the IDPs will still depend on food received through WFP/Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Distribution arrangements

Food is currently distributed to 700-800,000 persons located in about 60

IDP camps in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. Funding is provided by WFP and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. NRC carries out General Food Distribution (GFD) as a WFP implementing partner. WFP is responsible for the procurement of food items and transportation to the extended delivery point, while NRC supervises transportation to the final delivery point as well as distribution to the beneficiaries. NRC is responsible for the reception, storage, handling and distribution of WFP food aid commodities.

WFP, NRC and a contracted transport company meet on a monthly basis to draw up the food distribution operational plan. WFP provides the food and determines rations based on analysed household food security assessments. NRC's role in the triangular partnership entails:

- provision of competent personnel for GFD implementation
- collection of (gender-disaggregated) data and assessments in the IDP camps to enable joint analysis and appropriate intervention with WFP
- monthly reporting to NRC HQ and to WFP
- carrying out mobilisation and sensitisation of beneficiaries and local communities - usually prior to distribution but when security is bad by the use of a loudspeaker on the day of distribution
- hiring and training of volunteers who assist in crowd control and GFD supervision
- liaising with local administration and camp managements to determine who is entrusted with responsibility for identifying legitimate beneficiaries.

For an operation which provides so much for so many the logistical



IDP camp in northern Uganda

structures in place are remarkably simple. They consist of standard warehousing procedures, labour-intensive loading of vehicles using local labourers and locally hired transportation making optimum use of the limited number of locally available freight vehicles.

Warehouse facilities have capacity to cope with the highest turnover of food predicted in a worst-case scenario. They also meet the basic standards in terms of structure/infrastructure, damp control during the rainy season, security and loading area capacity.

In warehouses in the towns of Gulu and Kitgum, sacks can be stacked four metres high. Food is stacked by item and chronologically in order to ensure that the first delivered stocks of any one item are first to be delivered to beneficiaries. This prevents wastage of stocks that have reached their expiry dates. Each stack is of a standard base size in order to simplify the counting process. A simple stock card system is in place which is done manually and later transferred to a computer database used for tracking and archival purposes. A stock card is held for each different stack of food, with a central register also being updated to hold an overall picture of stocks in place, their arrival date and exact location within the facility. Due to the weakness of computer facilities and the potential for

software and hardware failure, the computerised aspects of the system (the central register of all items) are backed up by the retention of paper records.

In order to guard against theft, the compounds of both warehousing facilities are completely fenced off with a single constantly guarded access point. Within each compound, individual warehouse buildings are kept padlocked except for loading, unloading or stock checking. Daily checks of all stored items are conducted to identify any cases of interference or theft of stocks. Constant attention is also given to the protection of foodstuffs against contamination. Warehouses are kept immaculately clean and fumigated on a periodic basis. Regular inspections are made to ensure that entry points for insects and small animals are blocked wherever possible.

Vehicles are supplied by a local freight company which is responsible for recruitment and management of drivers. Vehicles are loaded slightly under their capacity in order to allow for breakdown and redistribution of stocks *en route* to the final distribution point. Although this incurs a slight extra cost per delivery, there have been substantial gains in opera-

tional effectiveness. Roads are in a very poor state and if vehicles break down the risks of looting are very high. It is essential to maintain capacity to redistribute loads when vehicles are stranded in the countryside.

Security constraints

The security environment in northern Uganda is particularly challenging. LRA fighters regularly ambush vehicles, using maximum brutality. Captured drivers are killed. Once looted, vehicles are burned. Refugee and IDP camps are targeted in order to steal food and personal possessions and to abduct and forcibly recruit children. Both the LRA and the army have planted landmines. Staff offices and accommodation are at risk of robbery.

Given the dangers of any travel, WFP demands military escorts for all food deliveries. Each convoy of trucks is accompanied by two army vehicles and around 70 armed soldiers. Drivers are taught convoy skills, to note the presence of vehicles to the front and rear and briefed to stay at least 100 metres from the nearest army vehicle in case it runs over a mine or is ambushed. In the event of a mechanical breakdown drivers of the vehicle in front are instructed to

stop. In the event of an ambush the vehicle in front of the incident will drive on while those behind will either turn around or reverse out of trouble as the situation dictates. In desperate situations vehicles drive into the bush before their occupants disembark.

NRC is incorporated into the UN security system which operates a five tier system in which one is the lowest perceived threat level. Northern Uganda is currently rated at security level four, meaning that only essential staff should be deployed and only operations of an urgent nature conducted. Level five requires evacuation.

Delivering food

On an average day food is distributed to about 20,000 beneficiaries. When security permits, each camp is visited once a month. It is an important principle for NRC that once food is brought to camp distribution points the beneficiaries should take on as much responsibility as possible for the actual distribution. They are thus involved in unloading sacks from the trucks, scooping the food and ensuring orderly and controlled distribution. If the village social structure survives intact within the camps then food is distributed to the traditional village leader who further distributes it to

WFP requires heavy military escort for its food aid convoys in northern Uganda.





Food distribution

individual families. Otherwise it is the head of family, often a woman, who receives the ration.

On several occasions distribution has had to be stopped for weeks on end, leaving the IDPs with no assistance. WFP/NRC are engaged in regular dialogue with the authorities to supply a sufficient escort force for the convoys and, equally importantly after food has been distributed, a military presence in the camps to deter rebel raiders from stealing it.

The amount of food distributed to each family is done in accordance with the number of members registered on the cards of each head of family. As the population fluctuates, both due to movements between camps and through arrival of new IDPs to the camps, it is a constant challenge for the staff to ensure that those entitled to the rations are those who actually receive them. They must always try to be one step ahead of the beneficiaries when it comes to identifying ingenious ways of getting extra rations by presentation of false identities, bogus new family members and non-registration of deaths.

Staff training is crucial to meeting these challenges. Staff need to be made aware of both the importance of

getting the right rations to the right people but also of how to counter pressure and manipulation from groups or individuals, many of them well-connected persons with authority.

Staff members are also under intense pressure to travel on convoys in very difficult conditions. The security situation is so dire that military escorts cannot be dispensed with. At the same time the presence of an escort of soldiers increases the risk of rebel attack, thus putting NRC staff at greater risk. Only the dedication of highly qualified national staff makes it possible to carry out the work under these extreme conditions. Management has to constantly consider when it is defensible to put staff at risk and go to the camps and when it is necessary to stay put.

Under the present circumstances in northern Uganda, the number of displaced persons is increasing and more than half of the population is dependent on food assistance primarily provided by NRC. This puts a continuous pressure on the capacity and the management of the logistics necessary to assist the population with the most basic needs.

Though the unpredictable security conditions in northern Uganda have

posed a great challenge to the project, NRC has succeeded in delivering food to the needy population most of the time. Over the last year, however, the deterioration of the security situation has forced NRC to suspend distribution to some of the beneficiaries for long periods at a time. Furthermore, the movement of people back and forth between the camps and their villages, as well as between camps, whenever the security situation allowed it, has made registration and identification of beneficiaries more difficult.

In this type of long-lasting conflict, the greatest challenge, however, lies in trying to counter the dependency of the population on food aid. NRC and other parties involved have very limited possibilities to address issues such as the loss of skills and people's ability to secure their own livelihood and become more self-reliant.

However smooth the logistics, and however satisfied we are that basic needs are being met, there are questions that should constantly trouble and challenge us in our role as humanitarian actors:

- What is the effect of long-term distribution on the ongoing conflict?
- Is there scope for NRC to combine food distribution with peace and reconciliation initiatives to nudge protagonists in a positive direction?
- Should we set a time limit to how long even a successful operation should be allowed to continue if the political situation remains unchanged and prospects for peace remain elusive?

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For further information on displacement in Uganda see the recently updated country profile from the Global IDP Project at www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Uganda

Food aid logistics and the southern Africa emergency

by Jon Bennett

The recent protracted crisis in southern Africa stretched the ingenuity and capacity of the international community.

In the six countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland – a jigsaw of accumulative factors was to bring about a heightened crisis: the volatile mix of drought, floods, disruptions to commercial farming, the absence of effective food security and governance policies, depletion of strategic grain reserves, poor economic performance, foreign exchange shortages and delays in the timely importation of maize. The sub-region has the worst HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world – a major contributing factor towards household food insecurity that will have long-term development implications.

One might have expected a fairly straightforward response to the crisis given that (a) the 1992 food crisis had provided useful lessons and helped build early warning capacities in the region; (b) the regional infrastructure was relatively robust – good roads, rail and port facilities; and (c) in spite of political obstacles, significant amounts of surplus maize were still being grown and governments gave early indications that they would meet domestic shortfalls through commercial imports and subsidies. Full advantage was taken of the strength of the commercial sector in southern Africa. The World Food Programme (WFP), by far the largest food aid delivery agent, was able to outsource the handling at the ports and management of rail transport in South Africa, transshipment points and warehouses.

What was not foreseen, however, was the series of extraordinary events surrounding the GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) issue. It is this issue in particular that is examined

here, for it was to have both positive and negative consequences for the relief operation, with a steep learning curve for those agencies adapting their approaches to unfolding events.

Attitudes towards GM

In mid-July 2002, UN agencies launched a special appeal for Southern Africa – OCHA's 'Regional Humanitarian Assistance Strategy' – requesting some US\$611 million of which 90% comprised food aid. WFP led inter-agency coordination, information exchange and advocacy as WFP's Executive Director served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa. The WFP appeal alone initially involved the provision of 992,459 tons of food over nine months, with some additional tens of thousands of tons to come through NGOs.

As with most large-scale food interventions, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) was to provide the majority of in-kind contributions in the form of whole maize. What they had not anticipated was the rejection of this food aid by some governments because it was genetically modified. It was difficult to distinguish political manipulation and obfuscation from genuine environmental, health and economic concerns. There were political interests on both sides of the debate. The USDA clearly did not want to create a precedent for governments to reject its food surplus exports as aid. WFP's official policy is essentially one of neutrality, stating that the acceptance or rejection of any such food donations is the prerogative of the recipient government. A UN joint statement of 27 August 2002 on the use of GM foods in southern Africa went further by indicating that no scientific evidence is yet available to



Bulawayo warehouse, Zimbabwe

suggest a risk to human health from GM foods. On the issue of potential spillage and cross-fertilisation, the statement leaves this to the judgement of recipient countries.

Though initially in favour of accepting GMOs, Zambia began to take a more hard-line attitude in 2002 just as the international community was gearing up for a major food aid intervention. By mid-August it had banned all imports of GM products, including those on the high seas already committed to the aid operation. WFP and other major donors were required to withdraw all existing stocks from the country at considerable cost. This included food destined for the 130,000 Angolan refugees in camps (though the government would accept milled maize for these people). Meanwhile, Kenya and Tanzania offered 'natural' maize to offset any further deficit once Zambia had purchased 300,000 tons from South Africa.

The Zambian decision had something of a domino effect. Bureaucratic delays and procrastination meant that quite significant amounts of GM maize had already been distributed in all countries but by December 2002 the following positions were confirmed:

- Zimbabwe banned all GM maize grain (unmilled) but was willing to accept some quantities for milling in Bulawayo prior to distribution (milled maize has neither re-planting/cross-fertilisation risks, nor the risk of consumption by cattle¹, but obviously still does not address potential human health risks).
- Mozambique banned grain but accepted in-country milling, provided extra funds were made available to meet this cost.
- Lesotho and Malawi in theory did not accept grain but existing and in-transit supplies were accepted.
- Swaziland was the only SADC country to accept GM maize.

Implications for logistical operations

i. Shipments and milling requirements

The immediate consequence of the crisis was a disruption of aid supplies to vulnerable populations for at least a month. Large shipments of GM

maize were stranded at the ports of entry; if these were in areas of high humidity, milling problems and wastage occurred later. WFP had to make immediate arrangements to mill large quantities of GM maize in South Africa. Previously mothballed mills were re-opened but owners insisted on some kind of guarantee of forthcoming quantities, always difficult in an international appeal with a staggered response.

Milling extraction in South Africa (where the majority was done) involves 25% reduction in the total cereal available for distribution from this source, since the offtake and some of the maize meal are taken as payment. Finally, the additional handling, superintendence, tallying and transport costs required to move GM maize and resultant maize meal in and out of mills further increased already high overland costs incurred by aid organisations.

ii. Local purchases

Two positive results came from the need to mill GM maize. It gave WFP an unexpected opportunity to fortify the maize meal at the mills, so meeting micro-nutrient needs of many beneficiaries in the region. Perhaps most importantly, it triggered the largest local and regional procurement of food in WFP's history, using cash that normally would not have been acquired for an operation of this size. Local purchases have the immediate advantage of timeliness and a stimulus to local markets - no long wait for port dispatches, and an increased use of local suppliers and transporters.

Much of the food was procured in South Africa. Compared to the previous 12-18 months, maize prices almost doubled in South Africa in November-December 2002, presumably influenced by expectations of high demand in neighbouring countries due to crop shortfalls. The depreciation of the rand against the dollar also became a key factor behind price rises since maize is bought in dollars. Although for its part, WFP usually bought in small lots as a deliberate policy to avoid adversely affecting the market, maize prices nevertheless rose to \$195/ton. This, and pipeline delays on interna-

tional deliveries, meant that planned distributions were not always achieved. Ideally, WFP would like to purchase less expensive maize from countries such as China rather than regionally produced white maize sold at premium rates but limited and late availability of funds meant this was not possible in the given timescale.

it triggered the largest local and regional procurement of food in WFP's history

iii. Widening of donor base

WFP paid for over 45% (332,000 tons) of its food commodities in the southern Africa region (as opposed to in-kind contributions, primarily from the US, that in many emergencies elsewhere in the world would have accounted for as much as 70% of commodities). An unusual array of non-traditional donors was found - more than 40, including from developing countries.

In a recent book Edward Clay has pointed to the gradual erosion of the multilateral character of WFP² as one donor in particular (the US) dominates the global food aid arena. Could the southern Africa emergency have been a turning point? Perhaps, though not without a cost: with cash donations, many new donors do not provide the same generous overheads per ton of purchased food as the US in-kind food allows. Also, economies of scale - precisely the strength of WFP - may be compromised by having a large number of small and dispersed markets to deal with. There can be several months between the confirmation of a pledge, the release of money and the purchase and delivery of food. In this operation distribution targets were below 50% in most countries for the first five months.

Lessons and questions

The response to the GMO crisis was greatly facilitated by the early setting up of an impressive regional management and logistics centre in the WFP regional office in Johannesburg. It included a web-based information system (ReLogS - 'Regional Logistics - Southern Africa') that was updated daily with pipeline information,

country-specific situation reports, port operation and other relevant logistics and programme information. Much appreciated by all stakeholders, this brought a welcome degree of cohesion into a complicated operation.

One clear lesson was the need to develop a more reliable and comprehensive way of assessing the 'food gap'. Currently, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and WFP do joint Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAM). CFSAMs were undertaken in all countries in May/June 2002. They are based on four sets of data: (a) projected national production of key crops; (b) what percentage of these will be consumed or exported; (c) commercial imports; and (d) levels of government food aid from existing stock (for example, grain held in reserve by the Grain Marketing Boards).

