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**Humanitarian  
Assistance and Conflict:  
A-State-of-the-Art Report**

**Bente Hybertsen, Astri Suhrke and  
Gro Tjore**

**R 1998: 2**

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## **Summary**

The rapid growth of international aid allocated to "complex humanitarian emergencies" has led to parallel calls for preventive action. It is also asked how humanitarian assistance and other forms of international civilian presence can help prevent and mitigate violent conflict.

The key question raised in the report are: What do we know about how, and why, humanitarian presence may help prevent or contain conflict? What are the conditions for failure or success? Can humanitarian presence have counterproductive effects and exacerbate conflict? How can unintended consequences be avoided?

The report reviews the relationship between humanitarian assistance and violent conflict. It is basically a "state-of-the-art review, supplemented with data drawn from some classic cases and interviews with Norwegian NGOs.

The report is based on work carried out by Bente Hybertsen and Gro Tjore, research assistants at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, with assistance from Emery Brusset and Bruce Jones, Ph.D. students at the London School of Economics. Astri Suhrke, Senior Researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute was team leader. The report was prepared with financial assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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## **Summary: Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict**

This is a summary of a "state-of-the-arts" report entitled *Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict*, completed by the Chr. Michelsen Institute for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 1997. The report reviews the policy-relevant literature on the relationship between humanitarian assistance and violent conflict, records the principal experiences of Norwegian NGOs, and indicates areas for further study. A bibliography of references from the literature is attached.

### **Key issues**

The rapid growth of international aid channeled to "complex humanitarian emergencies" has led to parallel calls for preventive action. The question is also asked how humanitarian assistance and other forms of international civilian presence can help to prevent and mitigate violent conflict. A small but significant literature has emerged in this area - some works are in the tradition of the social sciences, others in the form of advocacy writings, policy debate, evaluations and mission reports. This report analyzes the foci of inquiry and the findings in the literature, and, in an original collection of data, also systematizes the main conclusions of Norwegian NGOs in the relevant issue-areas by means of structured interviews undertaken for this purpose.

Four key questions are addressed:

- What do we know about how, and why, humanitarian presence can help to prevent or limit conflict?
- What are the conditions for failure or success?
- Can humanitarian presence have counterproductive effects by making the conflict worse?
- How can one control for unintended consequences?

The report does not review the record of humanitarian agencies with respect to their primary objectives, i.e. to save lives and reduce suffering in the short run by providing food and medical assistance. There is a significant literature which documents the impressive achievements of humanitarian assistance in this regard, also in contemporary complex emergencies (see e.g. Forsythe 1996). But it is precisely this achievement which has given rise to the additional question of whether the long-term and unintended consequences of aid may be to keep the conflict alive as well. The issue currently is in the frontline of the policy debate among humanitarian practitioners as well as observers, and consequently figures centrally in this report.

It is important to recognize that since conflict is a process, so is prevention. Preventive action can occur during several phases of a conflict - on the

upswing, when the conflict in theory can get worse, and on the downswing, when strife in theory may resume. Nor is there a sharp conceptual distinction between mitigation and prevention. Reduced violence (i.e. mitigation of the conflict) is the result of some form of prevention if it is reasonable to assume that violence otherwise would have continued or worsened. For instance, the creation of pockets of peace or "humanitarian zones" within a theater of conflict is both mitigative and preventive in this sense, as is negotiated reduction of strife.

If the focus is on prevention, methodological reasons inevitably bias the inquiry in a negative direction. It is easier to study failures than successes (since we can never know precisely what was prevented if preventive measures succeeded). The literature, moreover, contains very few studies that detail the positive-preventive impact of humanitarian presence.

## **Principles and schools of thoughts**

The review of the literature, drawn from the social science, and reports and policy discussions of aid agencies/organizations, suggests four major conclusions. All are concerned with humanitarian assistance in "complex emergencies" where aid actors operate in (or near) a conflict area, and where violence is man-made but exacerbated by natural conditions. The conclusions are as follows:

*Humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for political action.* The current conventional wisdom echoes the major findings of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996). Humanitarian assistance has only a limited, moderating influence on the political forces and the nature of violence in the target area. Humanitarian presence can only buy time for political solutions, and must be undertaken in tandem with a political and military engagement if the forces driving a conflict are to be dealt with. Hence, it is unrealistic and counterproductive to assign humanitarian assistance an ambitious agenda in terms of mitigating existing violence or preventing further conflict. Not only does this raise false expectations, humanitarian assistance may become a "fig leaf" for political inaction towards the conflict and its underlying causes.

*Humanitarian assistance has manifold consequences in the conflict area: negative as well as positive, unintended as well as intended.* There is growing recognition among humanitarian actors and observers that humanitarian assistance has complex consequences in the target area. There are significant short-term positive consequences (e.g. saving lives), but there is increasing awareness of negative, unintended and indirect consequences in the longer run such as helping to prolong a conflict, enhancing the vulnerability of

beneficiaries - e.g. by attracting people to feeding areas that become "killer traps", as the French-based *Medicins Sans Frontiers* (MSF) describes the aid pattern in Ethiopia in 1984 (*World in Crisis*, 1997) - or by undermining local coping and long-term strategies. There is growing articulation of the argument made by William Shawcross in his study of Cambodia already in 1984 - *The Quality of Mercy* - that aid agencies have a vested interest in channeling relief, and hence become willing participants in the institutional accommodation which the North is fashioning towards the repeated or permanent emergencies in the South. In this view, elaborated by the British scholar Mark Duffield in *The Symphony of the Damned* (1996), humanitarian aid becomes for the North a principal mechanism of conflict management in the South.

*A guiding principle of humanitarian assistance must therefore be minimalist - "Do No Harm".* Mounting concern with the negative effects of humanitarian assistance has been countered variously. One response is that aid agencies operating in conflict areas should adopt the motto: "Do no harm". Articulated in a 1989 book by US-based experts Mary Anderson and Peter Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes*, the "do no harm" approach has become increasingly accepted by aid agencies and NGOs. The principle formed the point of departure for a major conference of North American-based NGOs and aid agencies in 1996 that sought to develop concrete strategies of action.

*Growing awareness of the complex consequences of humanitarian assistance has sharpened the division between the "pure humanitarians" and the "solidarity humanitarians".* An old debate has intensified. The "age of innocence" has passed with the recognition that humanitarian assistance necessarily has political consequences. However, the "purists" - exemplified by the Swiss-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) - argue that the principle must be to provide neutral and impartial assistance, and that ways can be devised to reduce the political consequences. The "solidarity" view, on the other hand - increasingly exemplified by the MSF - maintains that neutrality is a form of moral bankruptcy, and argues that humanitarian organizations must take sides in the struggle against injustice and inhumane practices.

## **Strategies and practices**

Humanitarian organizations have shown some reluctance to become involved in explicit conflict management, as well as forms of protection such as human rights monitoring. The reluctance is based on fear that such activity may undermine their continued presence in a conflict area and hence jeopardize their primary mission to deliver aid. Nevertheless, insofar as "complex emergencies" have come to be viewed in the international aid community generally (and especially in the UN system) as having a human rights

component, humanitarian NGOs increasingly have moved in this direction as well. The major Norwegian NGOs have all adopted this approach (see below).

Humanitarian NGOs that work in "war-torn societies" increasingly include reconciliation or confidence building dimensions in their projects. Consciously or not, these NGOs typically base their work on a sociological theory of integrative cooperation which holds that by working together to achieve a common aim, preferably a concrete task, the parties will develop mutual trust that transcends their conflicting interest. For many NGOs involved in rehabilitation projects, these kinds of projects appear as a natural and relatively simple extension of their traditional activity. A prototype is multi-ethnic brick-making in Rwanda to rebuild houses that were destroyed by ethnic violence in 1994, and in the process to rebuild communication across ethnic lines. Norwegian NGOs have moved rapidly into this area.

Humanitarian NGOs that deliberately take on conflict management/resolution tasks use three tools:

- i) handling of information (overt or "quiet" advocacy, denunciation, lobbying)
- ii) providing good offices to facilitate dialogue, mediate, or conciliate on the margins of standard aid work
- iii) using the power of the resources which they introduce into the conflict area to extract concessions from the conflicting parties.

The first two are most commonly used. As for (iii), given their position as providers of very significant resources in situations typified by extreme scarcities, NGOs have in theory considerable bargaining power. Humanitarian imperatives limit, however, their willingness to manipulate emergency aid for political purposes. The major and partial success story in this respect is Operation Lifeline Sudan, as recounted by a team for the Humanitarianism and War Project of Brown University (USA) (Minear 1991).

Less dramatic ways to enhance the positive effects of humanitarian presence in terms of mitigating existing violence, and preventing further conflict, have been identified by US-based NGOs (Smock 1996). These are:

- Closer dialogue with donors that have limited field knowledge so as to avoid unrealistic restrictions and inappropriate mandates on NGOs;
- Improved planning to (i) assess needs more accurately, and (ii) analyze the consequences of agreements negotiated to gain access to needy populations and obtain security for NGO personnel;
- Provide aid that will have the longest-term benefit to targeted groups and empower local institutions;
- Deploy human rights monitors to help protect local populations from the fighting factions;

- Coordinate closely with other aid organizations that operate in the same conflict area;
- Contract for independent monitoring and evaluation of assistance programs to reduce mismanagement and the diversion of supplies.

In a more targeted strategy, NGOs have identified at least three ways of using provision of resources in a conflict-preventive manner. If conflict is a rational choice in the context of shrinking resources, humanitarian aid can be used to reshape opportunity structures in desired directions by:

- providing alternative channels for conflict-oriented leaders, (ex-)soldiers and militia;
- supporting moderating distributive institutions;
- reducing resource scarcities in conflict areas.

A traditional means of mitigating violence in a conflict area is to establish protected areas. In its classic humanitarian form, this was the Red Cross zone (hospitals, etc.), protected only by a symbol and, implicitly, by the value of the services rendered to all parties to the conflict. In the 20th century, non-military protected areas have developed in various forms. Experience shows that they are mostly effective when they

- are demilitarized;
- serve the humanitarian needs of both/all parties to the conflict;
- are established with the consent of the parties concerned.

Protected areas of this kind serve to modify the *symptoms* of conflict in the sense that they limit the extent of violence and reduce the suffering of victims. As such they have a mitigating rather than preventive effect, and do not address the underlying causes of the conflict.

Human rights monitoring are related to conflict mitigation and prevention in three ways: a) human rights reporting as an instrument of early warning of humanitarian crises, b) human rights monitoring as an instrument to deter abuse against individuals, and c) human rights reporting as an instrument to trigger stronger policy measures. In addition, human rights education is viewed as a generalized, indirect but still important conflict prevention measure.

There is not yet a cumulative literature that assesses these propositions in a systematic manner. Some studies focus on the design, some on the impact, of individual human rights operations. Analysis is typically lacking of factors which may account for success or failure across operations - the level of violence, consent of the government, the numbers and professionalism of the monitors, etc. Two major NGOs - Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch - have analyzed the effectiveness of human rights reporting in recent UN operations. Amnesty (1994) concluded that UN human rights observers in El Salvador and Cambodia had significant mitigative and deterring effects,

resulting in the release of detainees and the improvement of prison conditions. They also made important contributions to the legislative and institutional reform of the legal order, and raised public awareness of human rights issues. In the UN operations in Somalia, northern Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia, Human Rights Watch (1993) found that the human rights monitoring component was given less emphasis. In Rwanda, the initial monitoring operation was criticized for lack of professionalism and effectiveness (Joint Evaluation 1996).