The resulting deficit becomes a guideline for quantities of food aid required from external sources or purchased regionally. All national figures on production, consumption, importation and government aid rely upon accurate forecasts by government ministries. This has two basic weaknesses: first, the capacity of some Ministries of Agriculture has declined in recent years; and second, there can be important differences between national macro figures and provincial/local differences that are often not reflected in the balance sheets of the CFSAM.

Apart from deficiencies in government data, there were also some shortcomings in the way internationally supported early warning systems produced forecasts in 2002. In Malawi, for instance, there was a wrong assumption that the household consumption of locally produced roots and tubers would compensate for cereal deficits. This did not happen on the scale predicted, so the overall balance sheet forecasts were underestimated. Interestingly, it can also work the other way: in Lesotho in July 2003, there were reports of beneficiaries not turning up to food aid distributions since in some areas their harvest had been better than predicted. The dominance of the food aid operation and the projected needs foreseen by the unique Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs)³ set

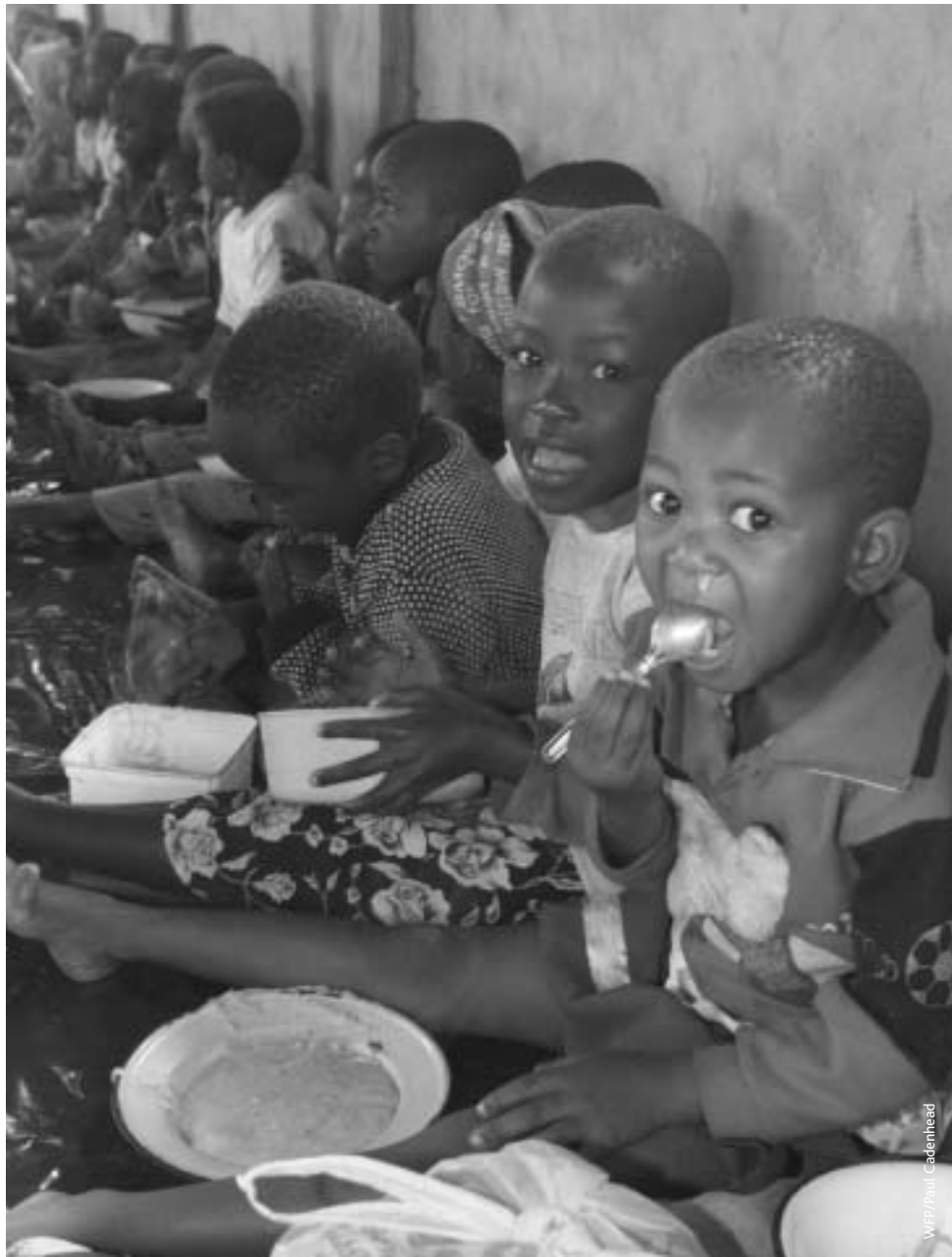
Children in Zimbabwe.

up in each country may have overshadowed more fundamental questions. In Zimbabwe logisticians faced problems of inflation, fuel shortages and restrictions on hard currency that worked against the smooth running of an operation of this scale. Some governments, notably Zimbabwe, were only too happy to accept the mantle of 'drought emergency' to divert attention from serious governance, economic and policy failures. In Malawi donors were subdued by the extraordinary sale of most of the Strategic Grain Reserve in late 2001 – a combination of ill-conceived IMF advice and domestic corruption.⁴ And still today little is known of the extent of informal cross-border trade that would have cast a different light on the grain import/export balance sheets that determined exactly what the food 'gap' was.

Conclusion

Southern Africa faces a protracted chronic and structural challenge. Declining development indices combined with the HIV/AIDS 'permanent emergency' mean that short-term food aid has a limited impact. The GMO crisis and the unusually large regional purchases it prompted have highlighted the need for:

- the larger international agencies to develop a new set of analytical skills to better understand both the economic variables that determine grain supply and demand, particularly in the informal market, and the decisions that farmers make over whether to sell or retain their produce
- understanding the effects of illegal cross border trade in state-dominated markets such as Zimbabwe



- greater inter-agency knowledge sharing on the potential adverse effect that aid demands have on grain prices and the commercial transport sector
- close liaison between high level advocates such as the Special Envoy, whose role it is to negotiate government concessions over such things as import duties and border controls, and those logisticians who face day-to-day difficulties translating these policies into practice with sometimes unhelpful local authorities.

The lessons from the emergency, the greater emphasis given to livelihoods approaches and the attendant programme adaptations already underway should ensure more sustained attention in future to problems facing the region.

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1. This was only a perceived risk, since the EU – a major importer of dairy and meat products from southern Africa – declared that cattle that consumed US maize would still be acceptable.
2. Edward Clay, 'Responding to Change: WFP and the Global Food Aid System' in *Food Policy Old and New*, edited by Simon Maxwell and Rachel Slater, Development Policy Review 21 (5), Overseas Development Institute, London (forthcoming).

3. See text box below.

4. See 'Structural damage: the causes and consequences of Malawi's food crisis', World Development Movement, October 2002, www.wdm.org.uk/cambriefs/debt/Malawi%20Final.pdf

Vulnerability assessment

SADC member countries established the Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) in 1999 with a regional office in Harare. During the 2002/3 regional emergency, its resources and staff were boosted by the secondment of UN staff, involvement of NGO partners and additional financial support from USAID, DFID and the WFP Regional Emergency Operation.

The VAC keeps abreast of and encourages coordinated development in the field of vulnerability and livelihoods assessment in the SADC region. It collates and coordinates data from existing sources and supplements these with additional information derived from on-site periodical surveys. In each country, a national VAC comprises government and partner agencies, with field teams drawn from relevant government departments, NGOs and some UN staff. Advice on methodology and training is provided by the regional VAC team based in Harare, which is also responsible for data collation, analysis and publication.

Throughout the emergency, 'rolling assessments' were undertaken to regularly gauge needs on the ground in order to prioritise districts according to food aid needs (and rations) and to derive a national level food assistance total (indicating how long the requirement will stand before the situation may change again). VACs are supplementary to the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Assessment Missions (CFSAMs) in that they provide sub-national food aid targeting requirements, including a breakdown of socio-economic groups and special needs targeting (such as HIV/AIDS and orphaned children).

Translating the VAC updates on targeting priorities and overall food aid requirements into programme action has presented a challenge. Limitations in NGOs' capacities as well as differing priorities of village/district committees and redistributions at village level make quick adjustments to a revised needs analysis difficult.

There was initially a hope that the VAC methodology might be adapted to move from 'needs assessment' towards an impact analysis of the emergency response. In the event, although it was possible in 2003 to include a few questions that would help understand the effects of the emergency response, the VAC was not actually an appropriate vehicle for impact assessment. By April, there was already a broadening of the assessments to include HIV/AIDS food security linkages but further expansion may have reduced the quality of the data and overstretched the capacity of the VACs.

Maintaining the high level of inter-agency consensus on VAC findings will depend on continuing investment and government commitment. There is a risk that too many expectations will be made of the VAC.

For more information, see: www.sadc-fanr.org.zw/vac/vachome.htm



The humanitarian use of the military

by Rupert Wieloch

As the humanitarian role of the armed forces has evolved, discussion has focused around three separate categories: military support to emergency or disaster relief efforts, the problematic notion of humanitarian intervention and the provision of humanitarian assistance during combat operations. The first category is the least contentious and describes recent British experiences in places like Mozambique and Montserrat. In these types of humanitarian disaster relief operations, the UK military acts as a sub-contractor to the wider foreign relief effort through the Department for International Development (DFID). The military is deployed for a specific task within a permissive environment which allows us to adopt a benign force posture.

During the past two years we have worked with DFID to develop a planning process framework which can be adapted for the particular circumstances of natural or man-made disasters. This process involves dialogue between the stricken state, the British Embassy or High Commission staff (who conduct an assessment of the disaster), DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (CHAD), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and British Forces HQ staff responsible for deploying the troops required to conduct the operation. Key planning considerations include:

- the ability to deploy quickly once the decision has been taken to support the international relief effort
- multifunctional coordination with such other actors as the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other NGOs
- sensitivity in conveying casualty information and disseminating coherent messages to the media
- a coherent exit strategy to avoid premature withdrawal or, just as undesirable, over-dependency on the military
- the amount and availability of host nation support which will affect the size and make-up of the deployed force.

These planning considerations and characteristics have now been consolidated in an unclassified pamphlet published by the Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre (JDCC)¹. Although primarily aimed at a military readership, it may be useful for civilians involved in humanitarian operations and is available free of charge.²

Humanitarian interventions

The use of force for humanitarian intervention is, for many people, contentious both from a legal and moral perspective.³ Much has been written on this subject and countless seminars have been held since the perceived failures of the international community to prevent genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica in the mid-nineties. From the military perspective, we fully acknowledge the need for civilian control of armed forces and the important role of the UN in providing legitimacy for our actions but, nevertheless, also recognise that we work to a different ethical principle from the humanitarian community. Using medical terminology, our fundamental position is based on beneficence, encapsulated by the term 'force for good'. However, this can cause tensions when we work with some NGOs, especially those founded on the basis of non-maleficence, or 'do no harm'. For military personnel, the conviction that our purpose is morally and ethically sound has a direct bearing on good morale and is encapsulated in our capstone military publications.

Whatever the philosophical differences, we agree that the military must stick to the rule of law. In 2002 the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland, described the reasons why this is so important to us, including: "common humanity"; "practicality" or what he called "the law of unintended long-term consequences"; the standards applied in the contemporary operational environment by "organisations and bodies prowling the touch line watching for every infringement of the rules"; and "a matter of history". In this last respect, the

effect of the way we work on future generations of military personnel is crucially important. None of us wishes to be held up by journalists or human rights bodies as pariahs. Nor do we wish to land in court facing lawyers seeking compensation for their clients or to be held responsible for the unnecessary death of innocents. However, from an individual perspective, the most important reason is the first: for, as the GOC said, "remorse is no doubt an uncomfortable companion as one passes through life..."⁴.

Humanitarian assistance

As far as provision of humanitarian assistance in a less benign environment is concerned, the military recognises that the provision of relief is principally a function of humanitarian and development agencies. However, there may be circumstances, especially during combat, when these agencies are unable to deliver aid or where there may be a shortfall. This was the case during my first tour to Bosnia, when all but one of the aid agencies withdrew from my tactical area of operations due to the deteriorating security situation. As a result, there was a need to fill the gap for about six weeks and my unit was drawn into humanitarian assistance tasks in order to save lives. Other more recent examples include: the military organisation of refugee camps during the Kosovo crisis, the response to the earthquake in Afghanistan in 2002 and the British Army's work to destroy anti-personnel land mines in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

While there is no such thing as a standard operation, the key tenets covered in our Humanitarian/Disaster Relief Operations pamphlet are likely to be applicable. We suggest that military forces engaged in such activities should, whenever possible, take advice and overall direction from a coordinating civilian authority or humanitarian agency and should hand over responsibility for the humanitarian task at the earliest opportunity. When the international community

decides to take action, there is a need for integrated joint operations which provide mechanisms for all the civilian and military actors in complex geopolitical environments to tackle the underlying causes of conflict.

British Forces have a great deal of experience of peace support operations. We have learned that a wide range of actors is involved and that we, the military, cannot act in isolation. The UK military approach emphasises the need for a comprehensive campaign plan, which identifies the means of achieving the desired effect or acceptable steady state agreed by the international community. Such a plan requires action to enforce the rule of law (via functioning judiciary and civilian police), revive education, encourage restoration of commerce and reconstruction, disseminate information and promote good governance. These activity lines should move forward together. It can be counter-productive if one speeds ahead at the expense of the others as this may be exploited by those who resort to violence and by opportunists, who profit from insecurity.

CIMIC

A key enabler to facilitate mission success is Civil Military Cooperation, which we see as a process rather than an activity. Through formal and informal mechanisms, CIMIC provides an opportunity for civilian organisations to raise the awareness of military personnel responsible for delivering the secure conditions required for individuals to pursue their own goals and for ordinary day-to-day business to be conducted safely. Much progress has been made in recent years. In conjunction with DFID, we have assisted the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) to develop the recently published Guidelines On The Use Of Military And Civil Defence Assets To Support UN Humanitarian Activities In Complex Emergencies ('MCDA Guidelines').⁵ The UK Ministry of Defence has published its first CIMIC policy and we are developing a new capability to be called the Joint CIMIC Group which will take account of lessons identified from Afghanistan and other theatres of war. This will

take forward the task of providing an interface for dialogue on operations for what we call 'Minimum Barrier People', the high calibre people who can operate in a complex, multidisciplinary environment, making things happen in the absence of strategic direction.

In conclusion, NGOs who still deny that troops can do anything humanitarian at all are in danger of perpetuating ill-informed and out-of-date opinions. There have been major developments in the way the UK military approaches its deployments since the Strategic Defence Review of 1998. In the light of our recent operations, and with the assistance of a wide range of contributors, we have refined our thinking about the humanitarian use of the armed forces. We are working now towards a wider understanding of the issues and concerns surrounding this role so that we will be better prepared for the next time we are required to undertake this sort of mission, wherever that may be.

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This article is extracted from a talk given to the Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust (www.wpct.co.uk), a UK-based society bringing together people of different cultural, political and religious backgrounds to address European and world issues.