## **Experiences of Norwegian NGOs**

Given the limited written literature on the subject, this report also sought to systematize some aspects of the experience of Norwegian NGOs. NGO representatives were asked to draw on their organizational experience to assess the potential impact of various forms of humanitarian presence on concrete conflict situations that fell in the category of complex humanitarian emergencies. The following organizations were interviewed: the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (NORDEM) which is primarily engaged in democracy or peace building activities,<sup>1</sup> and the five principal humanitarian NGOs: the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC), the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), the Norwegian Save the Children (NSC), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

In general, the NGOs are primarily concerned with the problems of i) how to deliver assistance, ii) how to protect civilians, and possibly as a spin-off effect iii) how to prevent further conflict. The dual challenge of managing conflict and providing aid has increasingly come into focus in the international community, and is also part of an ongoing debate among the Norwegian humanitarian NGOs.

## **Human rights monitoring**

Human rights monitoring is a relatively recent activity that expanded when the Cold War ended. Monitoring is an important part of the broader process of promoting human rights. All the Norwegian organizations interviewed carry out some monitoring activities, but the emphasis varies in accordance with organizational objectives.

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1. NORDEM is a collaborative project between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights and the Norwegian Refugee Council and is therefore a more "impure" type of NGO than the other organizations reviewed here. All Norwegian NGOs, it should be noted, receive large funds from the Norwegian state, and many receive core funding.

Human rights monitoring, election assistance and observation, constitute over 90% of NORDEM's workload. Human rights monitoring is also part of the practical work of the organization, which can produce a spin-off effect on the human rights situation even though it does not directly involve monitoring. The Norwegian Refugee Council co-operates with NORDEM in direct human rights monitoring

The Norwegian Church Aid does not include human rights monitoring as a major part of its activity, which it defines as humanitarian work. However, human rights, conflict resolution and peace building are increasingly being incorporated as dimensions of relief work. For human rights monitoring and democratization work, the NCA co-operates with NORDEM or the World Council of Churches. The Norwegian People's Aid has entered an internal debate on the organization's role in matters of human rights monitoring. Yet, it has already been involved in such activities in Bosnia and Guatemala. Save the Children is working for greater recognition of children's rights in a conflict situation, pointing out that children are among those most strongly affected by war or conflict. Greater respect for children's rights will have a positive impact at least on the consequences of conflict.

The Red Cross is also engaged in human rights monitoring and promotion as a preventive activity. In several conflict situations, the organization works with the parties to the conflict to enhance knowledge of human rights and the Geneva Conventions governing the conduct of war, often using local cultural and historical reference points in the educational message (as recently in Sudan, Somalia and Burundi). As a humanitarian organization it feels compelled to react to human rights violations, but public reporting may jeopardize its efforts to work on all sides of a conflict. Hence, it more often encourages other organizations to report on violations.

Of the Norwegian NGOs interviewed, only NORDEM participates in election monitoring. International election observation started in the early 1980s and a more consistent framework has gradually evolved. In NORDEM's view, election monitoring has a positive preventive impact. However, no systematic assessment has been undertaken. There is growing recognition of the importance and impact of long-term observation where observers are present over a longer period of time, including the electoral campaign. In this way, essential rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly etc. are also being promoted.

None of the five principal NGOs cites human rights monitoring as a main task. Nevertheless, as "complex emergencies" have come to be viewed in the international aid community generally as having a human rights component, also Norwegian humanitarian NGOs have moved in this direction. Most of them now see human rights monitoring as an important extension of their

traditional mandate. The NGOs generally concluded that human rights monitoring have a positive impact, but note that a) it is difficult to assess impact, and b) they lack systematic evaluations to make full assessments.

A general problem noted by all the actors is the lack of coherence in the field of human rights work (how to report, on what cases, to whom etc.). However, they all underline the difficulties of creating a common, standardized manual for human rights work, as there are several different human rights conventions, and different mandates in different situations. Another generally perceived problem is the low quality of reporting and training. This is partly attributed to the recent and rapid growth of human rights monitoring.

The potential conflict between human rights monitoring and maintaining other forms of humanitarian presence was noted. To reduce such conflicts, NGOs have developed cooperative strategies based on a division of labor: In a situation where human rights violations have been observed, the NGOs can agree on who is to speak out loudly. The organization that reports runs the risk of being expelled, but the others can stay and continue their work. In this way, co-operation among NGOs on reporting can enhance their over-all impact.

## **Humanitarian presence**

### *General views*

All the humanitarian NGOs claim that their presence generally has mitigative and preventive effects on violence, if not on the underlying sources of the conflict. However, the only evidence cited in support of this claim was anecdotal. Systematic evaluations/assessments on the subject had not been undertaken, or were not known to exist.

Norwegian Church Aid maintains that the most efficient protection does not stem from active reporting to external parties, but from making it clear within the conflict area that human rights violations are not tolerated. NCA emphasizes the need for more active strategies to communicate visibility. Visible presence may limit violence, for instance, if NGOs move their headquarters to an area where violence is known to take place, or by simply being more visible in other ways, e.g. by driving cars marked with NGO emblems.

The Norwegian People's Aid maintains that presence per se has an important preventive effect on the level of violence and on the overall conflict. The presence of international delegates, for instance, makes the local employees feel safer (Kurdistan is cited as an example of this: the presence of Norwegian



relief workers "guaranteed" the safety of local personnel). The Norwegian Refugee Council is convinced that presence means prevention or reduction of violence, and points to the presence of NGOs in Bosnia where they claim the visible presence did reduce the level of violence. The NRC also emphasizes that presence is a precondition for reporting; the preventive effects are thus associated with reporting. Norwegian Save the Children believes that the presence of NGOs has several positive preventive effects. For instance, the presence of the SC in conflicts helps prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. The general psychological effect on the civilian population of international presence is also seen as very important.

### *Relief assistance*

All the NGOs interviewed agreed that the level of consciousness concerning the different effects of humanitarian aid is much higher than in it was in the 1980s and before. Their experiences differed with respect to strategies that might reduce the negative effects of relief assistance, and the extent to which these are possible to undertake.

The Norwegian People's Aid notes that emergency relief can create passivity, although this risk must be balanced against the acute needs of the population in question. While humanitarian aid and supplies can prolong the conflict, lack of resources is often the main reason for conflict in the first place, and food shortages can obviously lead to violence. Another potential negative function of emergency relief noted by the NPA is the creation of new economic structures that are kept alive artificially through continuous deliveries, thus undermining traditional and otherwise viable structures.

The delivery of food in conflict situations has been criticized since some of it will go to the warring parties. In the Somalia famine in the early 1990s, food was handed out as ready-made meals in order to reduce the stealing and trading of food. There are ways of separating civilians from soldiers when handing out food, but in many situations it is preferable to supply as much food as possible. Creating an abundance or surplus of food will reduce the potential for conflict, according to the Norwegian Red Cross.

The Norwegian Refugee Council notes that humanitarian aid may have negative consequences, but believes that these are by far outweighed by the positive effects. According to the NRC, it is naive to exclude the possibility that food deliveries may prolong a conflict, but the humanitarian imperative is always more important. Humanitarian organizations should not stop bringing in deliveries to civilians even if it keeps the warring parties going. The NCA cites cases where humanitarian action has worsened the human rights situation (Srebrenica). This may happen also in remote areas where food deliveries attract large number of people, thereby increasing local tension (Ethiopia).

### *Neutrality and impartiality*

The organizations recognize that humanitarian aid generally has political consequences, but that policies of "impartiality" - which most distinguish from "neutrality" - still are possible. Approaches to the impartiality/neutrality question differ, however.

The NPA's policy permits partiality, *inter alia* when this facilitates access to certain areas. This is the case in Sudan, where the NPA does not co-operate with the Sudanese government and therefore does not wait for its approval, as do NGOs in Operation Lifeline Sudan. Generally, however, the NPA considers it useful to co-operate as far as possible with national governments and with the UN. In the NCA experience, humanitarian aid has had political consequences even when thought the NCA does not have specifically political objectives.

The NRC has found that political neutrality can only be intended, and not fully achieved, because presence in a conflict necessarily carries a political dimension. "Impartiality" is thus a better word than "neutrality". The NRC also points out that not taking sides on grounds of "neutrality" does not always mean being neutral. Not seeing or hearing is not neutrality, but an indirect support of the stronger party. In the NRC experience, it is important in such cases to report with reference to conventions/agreements. For instance, the NRC reported that the Serbs were ignoring the UN Convention on refugees in former Yugoslavia.

### *Confidence-building*

Some of the organizations are engaged in activities that can be grouped under the general heading of confidence building measures (including reconciliation and negotiations related to a peace process), others find that their regular work has confidence-building effects. The organizations work at different levels (state level, community level, individual level), but all emphasize the importance of the local level. Some have found indirect, low-profile projects most useful; here groups work on concrete projects and "confidence" or "reconciliation" appears as a positive side effect.

To exert a preventive effect, the Red Cross movement has found it is essential to be present at an early stage of a conflict, or even before a conflict starts. Early warning of potential areas of conflict or natural disasters requires institutional networks. The national RC societies can serve this purpose, and are being developed with local branches that cover the entire country. The idea that local agencies will have a stronger preventive effect emerged in the 1990s. The establishment of local RC societies is a continuous task, and in Africa goes back to the 1970s. Until the late 1980s, however, the IFRC concentrated on strengthening the central agency of the national societies, and hoped for a cascading effect downwards (local branches). As experience showed that this

was rare, institutional strategy shifted to focus on local branches as well as national headquarters. Increasingly, efforts are made to work locally in human rights and tension reduction programs by educating locals, building on local, traditional values, etc.

The NPA supports existing grass root movements as well as the establishment of new local organizations. The NPA has found that the most important task is to build or rebuild confidence to "others" and to key social structures. When supporting local organizations, the NPA assists with expertise and provides material. It seeks to create channels of contact between local organizations and the authorities. While no systematic assessments of impact have been done, the general conclusion in the NPA is that confidence-building can work. For instance, in Tuzla, the only remaining multicultural municipality in Bosnia, the presence of NPA, the NCA and other international agencies is considered to have enabled the population to resist ethnic cleansing.

The NCA has several confidence-building activities on both the local and national level. Two current "multicultural projects" are underway in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. A 3-year project for persons from the former Yugoslavia seeks to educate "multicultural" opinion leaders from different parts of former country. In Rwanda, the project is aimed at women from different ethnic groups. The women work together to find solutions to common problems. The project has a practical focus, but the process of problem-solving is expected to promote communication between the different ethnic groups. A review of the project concluded: (i) the project was most successful when building on already existing groups, and (ii) problems experienced were related to insufficient training and knowledge of personnel, as well as lack of clearly defined objectives. NCA participation in the peace process in Mali (1995) has been reviewed in an internal report which found that the foundation for success was a bottom-up socio-political movement, with negotiation below the government level.