1. A UK Ministry of Defence think-tank established as part of the UK's Strategic Defence Review.
2. 'Humanitarian/Disaster Relief Operations', available free of charge from DSDCL 3d, Defence Storage and Distribution Centre, Mwrwg Road, Llangennech, Carmarthen, South Wales SA14 8YP, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1544 822347. Fax: +44 (0)1544 822515.
3. It should be noted that the expression 'humanitarian intervention' is not used in British military doctrine and the notion never stemmed from the military but from publications such as *Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention*, published under the auspices of the ICRC in 1998.
4. Address by the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland to the Royal United Services Institute conference on 'Morality in Asymmetric War and Intervention Operations', 20 September 2002.
5. See: www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/UNID/6005B9C845DDBD0DC1256D520029ED39

Humanitarian distribution in Basra, Iraq



Marrying logistics and technology for effective relief

by H Wally Lee and Marc Zbinden

Logistics links all the stakeholders in the relief delivery process.

During an emergency, logistics departments have the primary mission to procure and track food, non-food items and gifts-in-kind (solicited and unsolicited) from appeal through to delivery while simultaneously monitoring the commodity and financial information along the relief pipeline. Timely and accurate availability of information is key. An effective operation depends on the emergency manager being aware of the changing needs of the field and communicating these to donors. Despite being the conduit connecting donors to beneficiaries, logisticians are seldom active participants in the acquisition and implementation of IT solutions pertaining to relief operations.

The relief technology landscape

The way information technology is used varies widely among humanitarian relief organisations. The technology landscape in the humanitarian sector is often extremely fragmented, limiting the availability of timely and accurate information. Organisations either buy large off-the-shelf commercial packages that need extensive customisation or create small in-house solutions for each field location. In the former instance, the dynamic variables and context of relief are not captured. Customisation to address this problem is very expensive and inhibits absorption of routine upgrades. Attempts to scale up home-grown solutions are rarely effective and are often dependent on the transient expertise of the organisation's IT staff.

Despite large investments by organisations, origin to destination information about the money, food and non-food supplies and gifts-in-kind is not readily available to decision makers in real time. In addition, manual, non-standardised, error-prone processes still dominate.

IT resources which could enhance information availability, reporting and learning are often not put to best use. Some of the deficiencies of current relief information systems include:

- Data has to be written out onto multiple forms and keyed into multiple spreadsheets.
- Budget control is inadequate; funds may be misspent as a result.
- Usage of funds is not tracked to the extent that donors have requested.
- Procurement procedures are difficult to enforce; integrity is lacking.
- Tracking and tracing of shipments are done manually using spreadsheets.
- There is no central database of history on prices paid, transit times or quantities received/purchased.
- Reports are done manually. Therefore, little reporting and performance analysis is undertaken, other than reporting to donors on quantities of relief items delivered for a given operation.

Harnessing technology

Humanitarian relief organisations have a common need for integrated information systems that are complete, timely and transparent. They should act as a repository for information from operations and integrate with other systems such as finance and human resources. In such a scenario decision makers would have access to valuable information before, during and after a relief operation. A snapshot of the possibilities is provided opposite:

New information technologies enable modular design to connect existing systems and introduce new ones to provide visibility and information about the entire relief supply chain.

Humanitarian Logistics Software

Fritz Institute has used the latest technologies and partnered with logisticians to build an origin to destination tracking system, especially designed for the dynamic relief context. It is based on commercial best practices and adapted to humanitarian requirements through extensive research with many leading relief organisations. Currently implemented at the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Humanitarian Logistics Software (HLS) is being made available free of charge to other humanitarian relief organisations. Its modularity allows it to be used as a framework tool which can incorporate current systems that underlie the relief supply chain and fill the functional gaps that may exist.

Humanitarian Logistics Software consists of four main modules: mobilisation, procurement, transportation and tracking, and reports. It connects to financial systems to provide real-time visibility for costs, purchases and in-kind donations in the relief pipeline. Information once entered populates all relevant modules.

The mobilisation module simultaneously tracks the needs of the beneficiaries and agency funding appeals, reconciling them with donations. The procurement module controls purchase orders, performs competitive bid analysis and reconciles received goods against invoices awaiting payment. The transportation and tracking module allows consolidation of supplies for transportation and allows the automatic tracking of major milestones in this process. Over time, the procurement and transportation modules become a repository for information about the performance of suppliers and transportation vendors. Finally, the reporting module provides detailed standard and customised reports for donors as well as internal decision makers.

Conclusion

More comprehensive and timely information provision can enhance the effectiveness of decisions made before, during and after a relief operation. However, to realise this potential, humanitarian organisations must develop forward-looking integrated information technology strategies which incorporate the valuable perspective of the logistics function. HLS may be a first step. It is only through collaboration across functions and organisations that the real potential of information can be harnessed for humanitarian relief.

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Preparedness	During operations	Post-operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historical profile of disaster types with geographic information to predict beneficiary needs more accurately. ■ Past performance of suppliers, logistics providers and donors to plan effective and reliable relief. ■ Market price and historical price by region to prepare contingency stock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reconciliation of quantities needed and quantities supplied to accurately adapt to the relief situation. ■ Tracking costs of each operation to calibrate against incoming donations. ■ Visibility of stock <i>en route</i> and stored in warehouses to determine procurement needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accountability of donations (use and administrative costs) to maintain integrity of relationship with donors. ■ Performance of relief operations i.e. time from appeal to delivery. ■ Loss and damage for accountability and claims.

For further information about Humanitarian Logistics Software see: www.fritzinstitute.org

1. The conclusions of this article are based on research into the technology underlying the relief supply chains of ten major humanitarian agencies: American Red Cross, CARE USA, Catholic Relief

Services, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Rescue Committee, Médecins San Frontières- Belgium, WFP, UNICEF and World Vision International.

Humanitarian mapping

by Rupert Douglas-Bate

In order to better serve those affected by conflict and disasters, there is a real need among aid agencies to better understand their locations, numbers and needs. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are computer mapping software systems. Currently they are being used by relief and development agencies to improve decision making and assist in the presentation of information relating to public health, epidemiology and humanitarian aid. To be most effective, maps must be:

- **Timely:** Maps should be available for use the moment a mission starts, so it may be worth a visit to your local bookshop to try and find paper maps relevant to the area you will be working in. GIS file formats can be updated with information as the situation unfolds. The presentation of such maps at sectoral coordination meetings can have an electrifying effect on understanding: maps speak louder than words.
- **Simple:** Maps that contain more than eight colours are too complicated. The scale needs to be

appropriate to the situation, for example 1:10,000 for refugee camps and 1:100,000 for towns and surrounding villages. A proven idea is to draw a freehand map that contains the style and form of the desired map but not yet the content. Once this objective map is obtained the team can work backwards in terms of designing questions and data collection strategies.

- **Accurate:** Information on beneficiary needs that goes into maps is mostly numerical; therefore the questions to obtain this information need to be very carefully thought through. Systematic survey technique is important.
- **Culturally sensitive:** Radios, sat phones, vehicles and, indeed, maps may be treated with suspicion by local governmental authorities in conflict zones. The best way around this is to request a government person to be seconded on a fixed term contract to work with the mapping team. This will help dispel suspicion and enhance capacity building.

■ **Relevant:** Given the advent of GIS, maps may now be rapidly generated and updated, within the above criteria. Placed upon a basic ground layer, overlays may include information such as population numbers, shelter, agriculture, hospitals, water and mass graves.

- **Planned and trained for in advance:** The manufacturers of GIS have donated their software for free to aid agencies but learning to use a GIS package is like learning a new language: a basic understanding is achievable in a few months but real understanding may take years. If you can, find some volunteers in industry or government already using GIS and ask if they will work within your organisation and help provide training.

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Complex emergency – complex finance?

by Guy Hovey and Diana Landsman

Complex emergencies and NGO response mechanisms entail rapid deployment of staff and resources, immediate recruitment and accelerated distribution of relief supplies.

Interventions require speed and flexibility. It is in this context that finance and accountability often become early casualties.

Emphasis is quite rightly put on immediate assistance to displaced persons and other disadvantaged people. However, financial and accountability procedures are often overlooked. This can lead to funds and aid going missing with a corresponding loss of confidence in the NGO on the part of beneficiaries and eventually on the part of the donor community. In the long run it can cause donors and governments to re-evaluate their funding strategy towards NGOs. A good example of this would be the hundreds of millions of US\$ which have gone missing in Bosnia/Herzegovina since 1993.¹ However, it is both possible and practical to incorporate simple yet effective financial accountability measures. A complex emergency does not need to entail a complex financial procedure.

We recommend a three-stage financial entry strategy in complex emergencies and the phases following the initial crisis. Each stage is designed to provide the minimum accountability and transparency requirements, whilst taking into consideration the overarching need to render immediate assistance to those who need it.

1. Emergency phase

a. Cash handling and disbursement

Inevitably, large amounts of procurement will be undertaken. While some will be done in a neighbouring country where banking systems may operate reliably, provision must be made to procure in country via cash transactions. The safe transportation of cash will be found in any NGO security manual so will not be dealt with here. However, the payment of cash is often where NGOs run into

difficulties, in particular proving what was purchased how, when, where and for how much. To pay cash for goods requires receipts and each team member should be issued with a receipt book. All receipts should be countersigned by the team leader or a team witness.

b. Basic accounting ledger

A basic ledger showing cash in hand, cash out and in, with vendor details, will, when combined with the receipts, provide enough information for HQ finance staff to process. This will provide an accountability and audit trail during the following months when set-up staff have left and it may be difficult to explain the need to make emergency purchases to an auditor unfamiliar with the vagaries of humanitarian emergencies.

c. Insert emergency finance staff

It is often not feasible to send a dedicated finance person into an emergency situation. However, at least one of the emergency team should have enough basic accountancy training to be the point of financial contact. They should also be able to undertake a financial assessment of the banking and financial systems of the country where the NGO is operational as well as operating a simple ledger system.

d. Support from NGO HQ

It is important for HQ staff to understand that emergency staff working in a complex emergency will, in all probability, not be able to generate the complex financial reports required by donors. HQ should therefore be willing and able to generate these reports for the field during the emergency and part of the transitional phase. It is at this point that many NGOs develop poor reputations with donors as the needs of the emergency, the financial ability of the staff dealing with it and the needs of donors collide.

2. Transitional phase

As the emergency phase gives way to a more secure environment and regular programme implementation, it is recommended that at the earliest opportunity a dedicated head of finance and appropriate staff arrive to provide administrative and financial back up. With the arrival of these staff, the emergency staff will be able to hand over the simple ledger and it can be upgraded to an appropriate accounting system such as an accounting and sales support package (ACPAC) run by trained and qualified staff.

3. Operational phase

As the operation becomes entrenched, all financial responsibility at field level currently being undertaken by HQ staff can be transferred to the field finance department. However, it is important to try and maintain some continuity of staff from the emergency phase as financial reporting questions will arise and lack of institutional knowledge has led in the past to confusion in financial reporting.

This is a very brief overview of our recommendations from our complex emergency experiences. Each organisation will have its own ideas as to how best to cope with the problems posed in an emergency intervention and how to balance the programme needs and the financial accountability needs. Without adhering to some basic principles, however, problems will continue to occur with the resultant drop in donor and client confidence which has at times become an all too familiar NGO problem.

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1. There is an often-quoted figure that of approximately \$6 billion spent on aid in Bosnia, \$1 million has gone missing.

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Fritz Institute strengthens the infrastructures of humanitarian relief organizations by mobilizing logistics and technology expertise and resources from the corporate and academic communities. Fritz Institute achieves its mission by developing solutions and convening stakeholders.

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PRTs – guaranteeing or undermining a secure future in Afghanistan?

by Paul O'Brien

Afghanistan may be 'the war before' but it remains a critical test case for post-11 September US foreign policy.

Despite, (or perhaps because of) worldwide attention on Iraq, the Bush Administration still needs a success story for the war on terror. Afghanistan remains their best hope. In search of a viable self-policing state and a plausible exit strategy, they look hopefully towards June 2004 – the end of the Bonn process and the date proposed for national elections – as a possible moment to declare 'success' in Afghanistan.

In April 2003 US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared that military-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are the "best thing that can be done to ultimately provide security" in Afghanistan. This article argues that US policy makers are overly optimistic to think they can use the PRT model to achieve quick and cheap success in Afghanistan.

Security on the cheap?

In February 2002 the US Army initiated the first PRT in Gardez, followed soon afterwards by other US-led PRTs in Kunduz and Bamyan and a British

PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif. Germany and New Zealand are considering running PRTs in Herat and Ghazni. Each PRT has a contingent of 60-100 soldiers, civil affairs officers and aid professionals. They face different reconstruction needs and security threats. While Bamyan is relatively peaceful and well served by NGOs, the Gardez region has seen repeated military attacks by warlords and neo-Taliban and has only a limited presence of the assistance community. In Mazar-e-Sharif, feuding between militia leaders impedes reconstruction while Ismail Khan's iron grip on Herat permits reconstruction while clamping down on political freedoms.

At first glance, the PRTs appear a plausible response to Afghanistan's myriad security challenges. Their small size gives them flexibility to respond in a tailored fashion. Staffed by civil affairs officers and psychological operations experts, they are supposed to negotiate with local power brokers to expand the space in which security and reconstruction can thrive and the writ of the central

government be strengthened. They are also expected to contribute to the international war on terror by collecting intelligence about the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. Sometimes they engage in reconstruction directly. More often they contract with local business people or NGOs to do reconstruction projects. Their reconstruction budget is small but stretches well, as their human resource costs fall into military defence budgets.

Civilian assistance organisations in Afghanistan expressed scepticism soon after the US Defence Department announced the PRT concept in November 2002. In June 2003 more than 70 international relief organisations in Afghanistan publicly stated that Afghanistan is facing a security crisis and needs more international attention. Humanitarians argue that:

- the military should restrict its engagement in assistance to situations where logistical capacity or insecurity gives them unique capacity to reach people in need
- by 'blurring the lines' between the military and humanitarians they put civilian aid workers at risk and politicise, and even militarise, aid work
- PRT personnel do not have the expertise or the mandate to facilitate community-driven reconstruction
- PRTs are a waste of precious resources: it is 50 times more expensive to keep a US soldier on the ground than to pay a senior Afghan aid professional working for an NGO or the Afghan government.

Some believed that NGOs were being naïve and even territorial and that in post-conflict settings donor governments have a legitimate interest in promoting

NATO and UN officials arriving for handover of the International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, 11 August 2003



overtly political and security goals. Some NGOs in Afghanistan have struggled to make the transition from the days of humanitarian crisis when they wore their political neutrality from donors and the Taliban on their sleeves. Today, there is a functioning, quasi-legitimate government that the international community wants to strengthen. Donors like USAID want

the PRTs are powerless to intervene directly

NGOs to work hand-in-hand with the Afghan government and the US military, to wear donor political support on their sleeves and to suspend any level of disbelief that the Karzai government is not here to stay. They are being asked not just to accept the political dimensions of their work (which is fair) but to subjugate their anti-poverty missions to broader, more complex political and sometimes military goals (which may not always be either fair or smart).

Problems with the PRTs

Six months after their launch, PRTs are not only still operational but they are expanding. Despite the fact that there has been no serious impact analysis, they have, in effect, been declared a successful model by international donors. Increasingly, the criticism of the PRTs is not about **what** they are – whatever their flaws, they remain a tiny part of both the reconstruction and security equations – but about what they are **not**.