The Norwegian Refugee Council is not engaged in confidence building measures at the political level, but works to bring together people from different sides of a conflict in various activities. Confidence building is considered a positive spin-off effect, and not the main objective.

Save the Children is not involved in explicit reconciliation or confidence building activities. The organization's experience is that this is an extremely complex area of work. Reconciliation is seen as a private and personal matter, and the SC finds that the work of the international community in this regard is too mechanical. Reconciliation works at a slow pace: direct reconciliation work must be avoided, even the word "reconciliation" should not be flagged. If one moves into this area at all, community workers must be carefully trained and able to inspire confidence. Indirectly this may generate further confidence

toward others. Relief work should have concrete foci where people work together to solve common problems. This type of co-operation (as in Bosnia) may produce a spin-off effects in terms of reconciliation.

## **The state of the current knowledge and directions for further work**

In the discussion of preventive measures - both in the social science literature and among aid actors - there is considerable unclarity about two critical issues:

- what is to be prevented?
- what are the limits of preventive action?

Preventive policies must be clear about precisely *what* they are to prevent. The classic trade-off between peace and justice cannot always be avoided. A policy designed to prevent conflict could easily disguise a policy to preserve (an unjust) status quo, or to defend one social order at the cost of another. Given different concepts of social order and rights - differences that some observers claim are increasing in the 1990s and taking the form of clash of civilizations (Huntington 1993) - these are unavoidable implications of a preventive policy. To some extent, these dilemmas are sidestepped by focusing on preventing *violence* as an instrument of social change, rather than preventing conflict in a more general sense.

The logic of preventive action, moreover, suggests modesty of ambition. Social science tells us quite a bit about why social contradictions sometimes develop to produce violence. Recently, this has generated considerable writings on "preventive diplomacy" as one powerful arm of preventive action (Lund 1996, Rupesinghe 1993). Yet, as noted by Zolberg and Suhrke (1995, 1997) knowledge of causes does not readily translate into policy. There are reasons of scientific logic: most simply put, the complexity of social reality makes it difficult to anticipate the consequences of intervention. More fundamentally, because any situation has roots in the past, preventive interventions constitute in some measure attempts to remake history. This poses formidable challenges for policy, and the part that humanitarian assistance can possibly play in this regard must be adjusted accordingly.

As noted at the outset, the present literature on the mitigating and preventive functions of humanitarian assistance is quite limited. The recorded institutional memory of NGOs is fragmented. Part of the problem, as noted above, is methodological: in the field of preventive measures, it is more difficult to assess successes than failures, since we do not know precisely what was prevented if prevention really worked. These problems are not insurmountable, however, as the increasingly case-study based literature on of preventive diplomacy demonstrates (cpr. Jentleson 1997). An important step towards

filling the present gaps in knowledge about the impact of humanitarian action on social conflict would be to collect and systematize the very considerable experience that the NGOs have accumulated. In a very modest way, this review has started to do this with respect to the major Norwegian NGOs.

It was beyond the capacity of this report to make a systematic survey of evaluations/studies undertaken by, or for, the major international NGOs. To do so should be the next step. Secondly, systematic evaluation of NGO activities in particular conflict areas would yield critically important knowledge. The work of humanitarian NGOs is increasingly being evaluated, but so far with reference to criteria of efficiency or impact that do not include the impact on the conflict (or on the level of violence in the conflict) in which the organizations are working, and the implications for mitigating and preventing violence. These conflict criteria should be brought in. The same applies to international agencies and the UN organizations. The UN organizations were not covered by the mandate of this study, yet they are rapidly accumulating experiences and some institutional memories at the cross-roads between humanitarian assistance and conflict. While structurally the UN organizations are in a different position than the NGOs, some of their experiences reflect cause-and-effect relationships that apply more broadly. Some lessons may be transferable, and should be scrutinized for this purpose.

The continuing overarching questions are those posed at the outset of this report. The answers should help to inform policy and develop operational guidelines so that humanitarian assistance may serve to mitigate conflict rather than itself becoming incorporated in a cycle of violence.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose and scope of study: the terms of reference**

This report seeks to systematize current knowledge about the contribution of non-state actors, primarily NGOs, to prevent or mitigate violent conflict by providing various forms of humanitarian assistance, including some confidence-building measures. The report summarizes and analyzes the state of knowledge based on the social science literature as well as reports, debates and recorded experiences in the aid and NGO community. In addition, the experience of aid agencies/organizations in particular cases are drawn upon. In a separate chapter (4), experiences of major Norwegian NGOs as these are represented in the “institutional memory” are summarized and systematized.

The report was prepared for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs according to terms of reference as specified. (For complete Terms of References, see Appendix II).

## **1.2 The literature**

Several traditions of writing converge on the relationship between humanitarian assistance and conflict. The two which mostly concern us here focus on humanitarian assistance. They consist of

- reflective recording of experience by aid agencies/organizations, and their assessment of relevant policies and principles which affect humanitarian work
- observations and evaluations of humanitarian assistance by independent writers (including academics, other experts and journalists)

There is also a very large social science literature dealing with social and international conflict, and a growing body of theoretical and applied research on the relationship between aid and conflict more generally. This literature is much too large and unwieldy to be summarized here, and we shall instead draw on it selectively when related to a particular topic. The same applies to the legal literature, in particular, on international humanitarian law. Since this report focuses on policy practices and social impact rather than the legal framework for action, legal texts will not be included.

## **1.3 A new agenda**

There are several reasons why the relationship between humanitarian assistance and conflict has attracted growing attention in recent times. Allocations to humanitarian assistance have increased dramatically and - despite statistical

uncertainties-- caseload estimates have also surged (IFRC 1995). According to OECD/DAC figures, emergency aid has increased from 2% to 6 % of total aid (1990-1996). Total emergency aid in 1994 was about 3.5 billion dollars, with perhaps an additional 1 billion from private sources. And while the number of international refugees stabilized in the early 1990s around 14 million, UNHCR placed its protective umbrella over a much larger group of "peoples of concern", and the estimate of internally displaced went to 30 million (Deng 1993). The end of the Cold War opened up new space for the United Nations and NGOs to enter conflicts with a humanitarian mandate - space that previously had been the preserve of the large powers or their clients. A parallel and sharp increase in the growth of NGOs reflects this development as well as the ideological change towards privatization which also affected the aid domain (Donini 1996, Weiss and Gordenker 1996).

While it is difficult to find meaningful figures to show that violent conflicts have increased in the post-Cold War period, a not unexpected turbulence in the wake of the profound changes in world order caused protracted violence in parts of the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, and contributed to "failed states" or "genocidal states" in parts of Africa. These conflicts generated massive humanitarian emergencies that evoked public opinion and international action. As a result, a new humanitarian scene evolved that has several characteristics:

- *aid responsibility*: donor states accept a general responsibility to mitigate the consequences of violent conflict elsewhere by providing humanitarian assistance;
- *expanded humanitarian space*: donors are delegating greater responsibility to aid agencies/ organizations, and states are pressed to permit the latter to enter and carry out their activities;
- *UN centered humanitarian assistance*: distinct from state humanitarianism, the marked growth of the UN in the humanitarian field has raised issues of coordination on the practical level, and of impartiality versus partisan assistance on the moral-political level (Rufin 1992);
- *freedom of action for humanitarian agencies*: agencies negotiate directly with conflicting parties on issues that often go beyond purely humanitarian issues and affect domestic sovereignty;
- *destructured conflicts*: fragmentation of parties to a conflicts, often with diffuse political objectives and typically involving large number of civilians;
- *strong cross-border linkages*: relief operations operate vast logistical network across borders that involve or affect the internal parties to the conflict differentially.

With some five billion dollars being spent annually on humanitarian relief in complex political situations of this kind, increasing attention is being paid to

the political implications of humanitarian assistance. Can humanitarian assistance be given in such a way that it prevents or mitigates conflict? Or, at least, does not make conflict worse? What are the intended and unintended political consequences of assistance? What are the relevant aid strategies and their effects? On a more fundamental level, questions are being asked about principles of accountability and neutrality - can and should humanitarian assistance be neutral? - and about humanitarian imperatives in relation to the interests of states and NGOs.

This report seeks to systematize the contemporary discussion of these questions.

#### **1.4 The team**

The report is based on work carried out by three principal researchers: Bente Hybertsen and Gro Tjore, former students at the Human Rights program, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Emery Brusset, a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics and with contributions from Bruce Jones, also a doctoral candidate at the LSE. Astri Suhrke, Senior Fellow at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, was team leader.



## 2 PRINCIPAL ISSUES AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The impact of humanitarian assistance on conflict - both in its mitigative and preventive aspects - has long been a subject for policy and theory. Two opposite schools of thought should be noted at the outset. One is the Red Cross idea of aid as impartial, neutral and independent, serving humanitarian objectives of limiting the human suffering brought on by conflict. A contrary view holds that humanitarian assistance has explicit political objectives such as preventing conflict, or supporting one of the parties. Cutting across this dichotomy is another classic distinction: should humanitarian assistance seek to deal with the causes of conflict (a "root-cause" approach), or only address the symptoms (a "Band-Aid" approach).

### 2.1 Prevention and population movements

During the Cold War, early efforts to link humanitarian assistance with preventive policies focused on the refugee movements and their causes. A UN Group of Governmental Experts on International Cooperation to Avert New Flows of Refugees presented its report in 1985. The report criticized the lack of respect of international law by sovereign states, and recommended the peaceful resolution of disputes. In a prefiguration of UN Resolution 46/182, it recommended more information sharing on the factors of refugee flows, and added capacity for the specialized agencies to respond rapidly.

More substantive policy recommendations emerged from the report of a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and Mass Exoduses (1981), appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights. Authored by Sadruddin Aga Khan, a former High Commissioner for Refugees, the report urged international cooperation to attack the root causes of refugee movements. In addition to measures directed at the economic and political and environmental causes of outflows, the report proposed concepts that were innovative at the time: the widespread use of humanitarian observers, the development of an Early Warning system, and the use of Special Representatives for Humanitarian Questions (UN 1981).

Sadruddin Aga Khan went on to head the Independent Commission for International Humanitarian Issues, set up in 1983 by the help of the Crown Prince of Jordan and supported by the UN General Assembly. The Commission sought to identify ways of strengthening the implementation of existing humanitarian norms, in which humanitarian assistance was seen as a secondary policy instrument (*Winning the Human Race?* 1988)

By the end of the 1980s, concerns to avert refugee flows became more pronounced. The policy and theory discussion that accompanied this concern pointed in two directions:

- to deal with the underlying causes requires comprehensive policies that must be integrated with the foreign policies of states (see e.g. *A World in Dispute*, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993, and Hocke, "Beyond Humanitarianism" 1990), but
- some measures to provide increased protection in place - i.e. in the domain of humanitarian assistance strategies - might help to avert international flows. (see sec. 3 below).