Ironically, the military seems to agree with NGOs about what they are and

are not. NGOs in Afghanistan have yet to hear a military officer describe the PRTs as an adequate international response to Afghanistan's current security needs. Even the PRTs themselves concede that their role is not to keep peace, to protect civilians, to disarm militias or intervene militarily between fighting factions. They simply do not have the resources or the

mandate to do so. While militias are growing stronger by

charging illegal taxes and customs, the PRTs are powerless to intervene directly. Neither can they prevent the dramatic post-Taliban rise in poppy cultivation and heroin production. They are unable to call on coalition forces for military back-up and operate under different chains of command that only meet at the highest levels. With less than one PRT member for every 50,000 Afghans, their mandate is restricted to negotiation, intelligence gathering, small reconstruction projects and other forms of hearts and minds work.

Apparently reconciled to the fact that the PRTs are here to stay, many NGOs now argue that they should be given a chance at success, should focus on security and should be renamed as Provincial Security/Stability Teams.

With immense pressures to deliver a cost-effective 'success' in Afghanistan, PRTs provide a useful talisman for international policy makers. Although there are fewer than 400 PRT soldiers currently operational, and additional PRTs unlikely to add more than 300 new personnel this year, policy mak-

ers can, nevertheless, talk about 'soldiers on the ground all over Afghanistan' while placating the public that they are neither spending their taxes nor risking the lives of too many troops as would be the case with a conventional large-scale peace-keeping force. They can point to how PRTs are helping not just to bring security but to rebuild Afghanistan (even though the current PRT budget is less than 1/1000th of Afghanistan's reconstruction needs).

All this hype and promotion will not be without its cost. On 11 August, NATO took over the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul (ISAF). If the PRTs did not exist, NATO might seriously consider expanding ISAF beyond Kabul; NGOs, who have long called for expansion of ISAF, still hope they will. But with the PRT success story already declared, Afghans may end up losing this critical opportunity for a more appropriately resourced international effort to provide real security for ordinary people.

Afghanistan's successful emergence from violence is under threat. Peace hinges on commitment by the international community to help fill the security vacuum. Our response will help to define the terms of international relations, not just for Afghans but for all those who live in fear of violence. They will ultimately be the real judges of Afghanistan's 'success' story.

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IDPs at Dashi-i-Qala, Takhar province, Afghanistan



Post-literacy for refugees and IDPs in Sudan

by Hashim Abuzeid, Naomi Lockwood, Rashida Abdel Mutalib and Tony Wrightson

Thousands of Eritreans, many of them second- or third-generation exiles, live in refugee camps in the northeast of Sudan. Millions of southern Sudanese have fled to the north where IDP settlements are scattered around urban outskirts.

Both groups of displaced people lack adequate education provision. Refugees and IDPs alike are excluded from formal education and employment opportunities due to language barriers, gender/ethnic prejudice and lack of basic skills.

In the Arab World illiteracy eradication programmes have traditionally focused on schools. Adults who had missed out on schooling were given a second chance and exposed to classrooms, rows of desks, teachers, text books and teaching methods drawn from the pedagogy of teaching children. Mass mobilisation campaigns – enrolling illiterates in literacy classes for a short period – were characterised by a high rate of relapse back into illiteracy, due to poor post-literacy activities.

More recent programmes have been influenced by ‘andragogy’ – the theory of adult learning that sees adults as self-directed and able to take decisions. Moving away from the classroom and from one-size-fits-all approaches to adult literacy, andragogical approaches focus more on the process and less on the content.¹

As NGOs and the Sudanese government become increasingly aware of the problems confronting literacy programmes and the need to develop appropriate post-literacy strategies, the Sudan Open Learning Organisation (SOLO) is playing a pivotal role. Set up in 1984 by the UK-based International Extension College (IEC), SOLO has been working with NGOs and displaced communities to promote and deliver a range of non-formal and open learning programmes. Through face-to-face adult

literacy classes, SOLO has reached over 6,000 learners.

Despite initial successes, barriers to learning still remained. There was no follow up to the literacy classes, no ‘next step’. Once literacy courses were over, people were considered ‘literate’ and provision ceased. The profound lack of reading and writing materials for the newly ‘literate’ and their social exclusion made it virtually impossible to apply their new skills.

Confidence-building literacy

In response IEC and SOLO have pioneered the ‘Building Literacy in Sudan with SOLO Press’ project (BLSP) project. BLSP is a post-literacy project which enables newly literate refugees and IDPs to write and publish their own stories in the form of books, magazines and newsletters. BLSP seeks to encourage displaced readers to read on a daily basis. From modest beginnings SOLO Press has become a fully-fledged commercial educational publisher generating income to provide SOLO with a more secure base to sustain its education activities.

BLSP has created 28 ‘circles’ among refugees and IDPs with some 1,800

members, the vast majority of whom combine circle membership with additional community activity – building drainage systems, carrying out income-generating activities and awareness raising. On an individual basis, people are now writing letters to family members, reading to their children, reading newspapers and teaching other family members to read and write.

SOLO has recruited Community Liaison Workers (CLWs) from the camps and settlements and trained them in selecting participants, facilitating circle development and encouraging participants to write, read and edit their own stories. CLWs were initially encouraged to gather participants in circles, which were to focus on reading and writing activities at prescribed times and venues. This had a semblance of unintended formality about it which seemed consistent with the early demands from some participants (especially those in urban areas) for a more formal, classroom-type of ‘instructional literacy’ approach with certification of competence upon ‘completion’.

Samira, Karkora refugee camp

The circle has helped her to feel confident while exchanging ideas with friends. She says also that friends show each other how to improve handwriting and other skills. She is showing her neighbours what she has learnt in the circle and helps them to learn.



IEC writing circle

It was a slow process to consolidate circle numbers, expand the types of reading, writing and discussion-based activities undertaken and generate outputs which would promote an intrinsic motivational energy and thus defuse the demands for something more 'formal'. However, once ideas generated by the circles resulted in published stories and community-based sensitisation campaigns, the interest and motivation of participants and potential participants grew dramatically. The desire for formality and certification died a natural death, overtaken by the obvious benefits of activities that led to enhanced individual and community self-esteem.

The volume and range of writing produced in the groups has been impressive, with hundreds of personal stories already written in several languages. A comprehensive commissioning process enables project staff and beneficiaries to choose which stories go through for publication. A new spirit of self-confidence, motivation and coordination can be detected. This form of applied confidence-building literacy is empowerment, rather than simply a process of empowering.

In recent years enthusiastic and visionary first-generation circle participants (known as Group Leaders) have led expansion groups while still retaining membership of their original circles. The range of activities within such groups has grown to include: editing, designing reading materials, participatory rural appraisal, community work, income generating, organising lectures, PRA-related information collection and distribution of literacy publications. The list of activities continues to grow.

Participant groups, while still clearly active in writing and reading, have become much more holistically 'communicative' and 'developmental'. Community leaders and participants themselves talk about the 'dignity' that group activities bring them. Individuals are learning, sometimes for the first time, skills of cooperation and organisation, problem identification and planning.

Challenges and discoveries

A danger for all post-literacy projects is that participant expectations rise

beyond the capacity of the project to cater for them. The challenge is for the participants themselves to creatively meet these expectations. The groups have grown and developed from their own energies, fuelled by their own skill bases and vision. These, in turn, have become an appropriate foundation on which to build other integrated development initiatives, including income-generating projects that are highly likely to succeed. This contrasts with the more common scenario of a development agency 'creating' a development initiative (e.g. an income-generating or nutrition project) and imposing it on a 'group' formed for the purpose. This is highly likely to fail.

Ashirim, Dar El Salam IDP settlement

"SOLO has improved my life and in turn others' lives."

Since becoming a Community Liaison Worker, Ashirim has become confident. He is facilitating circles in post-literacy and also mobilising community change, from water drainage to cleanliness to health and wider educational activities. He is committed to changing people's lives. He explains that his wife was illiterate, but she is now participating in the circle. He has brought experts to talk to the circle about health and educational issues and is making relationships with other organisations

The methodology employed by this project has seen highly organised, focused and competent groups emerge, which have identified their own needs and developed their own management structures to suit their needs. Groups and communities are acquiring social and financial capital. The challenge for the project now is how to work with the potential partners who may provide financial capital.

The project is confronted with a range of dilemmas and questions:

- Will the circles be able to survive in their current form? How will they evolve?

- Should we be worried about seeking stability of participant membership, or accept a much more fluid kind of membership or attachment by the various categories of participants?
- How will the CLWs evolve?
- How can the range of more 'integrated development' activities expand while still allowing a focus on facilitating the depth and frequency of reading and writing experiences for participants?
- Are we achieving applied empowerment - written work with social consciousness and awareness?
- Will different contexts see different groups of participants surviving and developing in their own, unique ways?
- How should we feel if groups move in entirely different directions with the use of their applied literacy?
- Does the aim of the community movement remain the same as the project?
- If we are a project, and if there is a process or system of 'post-literacy', when does 'completion' come?

BLSP is a model with its own momentum, a momentum which is created and owned by the communities themselves. The ownership by participants of the process is due to the fact that their words are transformed into tangible, published and widely distributed texts. Their voices, their words, are 'out there' for people like them who previously lacked access to the world of reading.

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1. For more information on the theory of andragogy, see www.andragogy.net

Promises without solutions: Iraqi refugees left in the lurch in Lebanon

by Bashir Osmat, Michael Kagan and Samira Trad

The US decision to halt refugee resettlement following the 11 September 2001 attacks¹ has left Iraqi refugees in Lebanon in limbo.

Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and refugees live in fear of arrest and detention. Refugees in Lebanon have no right to residence or work permits and UNHCR provides only minimal financial assistance. Most survive on the informal economy. Since August 2000 hundreds of Iraqis have been deported from Lebanon to Iraq, including dozens of recognised refugees and asylum seekers.

On paper, Iraqi refugees in Lebanon seem prime candidates for third-country resettlement – one of the three durable solutions for refugees promoted by UNHCR. UNHCR guidelines make a high priority of resettlement from countries that threaten refugees with deportation. Yet, UNHCR's commitment to seek durable solutions does not correspond to an actual right to enjoy one. No country is required to accept resettlement of refugees who first seek protection in another state.

Resettlement programmes for refugees who cannot find protection in the first country they reach are separate from the normal asylum systems operated by many governments for people who arrive directly on their shores. Refugees who arrive in Lebanon hence encounter a kind of parallel protection system with additional hurdles to overcome.

For asylum seekers in Lebanon, the first step along the long and winding road to resettlement is refugee status determination. In 2001 24% of Iraqi asylum seekers were accepted by UNHCR's Beirut office. UNHCR then considers whether to refer refugees for resettlement to third countries. Of the 653 Iraqis resettled by UNHCR in 2001, the majority went to the US.

As with other refugees referred by UNHCR in the Middle East, refugees in Lebanon waited for periodic visits by US asylum officers. Refugees approved by US asylum officers in 2001 received a letter that said, simply, "The Immigration Officer has determined that the case is tentatively approved pending post-interview procedures." Post-interview procedures normally included health and security screening.

Refugee resettlement is optional in international law and governments retain the power to stop the process at any point. After 11 September, the US resettlement process in Lebanon came to a near halt. Though processing from other countries in the Middle East recommenced in spring 2002, by spring 2003 no US asylum officers had returned to Lebanon.

Broken promises?

In May 2003 the Frontiers Center in Beirut interviewed 20 Iraqi refugees who had been referred to the US, 16 of whom had received tentative approval letters. Almost all had assumed that travel was imminent in 2001 and had made decisions accordingly. This cost them dearly. They resigned from their jobs, sold or gave away their belongings, bought articles for travel and took out loans. Their most common comment was that America had made them a 'promise' and should be required to keep it.

These Iraqis report that, when they approached the UNHCR office in Beirut to ask for information, UNHCR turned them away with vague, incomplete or inaccurate information. Most said that they were only able to speak with the receptionist, a guard or a policeman at the office gate. They complained that UNHCR and the UN

system in general had not adequately represented their interests. They perceived that the US had failed to discharge its obligations to provide assistance or compensation for the unexpected delay in resettlement.

"The US knows very well our suffering", one Iraqi said. The US did not send the Iraqis any correspondence revoking their acceptances. "Because of their promise, they kept me hoping", said another.

As the prospect of war in Iraq rose in early 2003, the Iraqi refugees in Lebanon wondered whether the US would ever accept them. After the war UNHCR announced preliminary plans to repatriate Iraqis and the Lebanese government organised the repatriation of more than 1,000 Iraqis.

Eventually the US did begin allowing previously approved Iraqis to travel from Lebanon but at a snail's pace. In 2002, 27 Iraqi refugees travelled to the US, followed by 59 in the first half of 2003. Yet, in July 2003, 191 Iraqis in Lebanon who were tentatively approved by the US before 11 September 2001 were still awaiting official word on when, or if, they could travel.

The concerns raised by Iraqi refugees in Lebanon highlight the need for reform of the durable solutions system:

- UNHCR and governments must change the way they treat refugees, allowing them to be informed decision makers in the resettlement process.
- UNHCR and countries participating in refugee resettlement should draft and agree to a Code of Refugee Relations governing communication with refugees during resettlement processing.
- Such a code should guarantee that refugees will be provided complete information about the procedures and timetable involved in their resettlement and notified of any changes.

- UNHCR should provide refugees with regular counselling, access to knowledgeable officials and information about the steps the agency is taking to promote a solution.
- The international community must do more to fill the gap between the UN's promise to seek solutions for refugees and governments' willingness to actually deliver solutions.

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The Frontiers Center is an independent counselling and research organisation providing professional services to marginalised people.

1. See FMR15 pp 48-49.

Settling refugee disputes in Iran

by Fatemeh Keyhanlou, Hani Mansourian and Negar Azimi

Legal systems are notoriously refugee-unfriendly. Are there alternative means of adjudicating refugees' legal disputes?

Can mediation systems be developed which are sensitive to the values of tribally-based cultures yet also in accordance with the judicial norms of the host country? Iran, host for two decades to one of the world's largest refugee populations, has been pioneering an approach which could be replicated by other host states.

Uncertainties and fears surrounding judicial processes are the norm among members of social groups lacking official legal status. They often suffer from high rates of illiteracy, poor access to social services and psychological instability born of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, paranoia and/or survival guilt.

Afghan refugees in Iran are no exception. So great are their doubts and uncertainties ("Do I have the right to claim?"; "Does my claim seem rational?"; "If I do not win, what will they do to me -lock me up, lash me, repatriate me?") that most are deterred from risking stepping inside any formal judicial arena. Coming from a society where disputes are mostly resolved by mediation by elders, they are unfamiliar with the concept of judicial action.

In Iran - a state with myriad political and judicial ambiguities - few can afford a lawyer. They are afraid of

being treated unfairly in court due to their dubious immigration status and their otherness. In the absence of any alternative to a judicial procedure, Afghans resign themselves to their fate or may embark upon actions which result in imprisonment or forcible repatriation.