## **2.2 Emergency relief and civil wars: The First generation debate**

Until the 1970s, the literature on emergencies was dominated by technical concerns of relief in natural and man-made disasters, and protection of refugees. The civil war in Nigeria, however, crystallized the need for aid actors to rethink the practice and doctrines of emergency response. Nigeria highlighted normative dilemmas that had received little systematic attention outside the international Red Cross movement. Emergency aid and media coverage had a significant and clearly visible impact on the internal balance of power in the civil war, and cast doubt on the principle of neutrality which until then had been the dominant paradigm of humanitarianism. The issue of local capacity building was also introduced. Vocal critics attacked the Red Cross, in particular, and the international community in general, for excessive subordination to rules of sovereignty in times of civil war. They raised the alternative of cross-border intervention as a legitimate response in exceptional circumstances (Cuny 1991, Kouchner 1987).

In France, events in Nigeria were later linked by Bernard Kouchner and others to the debates on wars of liberation and *tiers mondism*; in Britain and the United States the links were made with civil society. This underpinning in political philosophy made the debates continue in the 1970s even though relief remained a small concern. In general, both sides acknowledged the need for aid to remain impartial - or neutral, in the sense of maintaining a calculated distance from the political positions of the parties - and limit itself to a quasi medical diagnostic of the situation. There was disagreement on another critical point: one side believed it counter-productive to negotiate access with the authorities, preferring to call on solidarity to justify intervention, even when violating sovereignty.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia at the end of the 1970s heightened the debate. The political dimensions of sustaining large refugee communities through humanitarian

assistance was being noticed. The term "refugee-warrior communities" was coined by scholars (Zolberg, Suhrke, Aguyao 1989). Aid organizations developed concepts of cross-border solidarity and the Medecins Sans Frontieres gave it new meaning in practice. In France, one talked of the Sans Frontieres era. According to a recent MSF publication (Jean 1993), the aid community capitalized on the strategic nature of borders in these Cold War related conflicts in order to promote humanitarian objectives. The underlying principle of humanitarianism was not questioned, rather, how closely it should be tied to international humanitarian law (the Geneva Conventions).

Some have argued that it was this proximity to the powers of the Cold War that cast the first serious doubts on the age of humanitarian innocence. In Ethiopia in 1984 the international community was obliged, by the logic of humanitarian aid, to intervene on both sides of the conflict. It also entered into a political dialogue with the government regarding the treatment of its own population. The debate on neutrality became acute, with one group advocating taking sides on the basis of human rights and justice. The solidarity approach was moved forward, eventually to be articulated forcefully in the late 1980s and the 1990s in a second-generation of the debate. articulated e.g. by Alex de Waal and the activist organization African Rights.

### **2.3 Humanitarian aid and internal wars: The Second generation debate**

The first policy-oriented review carried out of a complete emergency response operation (Minear et al. 1992) hinted at new systemic challenges and requirements. The term "complex emergency" emerged in the corridors of the UN General Assembly during negotiations on Resolution 46/182 which established the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and was designed to identify situations requiring special emergency response. The "complexity" refers to the interlocking causes, justifications and aims, which require more comprehensive solutions than those devised by simple "relief" methods.

Political realignments, as well as accelerated social change induced by globalisation, had fostered increasing international disorder, *inter alia* manifested in the collapse and failure of states. These emergencies were problematic in terms of the principle of sovereignty, and hence also in relation to international law and traditional aid. As a result, the foreign policy dimensions of complex emergencies have generated interest in circles that are not normally concerned with humanitarian response (national security communities, international organizations, academic political science circles, etc.).

What characterizes these crises is the central place civilian populations occupy as both targets and victims in the conflict (Andreopoulos, Shulman and Howard 1994). In a major work, *Le Piege Humanitaire*, the French writer Jean-Christophe Rufin (1992) notes that the combatants in these types of conflicts seek a new basis of power: from Cold War linkages and assistance to financial autonomy and emotional appeal to the population. Control can be achieved by the use of repressive violence, manipulation of economic goods, and appeal to traditional social solidarities.

War-economies of this kind are decentralized and predatory. Aid from the outside is potentially a major source of power for the combatants in achieving control over populations and territory. As a result, the parties have a desire to see assistance coming in, but also a direct interest in its allocation. While this favored easier access for the aid organizations, it also allowed for a more politicized delivery process. The debate between "pure humanitarianism" versus "solidarity humanitarianism" reached a new stage.

### *2.3.1 "Pure" versus "solidarity" humanitarianism*

The advocates of "pure humanitarianism" were promoting an exclusive vision of needs (needs of an economic and biological nature were the only proper basis of intervention), whereas "solidarity humanitarianism" expressed an inclusive vision (needs must be addressed within the wider context of what caused them, including the power structures). The critical difference between the two centered on the question of *access*. The "pure" humanitarians wanted access to attend to needs, the other as part of taking sides. In one case access was not even an issue: it was automatically granted by some, and refused by others. To be neutral meant a much more complex process of confidence building and negotiation.

These contradictions emerged as a central issue in the literature on emergency response. It is analyzed in the work of Peter Walker (1992), Andrew Natsios (1995) and Fred Cuny (1991) as well as the works of Larry Minear and Thomas Weiss (1995) and Alex de Waal (1994).

In the UN humanitarian system, the issue was defined in terms of institutional arrangements: how could different approaches to local authority, and to the dichotomy of enforcement versus consensual access, be reconciled without creating dysfunctions? The UN's "Inter-Agency Standing Committee" was for example dominated by such debates, which led to the publication of the working paper on *Humanitarian Mandates in Conflict Situations*, by UNHCR (1993). On the NGO side, these issues were addressed in *Organizational Adaptation in Times of Conflict* (for the UK-based Conflict and Development Programming Network, 1994), and *Conflict, Development and Military*

*Intervention: The Role, Position and Experience of NGOs* (for the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the European Union, 1994).

At the same time, there was a reorientation in the strategic studies community to concepts of conflict and the importance of societies and legitimating processes in security. The writings on common security (Evans 1993), on the role of civil society in stability, on the critique of realist state-centric paradigms, and the rise of practical conflict resolution programs helped shift attention to the UN and its aid work. These writings also adopted a non-military and gradualist posture which made them an intermediary between the advocates of force and those of consensual access (either tactical consent of all authorities, as the ICRC required, or of a counterpart ally, as the Norwegian People's Aid required). The neutral approach remained split between the *Sans Frontieres* and the negotiated position, but a high degree of mutual accommodation was in fact reached in the field.

The debate on access moved forward in 1988/89 with the disappearance of the polarization of the Security Council. Operation Lifeline Sudan represented a breakthrough of humanitarian assistance as agencies entered into the "high politics" of mediation and negotiation between the rebel movement and the government in the Sudan civil war. By negotiating corridors of access, aid officials intermittently and temporarily brought a degree of consensus to the adversarial context (Minear 1991).

The dilemmas of providing humanitarian assistance in the midst of severe conflict, however, were accentuated in the 1994 Rwanda conflict. For some aid workers, the genocide was so fundamentally evil that it demanded only one response: public denunciation and intervention. To remain in Rwanda and provide humanitarian assistance was fundamentally immoral because it detracted attention from the primary need to combat evil, or because aid organizations chose to remain quiet about the evil they observed in order to be able to continue working in the country. The contradiction between the organizational interest of safeguarding access and thereby delivering services, on the one hand, and the interest of the victims in protection, thus came to a head. The contradiction paralleled that between (certainly) helping a few and (possibly) helping many. The contradictions have been brilliantly analyzed by two committed French doctors of the MSF (Brauman 1994, Destexhe 1996). The solidarity argument has here moved forward: Brauman and Destexhe advocate total solidarity with the victims of evil.

### *2.3.2 Interventionist Approaches*

The radical interventionist, or coercive approach to crisis, assumes that consent has no value in the face of grave and massive violations of basic human rights. In this view, issues of access that the aid agencies had started to grapple with

became irrelevant. The interventionists and the “pure humanitarians” disagreed on all fundamentals: The latter advocated a certain codification of the process of conflict (neutral assistance and an exclusive, minimalist vision of needs), while the former sought to promote a certain end state with respect to the conflict itself.

Coercive approaches to conflict settlement were discussed at the unprecedented heads of states meeting of the Security Council of January 1992, and were implicit in the new Secretary General's *Agenda for Peace* (1992). Humanitarian aid was not given a central place in that document; however, emergency budgets of states and the UN's Consolidated Appeals grew at an unprecedented rate. Less radical but nevertheless intrusive approaches inspired parallel thinking on reforms of the UN system and the regional bodies to better serve humanitarian imperatives (Childers and Urquhart 1991). The result was, inter alia, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and ECHO.

The humanitarian response in the aftermath of the Gulf War, when a “safe haven” was established for the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, seemed to vindicate an interventionist approach. The response of the aid agencies was fragmented and uncoordinated (Minear et al. 1992). Yet, the establishment of the zone itself was widely supported as a humanitarian response to a complex political-humanitarian emergency and as a *de facto* trusteeship for a vulnerable population. The political dimensions of the humanitarian operation were several and partially ambiguous, but at least one was clearly preventive: to prevent further conflict between the Kurdish population and the central Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. As such, it became a classic case of humanitarian policies introduced in a conflict situation in order to mitigate and prevent violence. For a time, these objectives were attained, but subsequent developments pointed to the limitations of protected zones of this kind (see 3.3).

The establishment of the zone in northern Iraq, and especially later interventions in Somalia and Bosnia, placed two new issues squarely on the agenda of the aid agencies: What was an appropriate relationship between military and humanitarian agencies in a UN enforcement action? And what is the relationship between enforcement and humanitarian interventions? The latter led to a new normative position that linked humanitarian mandates to Chapter 7 enforcement of peace-keeping operations (Reed and Kaysen 1993).

The relationship between humanitarian action and security was examined in a major study recently completed by Adam Roberts, a leading UK expert on peacekeeping (Roberts 1996). Published by the Institute for International Strategies Studies in London, the study also addresses fundamental problems of the doctrine of impartiality. Analysing cases of humanitarian intervention since the end of the Cold War, Roberts explores the distinction between impartiality

and neutrality, the variety of forms of humanitarian action (he restricts the term 'intervention' to use of military force), as well as coordination and early warning. His central argument is that the principal cause of setbacks in 'humanitarian action' has been the failure of states to develop serious policies to providing security for humanitarian activities during conflict. He points to the inconsistency of UN decisions in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, and the failure in those three instances to forge an appropriate relationship between security and the provision of humanitarian relief.

Part of the difficulty, Roberts argues, is the principle of impartiality and neutrality which many relief agencies observe. There is a difficult relationship between impartiality and security: for example, a strict adherence to the definition of impartiality, and a resultant unwillingness to be associated with security forces, may lead agencies to abandon populations when there is no secure access to them. Roberts does not wish to relinquish the principle of impartiality. He does, however, argue that the implications of impartiality need to be reconsidered in light of the need to recognize that, in practice, humanitarian assistance cannot be considered in isolation from the provision of security. Roberts gives little consideration to the distinction between neutrality and impartiality, and the existence of other interpretations of impartiality than that of the ICRC. While pointing out that enforcing the laws of war is a main avenue of humanitarian action, Roberts does not explore how relief agencies could adopt rules-based interpretations of impartiality that would allow cooperation with security forces when one or more parties to a conflict violate international humanitarian laws.

### *2.3.3 The negative impact of aid*

The conflicts in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda led to growing recognition that humanitarian assistance had a potentially negative impact on the conflict whose victims it sought to help. Humanitarian assistance, it was claimed, had at least three general, negative consequences:

- it became a substitute for more decisive political action
- it prolonged the conflict by giving each side additional material resources to continue to fight, at the very least by helping to keep their dependent populations alive
- it raised expectations of relieving suffering that could not be fulfilled

The first point was in particular argued in relation to the former Yugoslavia by both a prominent international lawyer (Higgins 1993), and a close observer-journalist (Rieff 1996). An evaluation of Finnish foreign aid captured one dimension succinctly when noting that "it sometimes appeared in Bosnia that donors did not care for the death of civilians, as long as they did not die hungry" (COWIConsult 1996).

The argument was also developed in relation to Rwanda, both with respect to the genocide inside Rwanda and relief to refugee communities in neighboring Zaire (Prunier 1996, Adelman and Suhrke 1996). All three points were developed with particular reference to Somalia in a recent book by a writer and former aid worker (Maren 1997).

Fundamental criticism also was expressed by two writers who approached the subject from quite different perspectives and backgrounds.

The work by Mark Duffield, a British academic, poses a radical challenge to the normative assumptions of the mitigative and preventive impact of humanitarian relief (Duffield 1994, 1994b, 1995, 1996). In essence, Duffield argues that the North has reached a form of institutional accommodation with complex emergencies in the South. Humanitarian aid, he argues, has become the North's principal mechanism of conflict management in the South. The impacts of this accommodation are manifold: a reduction in the quality of aid and an uneven pattern of intervention. In all, Duffield maintains that the current system of response to complex emergencies represents a crisis of developmentalism in the North.

The accommodation of NGOs to these states of permanent emergency is to Duffield "elegant and terrifying in equal measure." In a powerful and influential essay in 1996, *The Symphony of the Damned*, Duffield argued the willingness of NGOs and other western actors to make an institutional accommodation to permanent emergencies in Africa represented a new form of racism. As a result, Duffield insists that a number of societies are now in what might be called 'permanent emergencies.' He argues that the dynamics of self-sustaining war economies are little understood among those in the relief, development, and conflict management communities who operate on the assumption that civil conflict and war are aberrations in otherwise non-violent social systems.

Along with David Keen (1995), Duffield has made important contributions to our understanding of a new "political economy of internal war", wherein - in Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone - war is not an aberration but a system of political and economic resource allocation. A recognition of this system also compels a radical rethinking of such concepts as neutrality. Duffield advocates a new ethic of working in protracted political crisis which adopts solidarity, rather than neutrality, as the guiding principle for action.

On a more concrete level, the 1989 book work by two US-based experts, Mary Anderson and Peter Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes* examined developmental strategies in a disaster situation. Their work also contributed to greater awareness of the negative consequences of humanitarian assistance. In particular, Anderson and Woodrow found evidence that the ways in which



humanitarian agencies provide aid affect beneficiary capacity to achieve sustainable development. In particular, the impact of relief assistance on the environmental and social systems within which recipients operate was highlighted as a little understood, but critical, factor in determining whether or not relief efforts would indeed have preventive or mitigative consequences. Furthermore, especially in period of conflict or post-conflict rebuilding, decisions resources by UN agencies and NGOs about the division and allocation of resources will significantly impact on the capacities of and opportunities available to parties to a conflict or recently ended conflict.

In subsequent work, Anderson has sharpened a conclusion inherent in *Rising from the Ashes* although not drawn out within it: that there is evidence that development and relief programs can, inadvertently, contribute to the probability of armed conflict and disaster (Anderson 1994, 1996). Similarly, anthropologists such as Pottier (1996), Hutchinson (1996) or Turton (in Fukui and Markakis 1994), documented the perverse effect of many relief practices on the coping strategies of local people. The disparity of treatment of beneficiaries was noted, as well as the technical inappropriateness of aid. Human rights groups questioned the long term effects of aid on the protection of populations. The counterargument was that assistance should be made to be accountable to the beneficiaries.

### 2.3.3.1 The stakeholders

The accommodation of relief agencies to the protracted crisis of the Sudan also led to further questions about "the innocence of the agencies". Whose interests were the humanitarian organizations really serving? Thus a third debate surfaced in the aid community. Following the first debate on neutrality and the second on the relief-to-development continuum, this third debate concerned the stakeholders. It revolved around the issue of the identity of the groups and principles which should guide the work of the humanitarians, particularly in complex emergencies. For the NGOs, it raised especially critical issues.

This was the end of the age of innocence. Recognizing that their activities were not "beyond sociology" (de Waal 1994), the aid organizations actively participated in the deconstruction.

The contradictory rationalities of aid organization operating in the midst of conflict were well summarized in a paper by the Norwegian Church Aid (Villumstad 1995). Examining policy in the Sudan, Villumstad lists the conflicting demands of (a) public opinion, whose primary concern is to recreate a modicum of safety in areas it is aware of (primarily through media coverage), (b) organizational interests to develop spheres of influence and stability, (c) the integrity of a code of conduct during war, (d) the containment of the destruction wreaked on the economy and livelihoods.

The issues of stakeholders were also raised by Alex de Waal and Omaar (1994) Mark Duffield (1995), David Keen (1995), Jean Christophe Rufin (1992), and Mary Anderson (1989). The negative dimensions noted above were scrutinized with particular reference to the role of the aid organizations. The list included

- the possible role of aid in reinforcing the combatants
- the NGO's quasi-commercial competition for funds and the resulting subordination to a handful of donors
- the distortion of policy by media and politicians
- the tendency to overwhelm of local capacity and ecology in the rush for delivery
- the tendency by agencies/organizations to exaggerate their success in the pursuit of more (Borton 1995)

*Accountability* was a key issue. The question had early on been raised with respect to the UN administration in protest against the bending of rules in the name of financial and personnel accountability. As for the NGOs, criticism focused on excessive zeal in promoting "delivery" at the expense of, or instead of, justice and protection for the beneficiaries. Even the emphasis placed on staff security appeared as part of a protective institutional backlash. It was argued that the organizations behaved as if the primary accountability was to themselves.

Criticism also came from another quarter. International relations officials and experts, military planners and political commentators began to question the separation of emergency response from the international efforts to resolve the conflict. One prominent diplomat argued that emergency aid should be deliberately used as a political tool: relief aid should be withheld as part of political sanctions, and the UN specialized agencies - which typically channel over half of all resources into a complex emergency operation - should be subordinated to the policymaking of the UN Secretariat (Sahnoun 1995).

Last but not least, there was accountability to the donors. Concerned donors took steps to improve the quality of information they required from implementing partners. From rough effectiveness indicators, there was a growing demand for impact and outcome indicators.

#### *2.3.4 "Do No Harm"*

The mounting awareness of the negative effects of humanitarian assistance has been countered variously. Some have called for moderation, and a return to a "pure humanitarianism" (Slim 1995). Anderson and others have moved towards two strands of argumentation:

First, international agencies involved in war-torn societies should adopt the physicians motto, "first do no harm." The "do no harm" approach to regulating the negative consequences of humanitarian assistance now arguably forms the conventional wisdom among agencies, and is being put into practice in innovative approaches to relief delivery, perhaps most concretely in Liberia, where international agencies have adopted a 'Joint Policy of Operations' in efforts to ensure that their relief efforts will mitigate rather than fuel the civil conflict there.

Second, Anderson has concluded (1996) that the best way to ensure that relief has a preventive and mitigative aspect, rather than a negative impact, is to centre efforts on supporting local capacities for peace and development. Thus, while the emphasis in Anderson's work remains on non-state actors, there has been a shift of focus from international NGOs and their local counterparts. This parallels an earlier literature on refugee aid which emphasizes the need to develop participatory approaches in relief operations (Harell-Bond 1986); the issues subsequently moved forward in discussions of strategies in the relief-to-development continuum (see 3.3. below).

Recognizing the problematic side of assistance, some aid agencies/organizations sought to redefine the humanitarian challenge. The Red Cross/Red Crescent movement asked:

"While we can better target resources and increase efficiency and effectiveness, what of the causes? Is humanitarian assistance being used as a Band-Aid to cover inaction at fundamental levels in addressing the causes of today's disasters? At the 1995 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, some 142 governments joined in debate with the Red Cross and Red Crescent international and national components on humanitarian issues, with the Movement urging governments to address the policy vacuum. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot address many of today's crises. Political and economic action, too, must be taken by governments to underpin effective humanitarian assistance whose independence and neutrality is respected and guaranteed" (IFRC; *World Disasters Report* 1995: 7)

A "no harms" position effectively abandons any claim that humanitarian assistance can be an effective tool of conflict prevention. The best it can achieve is to do no harm. A similar modest claim is reflected in the general discussion on the role of aid as an instrument of conflict prevention.

The *Agenda for Peace* by Boutros Boutros-Ghali caught the imagination of aid workers in advocating a policy of peace-building, which, even though the Secretary General did not define it so, could be understood as a means of preventing an escalation or further conflict. Humanitarian assistance is not assigned a major role in this respect, however. The same applies to other

major "aid for peace" works. The Australian "blue book" on the UN placed issues of preventive diplomacy in the context of a reformed United Nations (Evans 1993, 1994); the Commission on Global Governance (1995) which discussed aid and peace generally, as was the case in Canada, where CIDA support rethinking that led e.g. to the publication of *Aid as Peacemaker: Canadian Development Assistance and Third World Conflict* by Robert Miller in 1992. Since then, the possible preventive role of aid has been the subject of increasing discussion and research, partly stimulated by the OECD/DAC task force on Aid and Conflict prevention.

In this overall picture, the preventive role of humanitarian assistance - delivered in the acute phase of crisis - *prima facie* seems limited. The policy options are generally defined as providing simply humanitarian aid while seeking to do no harm (the minimalist option) or - for those who go beyond a "no harm" position - as very modestly mitigating existing violence or preventing an escalation of the conflict. Activities in pursuit of the latter is usually seen as an extension of humanitarian work. The critical tools are

- handling of information (advocacy, denunciation, lobbying), and
- providing good offices to facilitate dialogue, to mediate or conciliate on the margins of standard aid work.

Such preventive extension of humanitarian work is seen as the natural province of NGOs, because of sovereignty sensitivities, and their proximity to the societal actors (Crocker et.al. 1996).

## **2. 4 The logic of preventive action**

To better understand the limited influence which humanitarian assistance can have in preventing conflict, it is necessary to place it in the context of the logic of preventive action.

As noted by Zolberg and Suhrke (1995, 1997) social science tells us quite a bit about why social contradictions sometimes develop to produce violence. This has generated considerable writings about the concept of "preventive diplomacy", as one powerful arm of preventive action (Lund 1996, Rupesinghe 1993). Yet knowledge of causes does not readily translate into policy. There are reasons of scientific logic: most simply put, the complexity of social reality makes it difficult to anticipate the consequences of intervention. Each root cause is in itself an intricate structure; their interaction to create social conflict is correspondingly complex. Even if one set of variables were modified (e.g. relating to economic inequality or ethnic antagonism) the overall impact on the level and nature of conflict would be uncertain and could be counterproductive by creating rather than preventing violence.