The Special Legal Committees for the Settlement of Afghan Refugee Disputes (hereinafter, 'the committees') are a means of providing free legal advice to Afghan refugees who would otherwise be unable to reestablish their rights. They arose from recognition in the early 1990s that traditional provision of legal assistance to Afghan refugees was

impossible due to the costs involved in dealing with a vast number of cases.

As an affordable alternative, the notion of using Afghan refugees with legal or counselling skills to offer peer support was developed. In accordance with a tripartite agreement on repatriation procedures signed by UNHCR and the governments of Iran and Afghanistan, the first committees were established in Mashhad in 1993. Supported by the Hizb-i Wahdat (a coalition of Afghan Shi'a political parties forged by the Iranian government) the concept soon spread to other areas of Iran where Afghan refugees reside. In 1994 a second committee, based at the Afghan Embassy in Tehran, was established followed shortly afterwards by another administered by the Hizb-i Wahdat in the Iranian capital.

Afghan refugee merchant, Gulshahr bazaar, Mashhad, Iran





The majority of cases brought to the committees involve financial and family disputes. Penal cases and those involving refugees in dispute with the Iranian authorities are also heard.

The committees' objectives are to:

- provide refugees with unhindered access to information and advice to complement that provided by UNHCR
- detect legal problems, identify their origins and explore the possibility of mediation
- arrange negotiation meetings between the parties involved, write letters and give advice with the view to an amicable solution
- provide refugees with counselling on personal security and social welfare assistance
- refer cases requiring specialised legal advice.

All committee members are tertiary educated and there are several lawyers. Originally all committee members were men. In response to the rise in the number of family cases and the reluctance of Afghan women to raise personal or legal issues in the presence of a male legal advisor, a women's committee was established by the Afghan Embassy.

UNHCR provides managerial and coordination support. Some of the members are employed by UNHCR. In Mashhad a permanent UNHCR legal advisor attends all meetings. If members of the two Tehran committees cannot find a suitable solution, or if they judge that formal procedures must be invoked, a UNHCR legal advisor is called in to liaise with the relevant authorities. The UNHCR legal advisor plans to consolidate the activities of the Tehran committees into a registered NGO to give them legal and official status.

The Mashhad committee is located at the Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA). An Iranian judge chairs the committee and works with an Afghan cleric, a UNHCR-provided legal advisor and a BAFIA staff member. The committee meets once a week for four hours. Claimants submit cases and documentary evidence in writing. On receipt of complaints, the chairman formally invites both parties for mediation. Ninety per cent of those summonsed attend on time.

If the dispute is settled, a consent order is signed. If claimants are not satisfied with the outcome they may ask for a hearing in the Iranian courts. However, the fact that an Iranian

judge is a member of the committee deters many as they anticipate that the court would be likely to come to a similar judgment. The committee advises on procedural matters and points out the risk of litigation. It is up to the parties to decide whether they wish to go to court.

Conclusion

These committees present an ideal and cost-effective means of dispute resolution for those whose status in a host country is precarious. Committees retain local flexibility with regard to their membership structures, their relations with the government and how they go about resolving disputes. They fill a useful gap for communities in which people are not familiar with their citizenship rights and fear both the consequences of punishment from kinsfolk and discrimination suffered in the formal Iranian legal system.

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The EU and asylum: towards strategies to reduce conflict and human rights abuses in countries of origin

by Stephen Castles, Heaven Crawley and Sean Loughna

Most asylum seekers in Europe come from states affected by high levels of violence, oppression and conflict.

Upon arrival, they are often accused of deception by politicians, the press and the public. So far the European Union and its member states have focused on strengthening the borders of Fortress Europe. A new study suggests that they would do better to address the root causes of forced migration: underdevelopment, conflict and impoverishment in countries of origin.

A report from the Institute for Public Policy Research critiques current EU policies to address the phenomenon of illegal and forced migration. It warns that those in need of protection will seek sanctuary in Europe as long as violence and human rights violations go unchecked.

During the 1990s, the top ten countries of origin of asylum seekers were former Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Iran, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The report identifies common 'push factors' in all these states: ethnic/religious discrimination, human rights abuses, civil war and a large proportion of internally displaced people relative to the total population.

Europe's fight against illegal migration has diverted attention from addressing its root causes. Changes in procedures and criteria for asylum determination, such as the introduction of temporary protection regimes (used to ensure those fleeing the Balkan wars went home) and declaring Central European states as 'safe third countries' to which asylum seekers can be returned, have made it more difficult for those genuinely in need

of protection to get asylum, while encouraging smugglers and traffickers.

The authors stress that:

- Flows of forced migrants to Europe are comparatively small when considered against global displacement movements: countries such as Guinea, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan and Tanzania have much greater refugee populations.
- There is evidence that underdevelopment and impoverishment are not direct push factors for forced migration. Rather they create the conditions for weak states, human rights abuse and conflict, which force people to flee.
- Even when fleeing violence or persecution and in need of protection, some asylum seekers have a degree of control over where they go and how they travel.
- Policy makers may aspire to make clear distinctions between economic and forced migrants but the migration-asylum nexus defies simplistic judgement: many migrants have multiple motivations for moving.
- Once a migratory flow is established it may be driven by social networks and chain migration patterns even where policies in relation to asylum seekers change.
- Discrimination against Kurds is a key factor behind the large number of Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish nationals seeking asylum.

The report shows that EU policy makers have been aware of such issues since the early 1990s but have failed to achieve concerted measures by the relevant Directorates-General of the European Commission, and the ministries for justice and home

affairs, foreign affairs, trade and international cooperation within each state. There is an urgent need for common policies to address the root causes of forced migration.

Sustainable reduction of migration flows requires:

- long-term joined-up policies to address issues of conflict prevention and development
- ending arms exports to regimes with poor human rights records and those engaged in internal oppression or violence against their neighbours
- concerted action against illicit trading in diamonds, coltan, cobalt and other commodities which fuel conflicts
- ensuring that the EU's High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration operates more transparently, values expertise from all policy areas and develops measurable policies and programmes.

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This is a summary of *States of Conflict: Causes and Patterns of Forced Migration to the EU and Policy Responses*, ISBN: 1 86030 216 5, obtainable for £9.95 from the Institute for Public Policy, 30-32 Southampton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7RA, UK. Tel: +44 (0)207 470 6100. Further information is available at www.ippr.org.uk/publications/index.php?book=359



debate

FMR17's feature section was on 'When does internal displacement end?'. Sarah Petrin takes the debate further:

Internal displacement in Afghanistan ends for some, not for others

by Sarah Petrin

The last issue of FMR provided an arena for ideas on when displacement ends that was both informative and engaging. Mooney introduced an integrated approach, requiring both solutions-based and needs-based criteria based on a range of human rights indicators. Frelick suggested that IDPs who no longer need international protection are no longer IDPs. Kalin emphasised that displacement ends gradually. However, there was no conclusion, no clear definition of internal displacement's end.

Let me offer a simple definition. Displacement ends when IDPs have established their place in a self-selected community of choice. What does it mean for an IDP to 'establish a place'? The end of displacement may require a policy choice on the part of the authorities or an end to certain conditions but the actual end to the state of being uprooted must be completed by the displaced persons themselves. The displaced persons must feel that they are in a place and a community that will not force them to be uprooted again.

I use the phrase 'established their place' instead of reintegration for a number of reasons. Whether IDPs are in a displacement location, are resettled or choose to return to their area of origin, they need certain settlement resources in order to establish a place – resources such as land, water and/or housing. For instance, housing is a key issue for displaced people. Often people in IDP camps who live in tents but have the opportunity to build homes will consider themselves 'settled' once the home is built. This is the case in Zhare Dhast IDP camp in Kandahar as well as the Chaman Waiting Area on the border of Pakistan. IDPs who return to their place of origin without land or are

unable to recover lost property will often not settle in their place of origin but go to relatives in another area who have a house or land. A lack of settlement resources will lead IDPs to become secondary migrants, seeking 'a place' elsewhere. This phenomenon has been duly noted in Cambodia.

This question of 'establishing a place' can also be applied to nomads, who in Afghanistan for example suffer most from insufficient water resources. When Kuchi transhumants in IDP camps in southern Afghanistan were asked whether they had a place of origin or a place to which they wished to return, many would say that they wished to relocate to Helmand province because there is "water in that place" or they have distant relatives who are settled there. Others wanted to remain in the IDP camp for an indefinite period. Recognising that water and animals would be scarce to come by for some time, someone said he wished "to keep the house I built here in Zhare Dhast and learn to work".

The idea of a 'self-selected community of choice' recognises that return is not a viable option for everyone and that other forms of forced settlement, such as villagisation in Rwanda, should not be an acceptable standard of settlement by the international community. This idea of a self-selected community could also apply to a camp situation like Zhare Dhast, where 50% of camp residents are hoping to reside permanently should the central government give rights for the use of land.

Do IDPs have a say?

While previous definitions of an end to displacement do stipulate that the views of IDPs should also take precedence in determining when displacement ends, most of FMR 17's discussion focused on when the international community could safely make the determination that the displaced have ceased to be so. Who is and who is not an IDP matters most to the international community, in so

much as humanitarian agencies have limits on whom they can assist and how much assistance can be given, so that logical decisions to exclude certain persons become necessary.

In the aid world, IDPs often have little say in determining how they are regarded and how they will be assisted. The problem of local people coming into IDP camps to seek material assistance is widespread throughout Afghanistan and has caused agencies, with limited resources, to come up with IDP status determination guidelines that can

"How can they say I am not an IDP?"

exclude certain persons from both assistance and camp residence. As I was walking around Shaidyee camp just outside Herat with the local camp manager, a woman showed us a piece of paper that explained she was not an IDP and was thus not eligible to receive food allocations from the World Food Programme or to live in the camp. The woman asked, "How can they say I am not an IDP? I am not from here and I cannot leave here. My son is very sick and is in the camp clinic for treatment." While there may have been legitimate reasons for denying this particular person assistance, her reaction to the news highlights the increasing insensitivity that international agencies show to the individual circumstances of displaced persons in the face of overwhelming need.

Protection for the internally displaced

The most engaging debate on when displacement ends concerned how to determine when IDPs no longer required protection and whether the 1951 refugee convention cessation clauses could be applied to IDPs. UNHCR's position emphasised that no legal need to declare an end to internal displacement exists. Yet, UNHCR's perspective came largely from drawing an analogy between an end to displacement and refugee return, stipulating that persons are of



concern until they are fully integrated into the local community, enjoy a normal livelihood in safety and dignity and have equal access of protection from the national authorities.

UNHCR, like some other contributors, also stated that a removal of the root causes of displacement is an essential factor to determining displacement's end. Bonoan also pointed out that the refugee cessation clauses, stipulating that there has to be a fundamental change of circumstances in the place of origin, lend guidance to an answer. However, Cohen rightly reminds us that a fundamental change in the political conditions which led to displacement do not always make it possible for IDPs to then return or resettle. While Cohen uses the example of Tajikistan to illustrate this point, numerous other examples can be drawn from Rwanda, East Timor and Afghanistan.

IDP protection in southern Afghanistan



Let us look at the example of Afghanistan more closely, drawing from the Informed Decision Making (IDM) project carried out by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) in Kandahar under the auspices of UNHCR from November 2002 to May 2003. The project aimed to find those displaced people located in five major camp locations in the south who originated from the western provinces to determine whether they wished to remain in their displacement location, return to their area of origin or seek alternative settlement options.

The IDM programme first began working with camp populations from Badghis province, an area northwest of Herat where fighting between the Taliban and Northern Alliance forces in early 2002 was particularly acute, leading thousands of ethnic Pashtuns from the area to flee to the southern provinces. UNHCR offices in Kabul, Herat and Kandahar believed that Pashtuns from Badghis who were not

politically involved in the Taliban regime could return to their communities of origin in safety and dignity. They came to this conclusion for two reasons; firstly because Taliban and Northern Alliance fighting in Badghis had come to an end and secondly because UNHCR's Field Officer in Badghis province reported that no major protection issues in the area impeded the safe return of non-political persons.

As the Programme Manager for the IDM project, I was able to locate substantial information in returnee monitoring reports on whether material, educational and health resources were available at the district level in Badghis. However, I could not locate any

factual evidence that there were no ongoing, low-level conflicts in the area. However, such protection indicators were aptly supplied by the IDPs themselves. The project found that more than half of the IDPs in Zhare Dhasht camp feared local commanders who took their women, homes, animals and other possessions during the period of Taliban-Northern Alliance fighting. They wanted to know whether specific individuals were present in their places of origin, whether they were occupying their property and especially if they were part of new government forces.

The IDM project team collected the names of 28 local commanders impeding the return of hundreds of families who would otherwise like to return. This information was given to the UNHCR office in Kandahar, with the suggestion that the UNHCR office in the west provide information concerning these individuals for dissemination to the IDPs. The information was disregarded, based on the fact that the 'circumstances which led to displacement had fundamentally changed'.

Yet, many IDPs felt that conditions in their place of origin had not fundamentally changed since the time of flight. While they recognised that major fighting between Taliban and Northern Alliance had ceased, they were aware of low-level conflict between commanders that I could not confirm from other sources. Although UNHCR felt this information was not credible, several weeks after reporting the IDPs' concerns, fighting broke out between commanders in two districts of Badghis which led the UN to evacuate its staff from the entire province. An important lesson was learned here. The factors by which displaced people make the decision to return or not are more intricate than those which can be determined from a checklist survey. The quantitative facts that are gathered from asking IDPs more probing questions about the situation in their place of origin can unearth important political indicators that could be easily overlooked without such investigation.

IDPs at Dasht-i-Qala, Takhar province, Afghanistan



Conclusion

Does internal displacement end? Yes for some, no for others. The case of southern Afghanistan shows that some people 'establish a place' based on where they build a home, have water or find relatives; others who wish to return to where they had property or livelihoods may be waiting for some time before they can find out whether return to their area is safe or not. Ironically, camp life has informally ended internal displacement for some, though such people remain under UNHCR auspices and wait for the new government to formally grant land ownership rights. While rain will end internal displacement for others, many will remain displaced until they rest assured that return will not subject them to future discrimination and loss.

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FMR16 had an article on Sudanese refugees in Cairo ('In 'closed file' limbo: displaced Sudanese in a Cairo slum' by Pascale Ghazaleh). Below are edited versions of comments received by Vincent Cochetel, former Acting Representative, UNHCR Cairo, and a reply from the author.

I appreciate the time spent by Ms Ghazaleh in her research and the interest shown by FMR to examine the plight of Sudanese asylum seekers being denied refugee status in Cairo.

However, the statement that UNHCR admits using a restrictive refugee definition at its office in Cairo is not accurate. UNHCR Cairo applies all refugee definitions in accord with its mandated Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures. The fact that someone was an IDP in

Sudan prior to coming to Egypt does not mean that article 1.2 of the 1969 OAU Convention, governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, applies automatically. A large number of former Sudanese IDPs are recognised as refugees by UNHCR. Others are not because their refugee claim does not fall within the scope of exiting refugee definitions or because their refugee claim seriously lacks credibility.

My question "why don't they move on?" should not have been taken out of context. I was referring to the fact that several asylum seekers, who had been denied an appeal refugee status, choose every week to return to Sudan by steamer via Wadi Halfa (and were observed doing so). This suggests that not all "rejected asylum seekers" are stranded in Egypt.

My comment "no one had forced these people to come to Egypt" should not have been negatively presented. The UNHCR Office in Cairo has not prevented any asylum seeker from coming to Egypt to apply for refugee status. Many asylum seekers, who were for many years IDPs in Sudan, have moved to Egypt because they were dissatisfied with the decreasing assistance programmes there or unrealistic prospects of resettlement via UNHCR Cairo. Many have been materially assisted and encouraged, including by aid organisations, to leave Sudan to become asylum seekers in Egypt. For those not qualifying for refugee status, their move to the Cairo slum of Arba'a wa Nuss results in a lowering of their standards of living and an increased need for protection.

I have been attributed a quote on "clientelism", which should also be contextualised. Many refugees and asylum seekers coming from Sudan have reported to UNHCR Cairo how various forms of religious clientelism are favoured by some Christian or Muslim aid groups in Sudan. Those practising traditional African religions are the most exposed to such unethical approaches. This practice of

creating religious dependence does not exist in Egypt. Church groups are providing, in a remarkable manner, assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt irrespective of their religion, ethnic background or nationality. Without their committed involvement in humanitarian relief efforts the life and well being of refugees and asylum seekers in Cairo would be in serious jeopardy. UNHCR hopes that Muslim and Coptic charitable organisations in Egypt will in the near future start to take a similar interest in providing support to all persons in need of basic humanitarian consideration.

Vincent Cochetel
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As a journalist, I am always careful to transcribe interviews accurately and check my sources. The topic of Sudanese refugees in Egypt – and RSD procedures applied to them – is of great sensitivity to the Egyptian authorities, UNHCR and the church groups which provide assistance. Any discussion of this subject is certain to arouse objections.

I am delighted that Mr Cochetel has agreed to qualify the comments he made to me that "they [Sudanese refugees] don't have to come here." When I cited this comment I neither stated nor implied that UNHCR had prevented anyone from coming to Egypt. If anyone is to blame for preventing displaced people from crossing borders it is the Egyptian and Sudanese governments. With regard to religious clientelism, editing of the version of the article which appeared in FMR removed references to the 'slave emancipation' movement and thus allowed no scope for discussing clientelism within Sudan. Clientelism is an accurate term for the tendency of various religious organisations to privilege their members when distributing material assistance.

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UNHCR/Beirut Refugee Service

Palestinian refugee protection needs go unmet

Participants from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine met in Beirut in early June to discuss protection rights, needs and strategies for Palestinian refugees. Organised by the A'idun Group (Lebanon and Syria) and the Bethlehem-based BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, the workshop was hosted by the Institute of Palestine Studies (Beirut).

Debate and discussion focused on clarification of the concept of refugee protection as it applies to Palestinian refugees, the similarities and differences in protection gaps in various host countries and the question of which international body or bodies – the UN Conciliation Committee for Palestine (UNCCP), UNRWA and/or UNHCR – should be responsible for protection of Palestinian refugees and the search for durable solutions.

Specific attention was given to different marginalised groups of Palestinian refugees such as the former inhabitants of Gaza who now live in Jordan, Palestinians in US/UK-occupied Iraq and the Palestinian residents in Egypt who suffer from a protection gap no less serious than that of the better publicised case of Palestinians in Lebanon [see FMR11 pp40-41].

Participants called for:

- efforts to identify and find the most appropriate remedy to protect the basic rights of Palestinian refugees to durable solutions (right of return, restitution and compensation) as affirmed in Resolution 194 and international law
- engagement of a wider spectrum of the refugee community in education, awareness raising and popular mobilisation on needs and strategies for international protection
- curricula in UNRWA schools to address concepts and principles of refugee rights and refugee protection
- coordination between NGOs and civil society in host countries to more systematically identify and publicise problems concerning access to employment and education, freedom of movement and right to documentation and to lobby governments and political parties to introduce effective remedies
- advocacy to ensure compliance of Arab host states with international conventions to which they are signatories
- more systematic efforts to raise awareness in the international community about the protection gaps facing Palestinian refugees and the need to provide funding to enable UNRWA to maintain health, education and social services, with special attention to the problems in Lebanon
- urgent efforts to resolve the question of which international mechanisms are responsible for the protection of Palestinian refugees and leading the search for durable solutions
- expanding the mandates of UNCCP, UNRWA and UNHCR in order to ensure that refugee protection and identification of durable solutions are guided by standards of international law – and not subject to political interference.

For additional information, see www.badil.org or contact Jaber Suleiman, A'idun, at jsleiman@inco.com.lb.

Offshore processing: out of sight, out of mind?

by Diana Quick

Responding to rising numbers of asylum seekers and growing anti-refugee sentiment in the UK, the British government plans to set up holding centres for would-be immigrants in the regions they are fleeing. Despite opposition expressed by several members of the European Union at the June 2003 European Council meeting, the UK and other interested nations, such as the Netherlands and

Denmark, plan to go ahead with pilot 'zones of protection', possibly in the Horn of Africa.

The British government argues that by allowing protection for people in areas where there is a risk of a humanitarian crisis they would be able to return to their homes more easily when it is safe to do so. Failing that, asylum claims could be processed on the spot. People who claim asylum in the UK, including women and children (but not unaccompanied minors), could also be sent to the protection zones.

The idea has, in theory, the support of UNHCR whose proposed 'three-pronged approach' to improve the global asylum system would mean donor states supporting refugees in their original host countries, helping them to return home, to resettle to other countries or start new lives locally. However, the agency has not said whether it will participate in the UK's pilot project.

Opponents, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the British Refugee Council, have voiced strong opposition, calling it an effort by Britain to dump its responsibilities towards refugees onto poor, distant countries. They have stated that the plan could violate international laws, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, the European Convention on Human Rights and possibly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are also concerned that refugees and asylum seekers in the zones of protection would face protection issues, including sexual assault, gender-based violence, forced recruitment of children by armed militias and people trafficking.¹

An early draft of the UK proposal suggests it would include primary humanitarian assistance (food, shelter and health services), protection against *refoulement* and compliance with Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (i.e. no risk of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment). There is no mention,



however, of human rights or legal protection.

Many questions about the 'zones of protection' remain unanswered. Whose law will run the camps? How can the human rights of refugees be protected? Who will fund the camps and who will monitor them? How long will refugees be required to stay in such zones before decisions are reached on their claims? Details of

how claims will be processed, how legal advice will be provided for claimants and whether they will be free to come and go are still unclear.

A recent report by the British Home Office² revealed that 'get tough' asylum policies lead to more illegal immigration and people trafficking and that the restrictive measures that were most successful at reducing unfounded claims also forced genuine refugees to go underground.

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1. For critiques of the UK proposals, see www.amnesty.org.uk/action/camp/refugees/action/index.shtml and www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/june2003/relea122.htm

2. See www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors259

RSC pays tribute to victims of UN Baghdad bomb attack

Staff at the Refugee Studies Centre would like to extend their sympathy and condolences to all those affected by the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003. The victims were working to resolve residual conflicts and to support the Iraqi people during this period of post-war reconstruction. Because of their close connection to the RSC we would like to mention two by name.

Gil Loescher, who lives in Oxford, has been closely associated with the work of the Centre; since its early days, he has provided invaluable teaching support, good advice and friendship. As FMR goes to press Gil is in a critical condition in hospital in Germany. Our thoughts are with him and his family.

Arthur C Helton of the Council on Foreign Relations was killed by the blast. Arthur was a noted expert on refugee and international law and had worked and talked with many of us on humanitarian issues. He gave a lecture at the RSC last year on the theme of his latest book which stressed the need for a more comprehensive and sympathetic refugee regime. He will be sadly missed.

Too late to be included in this FMR but available on our website at www.fmreview.org (see 'supplementary articles') is an article submitted on 22 August by Brian Gorlick, Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR Stockholm, on 'A problem from hell: humanitarian operations in a vengeful world'.

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'Operation Iraqi Freedom' and its phantom million Iraqi refugees

by Dawn Chatty

On November 2002 the UN Security Council voted unanimously to back an Anglo-American resolution (no. 1441) requiring Iraq to reinstate weapons inspectors withdrawn by the UN in 1998. The following month, as demanded by the UN, Iraqi officials presented the UN with a 12,000 page document disclosing Iraq's programmes for weapons of mass destruction. On 5 March 2003, after months of intense diplomatic efforts, the foreign ministers of France, Russia and Germany issued a joint declaration stating that they would not permit a second resolution to pass the UN Security Council to authorise military action against Iraq. The US and the UK abandoned hope of gaining Security Council support for launching a war on Iraq. On 20 March, the US launched its first set of air strikes on Baghdad and 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was officially underway.

Throughout the period between November 2002 and March 2003 there had been estimates that such a military engagement would cause displacement of more than a million people within Iraq and across its borders.

UNHCR and numerous NGOs had made preparations to receive this wave of humanity in Jordan, Syria and Iran. In Syria, UNHCR negotiated the upgrading of the El Hol campsite in eastern Syria and two additional campsites were agreed to with the Syrian government at Al Yarubiyah and Al Tanf border crossing. UNHCR pre-positioned non-food items sufficient for 5,000 people in the country with additional items available for transfer from the Turkish port of Iskenderun or the Jordanian port of Aqaba in a matter of hours. In Jordan, UNHCR worked closely with the Hashemite Charitable Society to set

up a refugee site near Ruwaishid in eastern Jordan. In addition, UNHCR stockpiled relief items at the southern port of Aqaba for immediate dispatch to Ruwaishid, should that prove necessary. In Iran, the government's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants prepared ten campsites with the help of UNHCR. Four of these sites were provided with basic facilities such as sanitation and water services and could initially host 60,000 refugees.

Despite the dire predictions, no Iraqi refugees crossed the border into Iran. Up to 30,000 Iraqis, however, gathered near the border at Badrah in eastern Iraq and requested help from Iran. Iranian authorities responded by sending food, water and medicine to the border where they requested that Iraqi elders take charge of distributing the relief items. In Syria just over 200 Iraqis crossed the border and took refuge at El Hol camp. Perhaps as a response to US warnings that no sanctuary should be given to any Iraqi government loyalists, 44 Iraqi refugees, including 23 children, were later removed from the El Hol camp and transported back to Iraq. This group of refugees were all residents of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's birthplace.

In Jordan, more than 1,200 refugees arrived at the Al-Karma border crossing between Iraq and Jordan and found themselves trapped, unable to cross over into Jordan and unwilling to go back into Iraq. These were mainly third country nationals trapped in a 'no-man's land': Iranian Kurds, Iranian Persians, Arabs and Palestinians. Two months after 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' had begun, some 550 Palestinians and a few hundred other Arab refugees were allowed entry into the Jordanian refugee camp at Ruwaishid.

How did the international humanitarian aid community get it so wrong? How were the estimates of 1 million refugees calculated and why were the figures so readily accepted?

We now know that inside Iraq some 300,000 people were displaced by the

Most Iraqis preferred to stand their ground

war, mainly Arabs who had recently been forced by Saddam Hussein's regime to settle in Kurdish villages surrounding the northern Iraqi town of Kirkuk. Relatively few people sought refuge across international borders and those who did were mainly nationals of other countries who were resident in Iraq.

Perhaps the fundamental error was in assuming that Iraqi citizens would flee their homes once the Anglo-American military attacks began. For most Iraqis, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was not regarded as a liberation campaign but as a neo-colonial assault on their homeland. Most Iraqis preferred to stand their ground and, by sheltering among familiar neighbours and kin, safeguard their holdings while affirming their Iraqi-ness. The Western assumption that Iraqis might flee across international borders for their personal safety and later return to recover their property and possessions was not one that many Iraqis, or Arabs for that matter, would make. The lessons of Palestine have been deeply engrained in the Arab psyche. If you flee war in your homeland, you may not be allowed to return when fighting ends

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Kabul kids

by Jason Hart

Few places evoke images of destruction and suffering created by war more strongly than Kabul. Kabul's children have featured in news reports and aid agency appeals to illustrate the devastation and displacement wrought by more than two decades of armed conflict. It might be assumed that many young people are traumatised by their experiences and now require the care of mental health professionals in order to begin rebuilding their lives. A study just published by Save the Children USA and UNICEF challenges this assumption and encourages us to reflect on established approaches to working with war-affected children.

The Children of Kabul: discussions with Afghan families is the product of six months' intensive research with more than 600 residents of Kabul, nearly 450 of whom were aged 7-18. The scale and duration of this research project set it apart from the majority of assessment exercises undertaken by humanitarian organisations working with war-affected children. It is methodologically innovative. Researchers did not focus on conflict-related events and their consequences for children's mental health but adopted a broader approach: an exploration of children's social relationships and well-being in light of a range of problems and challenges including, but not limited to, those created directly by conflict and displacement. Children were involved in research design, commenting on their lives and analysing their circumstances. The children emerge from the report as survivors actively engaged in the daily struggles of life, rather than victims who require 'expert' analysis and help.

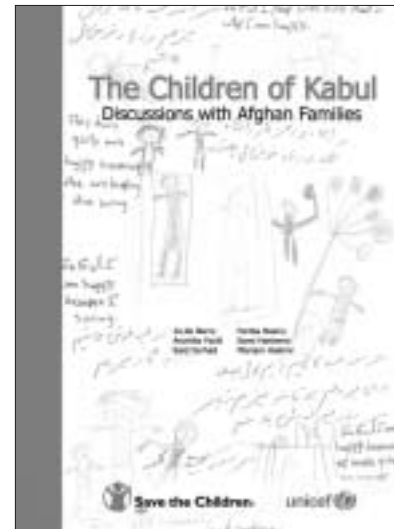
A central research finding is the overriding concern with the material and social consequences of war and displacement. Inevitably this includes poverty which, in turn, affects children's responsibilities, nutrition, ability to play, family relationships and access to health care. Destruction of basic infrastructure has greatly hindered many aspects of children's daily lives including the undertaking of tasks such as collecting water and firewood. The numerous destroyed

buildings – and the ghosts believed to haunt them – are a significant cause of fear. Alongside the challenges created directly by war and displacement, concerns about everyday matters similar to those experienced by young people around the world are also clearly expressed. These include teacher discipline, the sickness or death of relatives, romantic problems and gender discrimination.

Perhaps the most startling and salutary finding, however, is the extent of children's concern about conditions that have come about as a result of the supposed peace. The clearest example of this is traffic. With the fall of the Taliban came a massive increase in the number of vehicles on the streets of Kabul, a sudden and fearsome development for children and a direct threat to their physical safety.

The authors conclude that "...a child is much more likely to be preoccupied with the difficulties of crossing a mine field to fetch water today, than remembering an experience of fighting which happened several years ago." The implications of this study for the work of humanitarian agencies are significant. Given the range of concerns expressed, a multi-faceted response seems essential: one that focuses principally on helping children overcome diverse problems in their current lives. Save the Children USA and UNICEF are presently engaged in developing such a response, which includes a project to improve road safety, provide play and leisure opportunities and support healing practices in keeping with local religious belief and popular sentiment.

In other parts of the world affected by conflict, a fairly standardised, trauma-focused response continues to be promoted by many agencies. The Children of Kabul project illustrates the importance of devoting serious efforts to the study of local context and to working with children towards an holistic response that addresses directly their particular experiences, concerns and aspirations.