Another reason for caution is embedded in the logic of history. During the latter part of the Cold War, global competition and competitive intervention of the superpowers were significant causes of war and humanitarian emergencies. Preventive policy could focus on simple negative injunctions: "Do not intervene militarily and competitively in local conflicts", "Do not support client-regimes that resort to repression for lack of legitimacy", etc. These rules are less relevant in the post-Cold War period. After bipolarity gave way to a diffuse and complex structure of international relations, it has become more difficult to identify and address the sources of action that produce conflicts.

More fundamentally, because any situation has roots in the past, preventive interventions constitute in some measure attempts to remake history. Current refugee flows in the former Soviet Union, for instance, arise in part from a process of imperial disintegration with antecedents in earlier imperial policies to forcibly relocate and incorporate peoples. The process is not new: when the cumulative structures of imperial control crumble and new ones arise, refugee flows have historically been a byproduct of the sorting out of peoples and boundaries. Present refugees in the Commonwealth of Independent States are in important ways "in bondage to history", to rephrase Tolstoy.

The challenge for policy is thus formidable. Even if appropriate instruments of intervention can be identified and the consequences reasonably predicted, social structures remain resistant to policy manipulation in the short run. At best, perhaps, these analyses can provide warning about potentially explosive situations. In the case of Rwanda, for instance, underlying causes of the 1994 crisis included a sharpening of ethnic categorization, usually traced to the colonial period. Demographic pressures were intense, and economic competition increased markedly in the 1980s. Had there been less ethnic antagonism, more prosperity and less demographic pressures, the structural preconditions for widespread violence no doubt would have been less compelling. But modifying these variables would have required long-term policies driven by the probability - but not certainty - of avoiding violent conflict. Governments rarely behave in such a single-minded fashion, and the decentralization of power in an international system based on competitive nation-states makes it difficult to mount concerted action in this respect.

The limits imposed by the logic of science, history and policy have led critics to question the relevance of preventive diplomacy and warn about its illusory or even counterproductive effects (Stedman 1995). The complexity of social conflicts and the uncertain effects of intervention need not have a totally paralyzing effect, however. In recent decades, some progress has been made with respect to decolonization and democratization, in developing an international human rights regime and providing international economic

assistance - all positive developments affecting the underlying causes of conflict. There is also another approach.

To further develop preventive policies it is essentially to understand what they can realistically be expected to deliver, and adjust the claims accordingly. From a perspective of limiting the humanitarian consequences of social conflicts, the case is increasingly being made for addressing the proximate, not the root causes, in other words, to limit the violence against civilians. As Geoffrey Best notes in his analysis of the development of the law of war, modifying wars (*jus in bello*) is as important, if not more, as trying to preventing them (*jus ad bellum*) (Best 1980). As we shall see in the next section, considerable efforts in policy as been precisely to limit such violence, by various forms of "protective presence". This forms the context, and sometimes the essence, of humanitarian practices to mitigate or prevent conflict.

By focusing on preventing violence, - rather than on conflict per se - policy sidesteps to some degree the fundamental issues of peace versus social justices that a preventive policy raises. As numerous analysts have noted, it is necessary to be clear about precisely what so-called preventive policies are to prevent. A policy designed to prevent "conflict" could easily disguise a policy wedded to the status quo, or to the defence of one social order at the cost of another. Given different concepts of social order and rights - differences that some observers claim are increasing in the 1990s (Huntington 1993) - these are unavoidable implications of a preventive policy.

## **3 STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

The previous chapter outlined different schools of thoughts on the relationship between humanitarian assistance and conflict, and the overall direction of this debate in the aid community. This chapter seeks to systematize experience by summarizing the "state-of-the arts" in the literature, and drawing on examples from well-known cases. In a separate section (chap.4), experiences of Norwegian NGOs will be summarized.

### **3.1 The general "state of the arts"**

The first point to be noted is that "the state of the arts" is poor. A recent meeting of British NGOs on programming in situations of conflict (CODEP 1996) was typical: it emphasized that agency personnel lack the analytical tools to make sense of the context in which they operate. Relevant areas of research such as anthropology, conflict resolution studies, and political science have followed divergent directions. Anthropologists have focused on the impact of the availability of weapons (Fukui and Markakis 1994), or the disruption of exchange (Hutchinson 1996). Political scientists have examined the macro-social conditions for the emergence of sentiments of ethnic militance (e.g. Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983). Conflict resolution experts whom NGOs have called on for assistance have developed techniques related to mediation and negotiation, but these are not directly relevant for programme targeting and evaluation.

One approach selected by agencies concerned to strengthen skills in conflict situations is to develop manuals (e.g. Eade and Williams), mission reports and evaluations. The main weakness of these documents is the weight of the institutional constraints and agendas. This is particularly the case in the United Nations, where only semi-academic bodies such as UNRISD (the War Torn Societies Project) or UNIDIR (the Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project) can produce forward-looking thinking. Similarly, the UN Emergency Unit in Addis Ababa sought in June 1995 to systematize the links between the IGAD(D) process and the UN humanitarian programmes (Borton, 1995, Draft 4). The paper recognizes that certain forms of aid and conflict resolution are highly compatible, but beyond emphasizing the need for donor coordination, does not formulate specific guidelines. The same applies to the OECD's publication "The Challenge of Development Within Conflict Zones" (Mooney 1995); here we find only general or unspecific advice.

The full entrance of humanitarian organisations into theatres of war in the 1990s, as well as increased resources available, led some NGOs to refocus on security and political aspects. NGOs operate in, or close to, the conflict area, often has prolonged presence, and engage various social segments. Yet, for

reasons noted in the previous chapter, many humanitarian NGOs are reluctant to embark on conflict prevention /mitigation activities. They recognize the ethical dilemmas involved, and that reporting or negotiation may mean taking sides which can jeopardize their primary concern to deliver humanitarian services. Good theories on which to articulate a strategy are also lacking. Most NGOs therefore approach conflict management with reservations. One result is that the collective institutional memory of their experience, including “best practices”, is highly fragmented.

The main effort to systematize and evaluate the institutional experience of the UN and NGOs in the area of humanitarian assistance is the Humanitarianism and War Project at the Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, (USA). Their publication series established a trend and remains a core, but focuses mainly on issues of effective delivery of services, and does not systematize the intended or unintended political consequences humanitarian assistance.

This chapter will discuss institutional experience and strategies as they pertain to four forms of humanitarian activities:

1. Provision of relief and related forms of humanitarian presence
2. Protected areas (non-military)
3. Human rights monitoring
4. Confidence-building measures

The first category is the most general, and will include general discussion of humanitarian presence when not further specified or cutting across categories. The last three categories focus on particular forms of humanitarian presence.

This categorization represents a slight change from the original classification proposed and restated in the ToR, viz: ((i) human rights monitoring, (ii) medical assistance, including traditional Red Cross functions, (iii) “conventional” humanitarian assistance in emergencies (food and non-food assistance), and (iv) confidence-building measures (including “peace-building measures, informal mediation and contact facilitation). As the review of the literature progressed, it became apparent that a traditional sector approach as originally proposed was less useful than considering aid sectors from the point of view of the resources they introduced into a society. The original proposal also did not distinguish the specific notion of protected zones; however, this represents an important form of humanitarian response, and was reinstated. The last category was adjusted to exclude the general analysis of NGO activities in conflict resolution work, particularly negotiation and mediation. The literature on this so-called second-track diplomacy has become so large that it was not possible to give a fully summary of it within this limited review.



## **3.2 Provision of relief and related forms of humanitarian presence**

### *3.2.1 Approaches*

The collective experience of several US-based NGOs relating to humanitarian assistance and conflict was recently discussed at a seminar organized by the U.S. Institute of Peace (Smock 1993). Given the complicated consequences of humanitarian assistance, the seminar acted in the spirit of the "Do no Harm" principle by identifying practical steps that NGOs can take to minimize or eliminate the negative impact of aid:

- Closer dialogue with donors: NGOs function largely as implementing agents for donor governments and the UN. These donors are often not well informed about field conditions and may impose unrealistic restrictions and inappropriate mandates on NGOs that have negative consequences in the field;
- Improved planning: While emergency situations usually do not permit time for the requisite planning to avoid all negative consequences, more can be done by improved planning that 1) assesses needs more accurately, 2) analyzes the consequences of agreements negotiated to gain access to needy populations and obtain security for NGO personnel;
- Long term impact: provide aid that will have the longest term benefit to targeted groups and make empowerment of local institutions a high priority;
- Human rights: deploy human rights monitors to help protect local populations from exploitation and repression by the fighting factions;
- Coordinate closely with other aid organizations that operate in the same conflict area;
- Evaluate: contract for independent monitoring and evaluation of assistance programs to reduce mismanagement and the diversion of supplies.

Some of these steps are increasingly discussed as strategies that go beyond the "Do No Harm" principle and may have a positive mitigative/preventive effect on the conflict.

*Coordination.* In cases where the moral value of one party or the other in a conflict is roughly equal, and where each party holds the promise of some form of stability and long term resolution, agencies and donors may readily disagree on whom to support. In their strategy document for the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Prendergast and Scott (1996) concludes:

"It is pointless for OFDA to achieve Aid with Integrity if conflict is to be inadvertently fuelled by other agencies or donors. In order to fully address the

risk of aid sustaining conflict, all [third] parties need to improve co-ordination at all levels. First donors need to address co-ordination between and among themselves at national, regional and international levels. Second donors need to improve their internal co-ordination between different government departments. However co-ordination is a concept approved by all but defined by few... The notion of leadership is controversial, and many donors privately admit that co-ordination in the sense of loss of sovereignty is the last thing they want" (Prendergast and Scott 1996: Item 4.10) .

Some writers (including Prendergast and Scott) recommend a strengthened humanitarian core to the international system, such as the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs. However, even if there were a consensus on the need for prevention and the means of carrying it out, humanitarian norms remain singularly undetermined as regards social justice, political solutions and security priorities.

On the field level, however, there have been some successful cases of agency coordination, such as the "Joint Policy of Operations" in Liberia (cpr.2.3.4). Reviewing the humanitarian action in Liberia in the period 1989-94, Scott et.al (1996) concludes that the humanitarian NGOs struggled valiantly to preserve their independence of action from the political agendas of ECOMOG and the UN in order to obtain access to all parts of the country. As the UN and ECOMOG became associated with the Monrovia interim government in 1992-93, the humanitarian NGOs tried to deliver aid also to the rebel held areas. In the end, however, the agencies succumbed to political pressure and were forced to end across-the-border deliveries from Cote d'Ivoire. The aid agencies were torn between a desire to insulate themselves from the political process, and a desire to make a direct contribution to peace. As a result, a joint strategy eventually proved elusive.

*Inclusive approach.* The end of the Cold War facilitated the development of more inclusive approaches in delivering emergency assistance or rehabilitation aid. Instead of external parties competitively seeking to support their respective clients, there was now more political space for coordinating international assistance to benefit the victims on all sides.

An early case was Afghanistan, where UNOCA (established in 1988) developed so called cross-border and cross-lines practices. Designed to bring humanitarian aid to all the parties in the conflict by crossing (international) borders as well as (political) lines, aid strategies were also deliberately used to induce the various parties in a peace-related dialogues. Concepts such as "humanitarian encirclement" (trucking in aid from all sides), and "zones of tranquillity (where aid was given on condition that the parties in a given area cooperated), were developed. A subsequent evaluation of these practices was generally positive (Donini 1996).

Similarly, in Afghanistan, the ICRC worked on all sides of the conflict and used this for bargaining purposes. A special route was used for deliveries, and the parties to the conflict were informed that if this particular road was attacked, the ICRC could no longer assist the civilian populations. The road was, in effect, made a non-combat zone.

Operation Lifeline Sudan has become a classic case of linking aid with peace negotiations in an inclusive approach, and will be discussed separately below (3.2.2)

Multilateral institutions have become more open to working with non-state actors of all kinds. Building on this, one close observer /activist proposes that the UN Resident Co-ordinator promote a qualitatively different, non-elitist, truly participatory and co-operative approach to aid, involving working with non-governmental actors removed from the capitals and state structures (Stiefel 1994). This approach is also supported by key UNDP officials who advocate new strategic alliances (Cholmondeley 1995).

*Participatory approach.* Parallel to the solidarity literature (cfr. 2.3.1.) a strand of analysis was developing that called for aid agencies to build on the participatory efforts and enterprise of the victims, rather than just replacing them when delivering relief. An early and extreme formulation was *Imposing Aid*, by Barbara Harrell-Bond (1986), an anthropological analysis of refugee relief in south Sudan. The approach certainly had implications for political organizations and empowerment of the beneficiary population, which could have the effect of increasing or decreasing the conflict, depending on the inclinations and degree of empowerment of the local populations. These dimensions were less discussed in the subsequent literature than the practical possibilities of adopting a bottom-up strategy when delivering relief supplies, especially to large numbers and in sudden emergencies. Instead, this approach led into a second discussion that linked relief with development aid, or the so-called continuum debate.

The concept of a continuum between relief and development became conventional wisdom in aid circles in the early 1990s. Major issues were laid out in *Rising from the Ashes* (Anderson and Woodrow 1989). Using vulnerability analysis, the work leans on previous research on entitlements (Amartya Sen 1981) to address issues of relief and reconstruction. It recognizes the developmentalist concern regarding the negative effects of emergency aid, but also the practical limits to applying alternative strategies. Two sets of problems have been singled out in this and related literature:

- there is a cleavage in donor funding between capacity building activities - which are placed in the development category and involve slow and

cumbersome disbursements -, and survival needs and palliative activities - which are categorized within the more versatile aid category.

- the imperative of timeliness in emergency operations is recognized, and the related constraints on the use of local knowledge and consultation processes.

The first of these problems is increasingly acknowledged by donor evaluations and gradually remedied. The second appears insurmountable, especially when agencies have to deploy rapidly in areas not covered by their institutional memories.

*Neutral approach.* A neutral approach does not, of course, necessarily mitigate or prevent conflict. However, as the classic humanitarian approach to conflict, its implementation in practice should be noted. The claim of neutrality to moderate conflict rests on the premise of access: the ICRC sees neutrality as the best way of gaining access to all sides, and hence to mitigate the symptoms of conflict in the largest possible area. In order to remain neutral, in turn, the ICRC negotiates access with all sides, employs foreign delegates in central positions, disassociates itself with other aid actors that are seen to be partisan, including the UN (as in the ICRC did in the former Yugoslavia), and use national Red Cross chapters only when these are seen as non-partisan (as Somalia and Zaire). Letters passed on to and from prisoners that ICRC visit are carefully censored for political content. The organization very rarely reports publicly on human rights situations, but relies on "quiet diplomacy".

A recurring problem for humanitarian organizations has been the political-military activism of refugee populations they are called upon to assist. The phenomenon of "refugee warriors" has been noted, and the possibility that aid to such camps serves to perpetuate violent conflict (cpr. 2.2). Classic recent cases are the Liberian refugees in the Cote d'Ivoire, the Khmer refugees in the Thai-Cambodian border region, and the Rwandan refugees in Eastern Zaire. The conventional approach to deal with such problems has been to attempt to separate the "refugees" from the "warriors", and thus "neutralize" the phenomenon, and to move refugee camps away from the border. Where possible, this is UNHCR practice, which is grounded in international refugee law.

### ***3.2.2 Preventive Strategies***

*Preventive Protection.* The term was temporarily used by UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia to mean protection "in pace" through presence and the provision of humanitarian relief, thereby making conventional asylum less needed. The concept has since been heavily criticized and the term is no longer used by UNHCR.

Detailed criticism is provided by Mooney (1995), who concludes that protection through presence in the former Yugoslavia was a myth perpetuated by potential countries of asylum which did not wish to receive refugees. Using reports by Human Rights Watch, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and others, Mooney finds that protection was undermined by lack of access, and the limited mandate of UNPROFOR, as well as dubious neutrality of some troop contingents.

One dilemma posed by "preventive protection" in the former Yugoslavia was whether or not aid agencies should pre-empt violence by facilitating migration to ethnically more homogeneous areas. Some, like the Danish Refugee Council, found that blocking or reversing ethnic cleansing was not a practical proposition on the ground, given the means available. As a result, humanitarian agencies went beyond their normal reactive role to facilitate displacement, and sometimes allowed evacuation of civilians. While heavily criticised by local authorities and media, the strategy did help to prevent further violence.

As for protection through moral suasion and witnessing, accounts are likewise fragmentary. There are many examples of pre-emptive measures taken by aid workers that would not have been possible in their absence, e.g. taking individuals into an office compound who otherwise would have been maltreated or killed, or negotiating with attackers. There are also many other examples of failed protection, such as the killing of Christian civilians in the Kurdish Safe Haven in Iraq at the height of the international presence there in June 1991.

*Prevention as a function of provision of resources.* If conflict is a rational choice in the face of dwindling resources or a shrinking opportunity structure, aid can have a substantial impact. As providers of resources in a resource scarce environment, humanitarian agencies/organizations often exercise an influence quite out of proportion with their normal profile on the international scene. At times, NGOs become virtual shadow administrations on the local level, as in post-war Mozambique (Costy 1996). Dispensing numerous benefits, the NGOs can make local authorities and other groups cooperate (de Waal 1994). Three mechanisms are particularly important from a conflict management perspective:

- provide alternative channels for conflict-oriented leaders, (ex-)soldiers and militia
- support moderating distributive institutions
- reduce resource scarcities in conflict areas.

*Alternative channels.* One controversial approach is to assist soldiers/militia in refugee camps (i.e. "the warrior" component). Thus, some NGOs gave food and medical supplies to the former Rwanda Army camps in Zaire in 1994-6. Apart from the value of aiding the non-combatant families in the camps, the

main purpose was to pre-empt predatory raids from these camps into the towns and other camps. The strategy consequently served to reduce violence in the area, at least in the short run.

Simple forms of assistance can help to redirect the energies of militants towards constructive ends, e.g. by providing benefits during negotiations (such as paying for travels to Ethiopia for Somali politicians in 1993). This leverage is of course mostly used in negotiations concerning access and the safety of staff and premises. The ICRC has effectively used this approach.

After the conflict, demobilization programs are major avenues for providing new incentives and opportunities to ex-soldiers and the militia, and several internationally aided programs have been undertaken in the 1990s (Berdal 1996).

Aid agencies/organizations can influence the perception of risks and opportunities among the parties by withholding aid supplies. Relief agencies in Liberia, for example, decided in 1996 to suspend all but the most urgent programmes to protest against the manipulation of aid, and apply pressure on the parties to enforce humanitarian norms. The danger of using food and other basics as a "carrot", of course, is that it opens for general and reciprocal manipulation of emergency aid. Hence, many agencies/organizations were suspicious of the aims of the UN Special Representative Mohamed Sahnoun in Somalia, who repeatedly tried to blackmail and coopt difficult leaders with aid delivery. UN humanitarian officials perceived this as dangerous, especially after the deployment of UNITAF at the end of 1992.

*Moderating distributive institutions.* There has historically been a clear perception among aid agencies and governments of the importance of controlling relief supplies as a means to influence a given population. After World War II, for instance, this was a major debate around the establishment of the UN Relief and Rehabilitation agency. More recently, work on conflict prevention seeks to identify, or develop, administrative capacities that can work with international third parties to have a moderating influence on the conflict through the distribution of relief resources. This has been argued by e.g. Hizkias Assefa (1993) of the Nairobi Peace, and is a principal tools of conflict resolution used by NGOs such as Conciliation Resources in England. It also advocated by organisations concerned to strengthen administrative structures after the emergency, and reflected in works such as Macrae and Zwi's *War and Hunger* (1994). Failure to identify and develop such structures in the Kurdish northern Iraq between 1991 and 1995 was possibly one of the most significant "opportunities missed" from the perspective of preventing further conflict (Keen 1995).

*Resource scarcities in conflict areas.* Simply stated, the axiom here is that the more supplies are brought in, in the best possible way, the less suffering, grief and desire for revenge, and the easier it will be to enter a process of reconciliation.

The principle has been followed for example by Save the Children in Somalia. Assuming that conflicts often originate in disputes over grazing rights and water, the SC has designed its water drilling and water collection programmes to reduce the opportunities for the conflict among different clans and sub-clans.

A limitation in this respect is that emergency aid is often only partially effective in reducing mortality and morbidity, and the impact is very difficult to discern, even for the aid workers on the ground themselves.

Assuming that relative deprivation among groups is an important source of conflict, another potential preventive measure is to reduce such differences. Although the rationale is not conflict prevention, many NGO restocking programmes in south Sudan are probably playing that role. Large scale raids from the Nuer areas into some of the Dinka territory in 1991 had drastically reduced the availability of cattle among the Dinkas. Gradual replenishment of the herds is a direct dissuasion from more violent forms of repossession. Other examples of such aid is to reconnect services or roads to recently or suddenly deprived communities.

*Prevention as a function of the delivery process.* The connections between the process of delivering emergency aid and promoting peace have been examined in detail in what has become a classic case: Operation Lifeline Sudan. In an early assessment, the collective authors of *Humanitarianism Under Siege* (Minear et al. 1991) note:

"Many who had hoped and expected that Lifeline would bring peace are sharply critical of it for having failed to do so. They acknowledge that Lifeline succeeded in reducing hostilities for a time and in facilitating the safe passage of relief supplies. However, after a few short months, the warring parties were back at their bloody struggle, fortified by the reprieve Lifeline had provided. Whatever short-term tranquillity Lifeline may have afforded, it left untouched the roots of the conflict " (p.125).

Lifeline's particular historic breakthrough was, for the authors, the negotiation of corridors of tranquillity for relief deliveries. Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) officials built on the agreements reached with one side in the conflict to entice the other into concessions. The Operation encouraged dialogue, and this was seen as a direct contribution to the peace process. It also made the civilian impact of the war visible, shaming decision makers towards peace. The fact that the corridors were respected only for a few months was not seen as

- inherent to the process, but rather due to the lack of external political support to the commitments made in OLS.

OLS highlights three different contributions which aid can make to a peace process. Lifeline provided super-ordinate goals (a reminder of the common normative grounds for peace), it promoted communication between opposing parties, and gave additional legitimacy to both parties while creating some hopes for peace. This threefold influence was the example of humanitarian diplomacy which inspired later relief officials, including Jan Eliasson (while head of the UN-DHA) and James Grant (while head of UNICEF), to see relief efforts as an instrument of peace in so-called humanitarian diplomacy.