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The full text of *The Children of Kabul* is online at: www.savethechildren.org/pdf_publications/ChildrenofKabul.pdf

RSC Announcements

Voices out of Conflict: young people affected by forced migration and political crisis

Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, UK : 26-28 March 2004
[see page 58 for details]

RSC Southeast Asia Regional School in Forced Migration

8-18 December 2003 : Bangkok, Thailand

RSC International Summer School in Forced Migration 2004

5-23 July 2004 : Oxford, UK

Forced Migration Online
www.forcedmigration.org

For more details visit www.rsc.ox.ac.uk or contact the RSC at address opposite.



Liberia: a hope for peace?

by Raymond Johansen

Everybody has heard of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein but up until last spring few had heard of Charles Taylor, the Liberian militia leader turned politician whose regime exacerbated conflicts throughout West Africa. Homicide, torture, rape and expulsion marked everyday life for those under Taylor's rule. In June, the difficult security situation forced humanitarian aid organisations to evacuate their personnel. Even though humanitarian

The steady escalation of fighting had a dramatic humanitarian toll.

needs were greater than ever, the international community only contributed a fifth of the amount requested by the UN for emergency relief programmes in Liberia.

The Norwegian Refugee Council supported the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, when he called on the UN to mandate and dispatch a peace force to this war-torn country. In July the US sent the first soldiers to prepare the ground for a larger peace operation. ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) offered to field 3,000 soldiers to a peace operation. In August the US deployed 200 soldiers after Taylor took refuge in neighbouring Nigeria. Shortly after, the government and the two leading rebel groups agreed on a peace treaty including a new interim government and new elections in 2005. Backed by the UN and with a US-led peace force in place, there is now a fair chance that this war-ravaged country will get back on its feet.

For many years Liberia was a safe haven for rebel groups in neighbouring countries. Illicit trade in weapons and diamonds flourished, earning huge sums for Taylor and his family. Regional political instability was essential to the continuation of this

steady income flow. Taylor's regime was an important protagonist in the horrific civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Taylor also played a role in the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire and attempted to destabilise the government of Guinea.

Two different rebel groups in northern and eastern Liberia were steadily pressuring Taylor, whose regime only held sway over a small part of the country and the capital, Monrovia. An International Contact Group on Liberia led by ECOWAS initiated several meetings between the rebels and

Taylor. The steady escalation of fighting had a dramatic humanitarian toll. Between 500,000 and 600,000 people are in desperate flight inside the country while almost 300,000 have sought the limited and precarious protection available in neighbouring states. Approximately 200,000 IDPs are presently in and around Monrovia.

In Sierra Leone the international community has mobilised to maintain the fragile peace. The UN's peacekeeping operation consists of 17,000 soldiers, the largest operation of its kind in the world. War criminals are being prosecuted and improved security is enabling humanitarian organisations to provide aid. In just a couple of years the situation of the civilian population has turned from abysmal despair to a new sense of hope.

This is in striking contrast to Liberia where the volatile security situation prevented humanitarian aid in large areas for years. Earlier this year a Norwegian humanitarian worker was killed. For some periods of time the World Food Programme has had to interrupt food distribution in large parts of the country. While formal colonial powers have intervened in the region (the British have taken the initiative in Sierra Leone and France has dispatched 4,000 troops to Côte



d'Ivoire) Liberia was left to her own devices.

Since the Liberian state was founded by emancipated American slaves in 1847 it has enjoyed close ties to the US. Liberia was a staunch US ally during the Cold War. The country was no longer of strategic interest to the world's leading power. The global war on terror caused changing priorities and the suffering of Liberian civilians accorded a low priority.

The Norwegian Refugee Council is back in Liberia to assist IDPs. It is our hope that the international community will extend its efforts to support the people of Liberia to establish peace, democracy, human rights and social and economical growth in their war-ravaged country.

Raymond Johansen is the Norwegian Refugee Council's Secretary General.

For further information on Liberia see the NRC/Global IDP Project country profile: www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/w/Countries/Liberia

For more information about the Norwegian Refugee Council, visit www.nrc.no/engindex.htm



The Global IDP Project is pleased to present the inter-agency Camp Management Project:

In October 2002 an inter-agency working group (comprising OCHA, UNHCR, NRC, the International Rescue Committee and the Sierra Leone government's National Commission for Social Action) set up the **Camp Management Project**. The initiative sprang from the urgent need to focus on management of displaced people's camps following the sexual exploitation scandal involving humanitarian agencies in West Africa.¹

While comprehensive guidelines and minimum standards already exist for camp design, construction and service delivery, there has not been a systematic and holistic approach to camp management - from negotiating camp locations through to camp closure. Neither is there any comprehensive documentation with a camp management perspective which could be a practical tool to complement existing sectoral guidelines.

Camp management agencies play a critical role in delivering assistance and providing protection for displaced people in both IDP and refugee settings. However, the capacities of management agencies vary widely depending on their expertise,

experience and ability to secure donor support. These differences in management and approach are particularly clear between refugee and IDP settings. The inter-agency working group in Sierra Leone has focused on identifying key areas of camp management responsibilities, reviewing lessons learnt and identifying good practice from refugee camp situations which could be transferred to IDP camp management. By combining all of this, the working group aimed to develop a comprehensive overview from a camp management perspective. The product that was developed became the Camp Management Toolkit.

The objectives of the **Camp Management Toolkit** are:

- to define and compile information on all aspects of camp operations required by a camp manager (there are 19 chapters²)
- to define the roles and responsibilities of camp managers in relation to each subject
- to provide a list of essential reading for each subject
- to provide both practical and reference tools to support camp managers in their daily work, including checklists, monitoring forms and practical guidelines.

The toolkit addresses both the technical and social aspects of camp management and is meant to be an iterative document, open to additions and changes. This initiative specifically focuses on individual camp managers and camp management agencies. It does not aim to be exhaustive and there is no intention to duplicate or revise existing guidelines or standards. Ultimately, the toolkit aims to provide a comprehensive, holistic and practical overview of a full spectrum of camp management responsibilities.

The Camp Management Project is now moving to a global level. From October to mid-December 2003, the toolkit will be field-tested in selected

countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and South America in order to identify gaps in information and tools, assess the effectiveness of the tools, review and assess the present design, enhance the revised toolkit with newly identified good practices and identify which operational areas of the toolkit are consulted more frequently.

For the field testing to be as reliable as possible, it will take place in a cross-section of conflict-prone or post-conflict countries. The main criteria for selecting field-testing countries are:

- a non-emergency refugee/ internally displaced situation
- an established IRC and/or NRC presence alongside UNHCR and OCHA country offices or other partners willing to coordinate in-country field testing in close cooperation with the Camp Management Project coordinator at NRC-Oslo
- a well-established humanitarian presence.

**For further information please contact Nina M Birkeland.
Email: nina.birkeland@nrc.no**

1. See FMR15 pp16-19 and FMR16 pp45-46.

2. The 19 chapters are: negotiations; camp design, care and maintenance; camp management team; camp committees; food distribution and non-food items; water and sanitation; registration and data collection; security; protection; child protection; community participation; formal education; enhancing livelihood strategies; sexual- and gender-based violence; recreation and youth; health care and health education; psychosocial care; peace building and reconciliation; and camp closure.

The **Global IDP Project** is an international non-profit organisation that monitors internal displacement caused by conflicts.

The IDP Database (www.idpproject.org) provides public information about internal displacement in 50 countries.

The Project is part of the **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**, an organisation that works to provide assistance and protection to refugees and displaced people in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. NRC was founded in 1946 in Oslo.

The Global IDP Project
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Tel: +41 22 799 0700
Fax: +41 22 799 0701
Email: idpproject@nrc.ch

IDP news

IDP news is a weekly summary of news on IDPs in conflicts. It is compiled by the Global IDP Project, based on public information.

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visit our website
www.idpproject.org.



Why do we know so little about refugees? How can we learn more?

by Jeff Crisp

A number of recent UNHCR evaluations suggest that the organisation knows less and less about the refugees it is mandated to protect. Recent events in West Africa, where a number of humanitarian personnel were implicated in the sexual exploitation of refugee girls¹, confirmed the impression that UNHCR and other aid organisations have a very limited understanding of the social dynamics of refugee situations.

Seeking to understand the origins of this problem, UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) asked a number of staff members why the agency has lost contact with its beneficiaries. The answers received provide valuable insight into the changing conditions under which humanitarian personnel are obliged to work.

Many respondents pointed to the fact that security in refugee-populated areas is much weaker than it was a decade ago – a development evidenced by the abduction and murder of UNHCR staff in a number of locations. While UNHCR staff were once able to live and work amongst refugees, they are now more commonly based in provincial centres, a long and often difficult drive away from the nearest refugee camp.

Many staff members also pointed to the way in which email and the internet have penetrated even the most remote UNHCR offices, making it possible for staff to spend much longer periods of time in their office – and much less time interacting with refugees. The organisation's reporting requirements have increased substantially in recent years, obliging field staff to sit at their computers for hours on end. Ironically, the new emphasis on accountability in the humanitarian sector has thus distanced UNHCR from the very people it is supposed to protect!

Our staff also told us of their concerns about the limited number of UNHCR personnel in frontline refugee locations. The difficulty of filling posts in difficult duty stations, coupled with the introduction of new regulations allowing staff posted to such locations to take regular 'rest and recuperation' breaks, has led to a reduction of UNHCR's field presence. This trend has been reinforced by the delegation of many operational responsibilities to NGOs and other implementing partners.

Employees also pointed out that the impetus to get out of the office and to mingle with refugees has been considerably reduced by UNHCR's inability to provide them with the protection, assistance and solutions which they need. "It's very difficult to talk with people when you know you cannot satisfy their requests for relief or resettlement opportunities, and who may be quite angry as a result," suggested one respondent.

Others told us that UNHCR's interaction with refugee communities, especially those which have lived in exile for long periods of time, is hampered by the unrepresentative nature of the committees established to provide refugees with some form of organised leadership. As Tania Kaiser concluded when she visited Guinea to undertake an evaluation for UNHCR, "the refugee committees are extremely variable, and some ordinary refugees have nothing to do with them. Committee members are often considered to be 'big people', in some cases corrupt and self-serving." This problem is evidently compounded when UNHCR and other humanitarian personnel deal only with committee members and fail to interact with other refugees.

Confronted with the challenge of learning more about refugees and other people of concern to UNHCR, EPAU is:

- experimenting with 'beneficiary-based evaluations' which set out to solicit the opinions and perceptions of women, children and other powerless people who tend to be ignored in more conventional evaluations
- awaiting the results of a major review of UNHCR's monitoring systems and procedures: initial findings indicate that, despite all the obstacles identified above, UNHCR and its partners continue to collect large amounts of information about refugees and other beneficiaries but data analysis is often weak and information collected is not used to inform policymaking and programme design
- examining the way that sample surveys can be used as a means of learning more about refugee populations and their aspirations: the methodology of surveys undertaken has often been uneven in quality and little guidance material is currently available to humanitarian organisations that wish to undertake or commission sample surveys.

FMR readers experienced in the use of sample surveys in refugee situations are invited to contact EPAU at hqep00@unhcr.ch.

Some of the issues raised in this article are also examined in 'Researching refugees: some methodological and ethical considerations in social science and forced migration' by Karen Jacobsen and Loren Landau, 'New Issues in Refugee Research', no. 90, available under 'Publications' on the UNHCR website www.unhcr.ch.

1. See FMR15 pp16-19 and FMR16 pp46-47.

This is a regular page of news and debate from UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU). For further information, or suggestions regarding this feature, contact Jeff Crisp, head of EPAU. Email CRISP@unhcr.ch

B The Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement

Civil society initiatives can improve national laws and policies for IDPs

Lawyers associations and NGOs around the world can play an important role in promoting better laws and policies in their own countries for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Take, for example, the recent initiative in the South Caucasus, home to more than a million IDPs, where teams of lawyers from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan evaluated their national laws and administrative regulations in terms of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and came up with recommendations for legal reform.

Their findings are the basis of a new study¹, published by the American Society of International Law in collaboration with the Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement, the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR).

The idea for the study arose at a regional seminar on Internal Displacement in the South Caucasus, held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 2000. During the following two-year period, local lawyers analysed their national laws in terms of the Guiding Principles to determine whether legislative reforms were needed to enhance legal protection for IDPs. Professor Walter Kälin, author of the *Annotations* to the Guiding Principles, chaired the process, while GYLA acted as Project Coordinator; OSCE/ODIHR and the Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal displacement provided overall supervision and support.

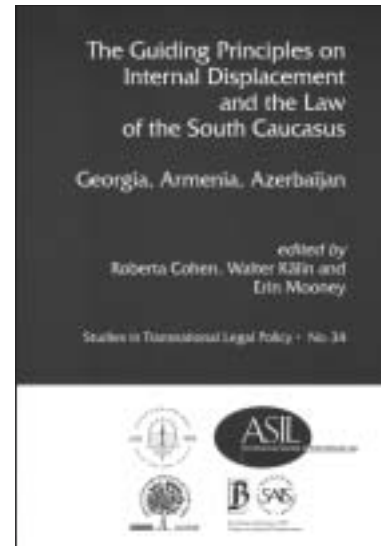
The new study includes the English translations of the lawyers' reports and the summaries of roundtable discussions convened in Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan at which the lawyers presented their findings. Among the major issues they addressed are rights relating to citizenship, return or resettlement, property restitution and

compensation, education, employment, housing and political participation.

In Armenia, the lawyers recommended the drafting of a specific national law on IDPs that would establish a definition of IDPs and clearly delineate their rights. They also proposed amendments to a variety of existing laws to better protect IDPs. In Georgia, where there already exists an extensive body of law relevant to IDPs, the lawyers recommended that IDPs be guaranteed the right to vote in local and parliamentary elections without loss of assistance benefits. And they called for: improvements in the government's registration system to enable IDPs to more effectively exercise their rights; the elaboration of standards for adequate living quarters; and legal provisions to regulate property restitution. In Azerbaijan, which since 1992 has had a law on refugees and IDPs, the lawyers recommended separate laws for IDPs and refugees in order to clarify and better ensure the protection of both groups. They also suggested revising the existing legal definition of IDPs to include those displaced for reasons other than conflict, called for special protections for those IDPs with particular vulnerabilities, and proposed legislation for IDP return and property compensation.

The roundtable held in each country brought together senior government officials, parliamentarians, local NGOs, IDP representatives, and international organisations and experts.

The lawyers' recommendations are being studied by the governments and have already begun to stimulate important legislative reform, for instance in Georgia with regard to voting rights. The process is also providing important follow-up to the recommendations of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on IDPs who, in his missions to all three South Caucasus countries, had recommended



the development of national policies and programmes in accordance with the Guiding Principles. Just as significant, the Representative recommended stronger government partnerships with civil society.

Overall, this process of legal review in the South Caucasus provides a truly noteworthy example of the significant contribution that civil society can make to promoting more effective laws and policies for the internally displaced. It is to be hoped that the publication of the results of this process will stimulate similar initiatives in other parts of the world and prove instructive to lawyers, parliamentarians and IDP organisations who observe a need in their own countries to improve national laws and policies for IDPs.

The Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement would be interested to hear from lawyers groups in other parts of the world ready to undertake similar processes.

1. *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Law of the South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan*, edited by Roberta Cohen, Walter Kälin and Erin Mooney. For a copy contact Charles Driest: cdriest@brookings.edu
Tel: +1 202 797 6168. Fax: +1 202 797 6003.

publications

From Persecution to Prison: The Health Consequences of Detention for Asylum Seekers

by Physicians for Human Rights and the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture. 2003. 219pp. Available online at www.phrusa.org/campaigns/asylum_network/detention_execSummary/detention_.pdf

From Persecution to Prison is a systematic and comprehensive scientific study examining the health of detained asylum seekers. Many asylum seekers have suffered trauma, such as torture, prior to immigration, which contributes to high rates of psychiatric morbidity in this population. Detention may exacerbate prior symptoms or even foster development of new problems.

Contact: John Heffernan, Physicians for Human Rights, 100 Boylston Street, Suite 702, Boston MA 02116, US.
Tel: +1 617 413 6407.
Email: jheffernan@phrusa.org
Website: www.phrusa.org
In UK, contact Moyra Rushby, Medact, 601 Holloway Road, London N19 4DJ.
Tel: +44 (0)20 7272 2020.
Website: www.medact.org

Women Asylum Seekers in the UK: A Gender Perspective

Refugee Women's Resource Project, Asylum Aid. 2003. 178pp. Available online at www.asylumaid.org.uk/Publications

This report, based on the study of 102 cases, reveals that in many cases in the UK the decision to refuse women asylum seekers protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention is made on the basis of a gender-blind approach to their claim. It includes recommendations urging the government to adopt measures to guarantee a fair treatment of women asylum seekers' claims in the UK and to respond to their specific needs throughout the asylum determination process.

Contact Asylum Aid, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS, UK.
Tel: +44 020 7377 5123.
Email: info@asylumaid.org.uk

Psychosocial Concepts in Humanitarian Work with Children: A Review of the Concepts and Related Literature

Eds Maryanne Loughry and Carola Eyber. Roundtable on the Demography of Forced Migration, National Research Council and Program on Forced Migration and Health at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. 2003. ISBN 0-309-08933-b.142pp. Available online at www.nap.edu/catalog/10698.html

This publication reviews the literature on research of psychosocial issues in humanitarian work, especially as it relates to children who have been exposed to prolonged violence and armed conflict. Includes an annotated bibliography.

Contact: National Academies Press, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Lockbox 285, Washington DC 20055, US.
Website: www.nap.edu
Email: zjones@nas.edu
Tel: +1 888 624 8373.

Supporting Refugee children in 21st Century Britain - NEW REVISED EDITION

by Jill Rutter. June 2003. 320pp. ISBN 1-85856-292-9. £19.99/ €30.00.

Since the first edition of this compendium was published in 2001, important new legislation has altered the prospects of refugee children. The first is the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) which came into force in April 2002, the second the new Asylum Act. This revised edition takes account of the changes in the law. It describes the backgrounds of 35 of the major refugee groups in Britain, including Albanians, Eastern European

Roma and people fleeing the former Soviet Union, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. The author notes how educational provision for pupils for refugee communities has progressed and describes those which have proved effective in promoting their learning, from pre-school through the statutory years and up to age 19. Additional sections include healthcare issues, emotional and psychological issues, using the expressive arts with young refugees, and parental involvement and family literacy.

Contact: Trentham Books Ltd, Westview House, 734 London Road, Stoke on Trent ST4 5NP, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1782 745567.
Fax: +44 (0)1782 745553.
Website: www.trentham-books.co.uk
Email: tb@trentham-books.co.uk

An assessment of the impact of asylum policies in Europe 1990-2000

by Roger Zetter, David Griffiths, Silva Ferretti and Martyn Pearl. Home Office Research Study 259. June 2003. 168pp. Available at online at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors259.pdf

Commissioned by the Immigration Research and Statistics Service of the Immigration and Community Group in the UK's Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, this study reviews the available evidence on the legislation, policies and practices that may have had an impact on the number and patterns of asylum applications to the EU between 1990 and 2000. It brings together an extensive body of literature and data on refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. The study should be of interest both to those involved with research in this area and with asylum policy.

For a hard copy, contact: RDS Communications Development Unit, Room 264, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT, UK.
Tel: +44 (020) 7273 2084.
Fax: +44 (020) 7222 0211.
Email: publications.rds@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Taking Stock and Charting the Future: International Symposium on the Mandate of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on IDPs

Brookings Institution-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement. 2003. 88pp.

This is the report of an International Symposium held in December 2002 in Austria, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Representative's mandate. The principal objectives of the meeting were to assess the work and challenges of the mandate as well as the progress made by the international community and to explore future strategies at the international, regional, national and local levels for promoting enhanced responses to the global crisis of internal displacement. The publication includes a summary report on the Symposium as well as a background paper by Professor Thomas Weiss on 'International Efforts for IDPs after a Decade: What Next?'

Contact: Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli, Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement, The Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036, US. Tel: +1 202 797 6145. Email: gsanchez@brookings.edu

Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2002

Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. June 2003. ISSN 1728-1679. 200pp. \$10. Available in English and Arabic.

This annual survey covers root causes, demographic characteristics, legal status, socio-economic status, international protection and assistance, and framework for durable solutions. It also provides recommendations concerning the implementation of the rights of Palestinian refugees and IDPs in the context of a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

Contact: Badil Resource Center, PO Box 728, Bethlehem, Palestine. Tel/fax: +970 2 274 7346. Email: info@badil.org Website: www.badil.org

The World Refugee Survey 2003

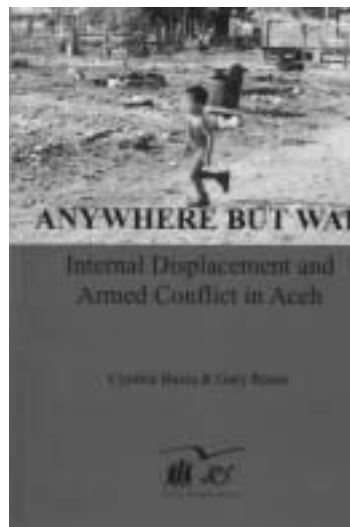
US Committee for Refugees. May 2003. 258pp. \$25.

The 2003 Survey reviews refugee conditions and government policies affecting refugees and displaced persons in 134 countries worldwide. It includes 13 pages of statistics on refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers. The 2003 Survey features articles on problems in international refugee protection in the aftermath of 11 September by Ruud Lubbers (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and the plight of North Korean refugees by Sen Sam Brownback.

Contact: US Committee for Refugees, 1717 Massachusetts Ave NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20036, US. Tel: +1 202 347 3507. Email: uscr@irsa-uscr.org Website: www.refugees.org

Anywhere but War: Internal Displacement and Armed Conflict in Aceh

by Cynthia Buiza & Gary Risser, Jesuit Refugee Service-Asia Pacific. March 2003. ISBN 974-91284-9-4. 108pp. Free - but donations welcomed.



This book presents data collected about those displaced in Aceh and attempts an analysis of the situation – but also looks beyond the data to the lives and suffering of the people represented.

Contact: Cynthia T Buiza, JRS-Asia Pacific, 24/1 Soi Ari 4 (South), Phahonyothin 7, Bangkok 10400,

Thailand. Tel: + 66 2 279 1817. Email: cynthia.buiza@jrs.net Website: www.jrs.th.com

Forthcoming Conference

Voices out of Conflict: young people affected by forced migration and political crisis

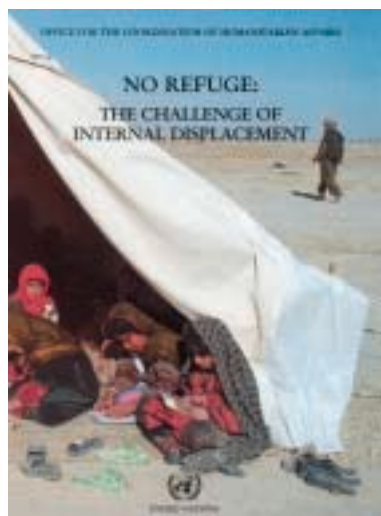
Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, UK : 26-28 March 2004

Humanitarian aid agencies have tended to see protection in terms of national or regional security, and do not give enough recognition to other aspects of protection which are far more vital to young people in situations of political crisis or forced migration. For these young people, aged 10 to 25 years, protection from sexual abuse and labour exploitation, and the creation of the conditions under which they can have safe access to education, employment and healthcare, and consequently become self-sufficient, are much more immediate concerns. Recent research and experience suggests that these young people are still too rarely listened to even by the agencies and NGOs whose goals are to help them. This international conference will be hosted by Cumberland Lodge in partnership with the RSC and by the International Rescue Committee (UK) and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. It will address these issues in a unique way, by bringing young refugees to Cumberland Lodge to put their experiences and solutions directly to funders, agencies and academics.

For more details, visit www.rsc.ox.ac.uk or contact the RSC at address on page 51.

No Refuge: The Challenge of Internal Displacement

OCHA Internal Displacement Unit.
2003. ISBN 92-1-132023-2. 153pp.
\$28 (plus \$12 p&p).

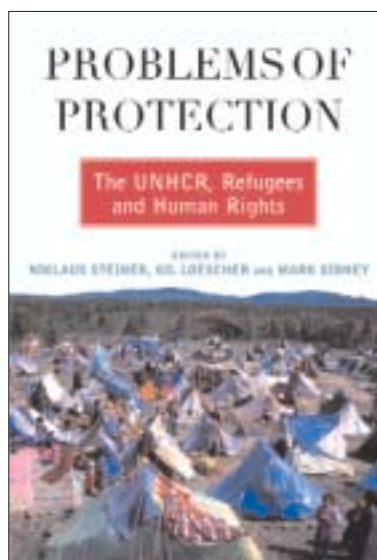


No Refuge: The Challenge of Internal Displacement outlines the emergence of internal displacement as an issue on the international humanitarian agenda, and explores conceptual challenges that confront policy makers and humanitarian actors. It analyses internal displacement against the backdrop of the major themes that delineate the policy framework of humanitarian action and diplomacy – such as sovereignty, access, protection of vulnerable people (especially civilians caught in armed conflict) and the problems that must be addressed in order to create conditions for durable solutions. The principal author is Kathleen Newland and contributing authors are Erin Patrick and Monette Zard of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington DC, who interacted closely with the Internal Displacement Unit's editorial team and many institutional partners and experts.

Contact: UN Publications, Room DC2-853, 2 UN Plaza, New York 10017, NY, US. Email: publications@un.org. Or go to www.un.org/Pubs/whatsnew/orderfrm.htm and quote UN Sales No. E.03.III.M.1 on order form.

Problems of Protection: The UNHCR, Refugees, and Human Rights

Eds Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney and Gil Loescher. May 2003. 304pp. ISBN 0415945747. £24.95.

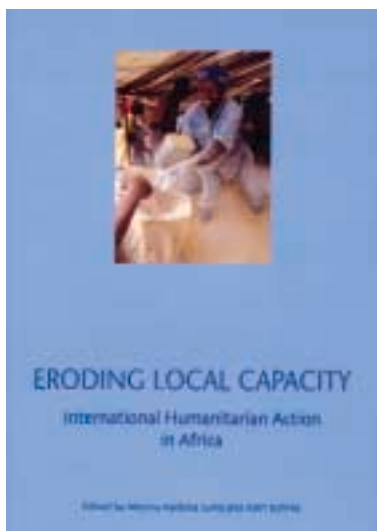


The process of refugee protection is one that is complex and controversial and always more political than humanitarian. *Problems of Protection* addresses the shortcomings of relying on an international system in which the richest countries often set the agenda, shifting attitudes among affected countries, and the difficulty of rebuilding societies in which the refugee situation continues to intensify.

Contact: Routledge, 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001, US.
Website: www.routledge-ny.com
Email: info@routledge-ny.com

Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa

Eds Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
2003. ISBN 91-7106-502-4. 203pp.
£16.95/\$27.95.



Eroding Local Capacity focuses on cases from East Africa and the Horn. It considers institutional capacity in the public and private sector, as well as legal and social norms of humanitarian action. Includes chapters by the editors plus Bonaventure Rutinwa, Mutoy Mubiala, Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, Bertha Kadenyi Amisi and Joakim Gundel.

Order online at www.nai.uu.se/webbshop/ShopGB/index.html or email orders@nai.uu.se.

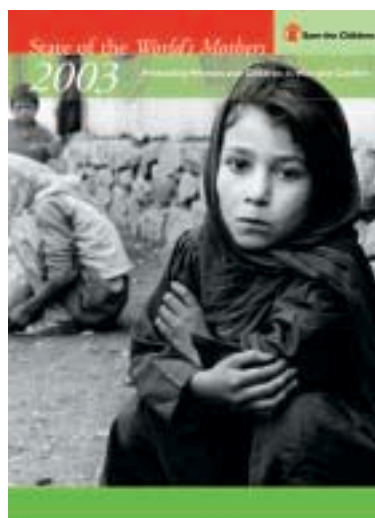
Tel: +46 18 562200.

Fax: +46 18 562290.

Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, PO Box 1703, SE-751 47 Uppsala, Sweden.

State of the World's Mothers 2003: Protecting Women and Children in War and Conflict

Save the Children USA. May 2003. 44pp
Available online at www.savethechildren.org/sowm2003/index.shtml



This report focuses on the millions of mothers and children whose lives have been shattered by armed conflict. It suggests actions required to support women and shield children from the brutal excesses of war. A 'Conflict Protection Scorecard' analyses 40 of the world's most dangerous conflict zones and shows where abuses against women and children are greatest. A 'Mothers' Index' documents conditions for mothers and children in 117 developed and developing countries.

Contact: Save the Children USA, 54 Wilton Road, Westport, CT 06880, US.
Website: www.savethechildren.org

Encouraging self-sufficiency for displaced populations

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
FARM RADIO NETWORK



The Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (www.farmradio.org) is a Canadian-based, not-for-profit organisation working in partnership with radio broadcasters in over 70 countries to fight poverty and food insecurity. The Network gathers information about successful, low-cost practices in sustainable agriculture, nutrition, health and community development. These are turned into radio scripts which are distributed to partner-broadcasters and others engaged in rural development for free dissemination.

The Network has produced a package of scripts - with guides to further sources of information - designed to meet the needs of refugees and IDPs:

- rebuilding local seed supplies after armed conflict or other emergency situations
- 'survival' crops provide food during times of need
- an innovative farmer grows food for refugees
- sharing the load after conflict: villagers start a revolving loan fund
- growing vegetables in a refugee camp
- dispute over a sacred stream: villagers describe the conflict
- conflict over natural resources: a short story
- women face many challenges after conflict
- health considerations for refugees
- rebuilding local seed supplies after armed conflict or other emergency situations
- Mummy Tiger and her babies: how children experience conflict

They can be downloaded at:

www.farmradio.org/en/publications/scripts_en.php

For further information and to register to receive scripts, contact Naomi Fraser, Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, 416 Moore Avenue, Suite 101, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4G 1C9. Email: nfraser@farmradio.org