The window of opportunity provided by the period of direct negotiation between the two sides was in fact rapidly closed. The experience of relief workers, after the period in which the OLS study was written, was that even when proximity talks were arranged between the parties by OLS, these allowed the diplomatic staging of military manoeuvres, rather than creating the premises of a growing common ground (a view endorsed notably by Alex de Waal). On the ground, the humanitarian agencies struggled to keep open access to areas in need against overwhelming natural and man-made obstacles. However Operation Lifeline survived for many more years, having relinquished its role as a peace-maker, and concentrating instead on the delivery of supplies. It continues to give donors discrete leverage on the parties to the conflict: high visibility flights into the area, and the ability to deliver (or not deliver) material aid to specific populations confers considerable power on the donors.

This persuasive role of emergency aid has been underscored in a different context by Randolph Kent, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Rwanda. Examining the critical transition in 1995, Kent concludes that a main problem was the inability of aid actors to reach a consensus with the Government on humanitarian objectives:

"There might have been a greater chance to reconcile the positions of both sides had the government been more convinced that the international community was indeed responsive to its needs... The type of assistance that was required did not fit into the conventional categories of either relief or development. The situation in Rwanda demanded greater risks and greater imagination than the international community felt willing to give. Resources to stabilise the military, to recreate the police force, to build prisons and to rebuild the justice system were essential but few donors were initially willing to accept the domestic political consequences of such assistance. And when some did, the procedures for providing such assistance were all too slow and cumbersome... It was difficult to engage a government that felt more and more that words rather than action were the net result of efforts of accommodation". (Kent 1996: 79-80).



In this case, the donors were in principle committed to give aid in support of reconciliation, and hence renewed massacres in the country. This failed in large part due to the inadequacy of the sectoral definition of aid.

### **3.3 (Non-military) protected areas**

Protection of a place or population can be achieved with different forms of power. The classic categories of power in political sociology are:

- normative (based by invoking norms, reason or symbols, the power of witnessing)
- utilitarian (based on rendering or withholding material goods/services)
- coercive (based on physical force).

Of these, the first two are of most interest here since they constitute the principal source of power of NGOs to influence the course of a conflict in the field.

Protected areas in or near the theatre of war represent a moderation of the *symptoms* of conflict in the sense of mitigating the violence. Such areas thus affect the proximate causes of flight and suffering rather than the underlying ones. As such, they are a modest but long-standing response of the international humanitarian community to war.

There are basically two kinds: protected zones designed to be enforced with military force; and those that are not. The former kind has received increased attention in the 1990s as the UN increasingly mandated the military enforcement of protected zones, e.g. in northern Iraq, southwestern Rwanda and various parts of the former Yugoslavia. The latter is the classic Red Cross area, grounded in the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Our primary concern here is with non-military protected areas.

#### **3.3.1. Red Cross protection**

The International Red Cross movement has been supporting the gradual elaboration of the law and practice of restraining the impact of war on *personnes hors de combat* and non-combatants. By implication, this also involved a strong preventive role (Grunewald 1995). The independence and neutrality of the ICRC organisation, anchored in Swiss concepts of "active neutrality", led its leaders to promote international law to cover the largest possible number of civilians. This included the establishment of "safe zones", originally conceived during World War II, to provide a refuge from bombings to urban population. It also drew from ICRC's experience in the Spanish Civil War, where written agreements were obtained from both sides to respect the

Geneva Conventions, to develop a code for internal conflicts. The early stages of these developments have been analyzed in a book on the Palestinian conflict the 1945-1952 period (Dominique-D. Junod 1996).

The ICRC has done considerable work to systematize the Red Cross experience with protected zones in this century. A particularly useful summary of the conditions and characteristics of safe zones has recently been done by Yves Sandoz (1995). He gives a brief overview of the historical context in which today's debate on "safe zones" should be placed. In modern times, the establishment of safe or protected zones goes back to a proposal made by Henri Dunant in 1870. There were several different proposals on the issue in the following years, all of them leading up to the codification of safe zones in the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Although formally established in the Geneva Conventions, the possibility of creating safe or neutral zones have rarely been used during conflict. In 1977, an additional protocol to the Fourth Convention supplemented the neutralized zones (article 15) with two other types of protected zone: the non-defended localities (article 59 of the additional protocol of 1977) and demilitarized zones (article 60). These are meant to provide protection from hostilities for the entire population that is not involved in such hostilities. Common for all the various forms of protected zones is the fact that they provide protection for civilians, not combatants.

From the early 1990s onward, the emergence of a new type of protected zone: "safe havens" or "security zones" has been seen: in Northern Iraq in 1991; in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia from 1991 onwards. The creation of these zones was only made possible under international military protection, this makes them very different from the traditional neutral or safe zones. The fact that the Iraqi operation was imposed upon the Iraqi authorities also differs with traditional procedures and the framework of international humanitarian law. In the case of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, the picture is very complex, and Sandoz gives examples of "classic" protected (or neutralized) zones (hospitals) as well as "protected zones" in its broader thinking. In former Yugoslavia, ICRC could not assume responsibility for such zones itself, due to the nature of the conflict, and international troops should therefore ensure the safety of the zones. The "classic" protected zones are meant to give shelter to the population not involved in hostilities, thus fulfilling a central objective of international humanitarian law. When it comes to the use of force to secure a zone, Sandoz concludes that "if force is used it must also be in relation with an attempt to solve the problems that have given rise to the conflict" (Sandoz 1995: 925).

The RC emblem has a symbolic power that provides protection to its personnel and to the people given help. This is a commonly made assumption. The question why the emblem is providing an effective and actual protection is however not readily answered. Historically, the adoption of one distinctive sign was from the very beginning seen as a prerequisite for the inviolability of

medical services, ambulances and personnel. However, the ICRC has long been concerned by the problems (real as well as potential) caused by the current multiplicity of emblems within the Movement. In 1977, a working group was set up to study the matter, but in 1981 it was dissolved without having reached agreement on any specific proposal.

A volume of the Movement's own periodical, *International Review of the Red Cross* no. 272, Sandoz 1989: "The red cross and red crescent emblems", was fully dedicated to questions relating to the meaning and use of the emblem. In an article here, Francois Bugnion sees the main problems caused by the coexistence of two emblems to be as follows:

1. that it implies a preferential treatment in favour of Christian and Muslim countries over other religions
2. that it is at odds with the principle of unity
3. that it undermines universality
4. that it is an invitation to further split (despite the 1929 decision that no new emblems would hereafter be recognized)
5. that it causes problems in countries where different religious communities live together
6. that it undermines their protective force (Bugnion 1989)

Yves Sandoz presents some reflections on the issue in an article from the same volume of *IRRC*. He sees two issues to be the main problems: the improper use of the emblem, and the problem of maintaining religious neutrality. As he points out, misuse of the emblem is a corollary of its symbolic power. The question is how misuse can be avoided.

The President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, has in a later article (*IRRC* no. 289, July 1992) discussed the "unity and plurality of the emblems", stressing the importance of securing absolute respect for the emblems. He claimed that the protective power of the emblem is threatened by two factors; abuses of the emblem, and its plurality. That the use of two emblems is a problem, not only due to the signs' religious connotations, is linked to the fact that the unity of the distinctive sign is a major factor in providing its protective force. Also "the objective of unity of the distinctive sign, which symbolizes selfless help for all who suffer, is a corollary of the basic ideals of the Movement". He further pointed to the danger of the signs being perceived as religious symbols, in this way they will no longer be seen as neutral, and thus "there is a great danger of becoming a target". Sommaruga wanted with this article to launch a debate on future strategies and solutions to the problems related to the plurality of the emblem. The annual reports of ICRC as well as their newssheets list some experiences, and mentions the lack of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions with the warring parts as a major problem. However, no thorough evaluation of which factors that may cause disrespect for and attacks on Red Cross personnel has been undertaken.

More generally, the “humanitarian diplomacy” of the ICRC by such means as dissemination of humanitarian principles, visits to officials and prisons, and presence in sensitive places has been analyzed by Berger (1996), and in a seminal work by David Forsythe (1977).

Practically all complex emergencies have given birth to discussions on the creation of safe zones inspired by the Geneva concept (such as Operation Lifeline Sudan in 1992), few (non-military) have been implemented, and the record has been mixed. In Sri Lanka, the Open Relief Centres (ORC) established by UNHCR succeeded in building de facto protected zones around relief areas. The reasons for the success of the ORCs are generally recognized (UNHCR 1993, Clarence 1991), and point to three critical pre-conditions:

- they were demilitarized
- they served the humanitarian interests of both parties to the conflict
- they were established with the consent of both parties

### 3.3.2 Other “safe zones

Several safe zones which were established in theatres of conflict in the 1990s (notably in the former Yugoslavia and Northern Iraq) represent a departure from the Geneva legal framework in that they were established without the consent of the parties. There is a substantial literature on these zones, mainly in relation to international peace-keeping, and only some aspects concern us here.

The “protected zone” in Northern Iraq is of particular interest because it was established with military force, and retained a protective military umbrella, but international ground presence after 1991 consisted exclusively of humanitarian workers and “UN guards”. This non-military presence was effectively given a major protection role, but appears to have had little impact: the effective protection which was provided depended basically on the willingness of external powers to use military force. As a UNHCR analyst concludes, the case illustrates the limits as to how much can be loaded on to the doctrine that “humanitarian presence” has a restraining effect on the parties to the conflict (Morris, *The Limits of Mercy*, 1995). Another UNHCR official adds that basic rules of staff training and appropriate resourcing were not observed, thus aggravating the consequences of the failure to provide asylum elsewhere (Landgren 1995).

Safe areas are particularly difficult to maintain when state structures fragment, as happens in many complex emergencies. These are “destructured conflicts”, in ICRC jargon, or “failed states” in academic jargon. The experience of several humanitarian organizations during the emergency in Somalia, when they succeeded only intermittently in maintain safe corridors or safe areas in their core area of operations, illustrate these problems. All social “space”

became heavily politicised, thereby complicating humanitarian access. As for the ability of the humanitarian organizations in mitigating and preventing further violence, the conclusion of one major study sponsored by Actionaid (Farah and Lewis 1993), is that it requires separate and deliberate strategies of reconciliation. These must start by recognizing certain "givens" in the situation, notably the limited and diffuse authority of the elders, the existence of freelance militias, and local conventions of protocol that require long time-horizons. Similar conclusions emerged from the experience of the Swedish Life and Peace Institute (*Horn of Africa Bulletin* 1996).

### **3.4 Human rights promotion and monitoring:**

Three human rights dimensions are relevant for this review: a) human rights reporting as an instrument of warning of humanitarian crises, b) human rights monitoring as an instrument of deterrence against individual abuse, and c) human rights education as conflict preventive measures.

Numerous organizations and agencies are engaged human rights promotion as preventive activity. Also traditional humanitarian organizations have branched out in this direction, as the ICRC illustrates. In the former Yugoslavia, for instance, the ICRC has a two-year program educational program in international humanitarian law and human rights. In several conflict situations, the organization works with the parties to the conflict to enhance knowledge of human rights and the Geneva Conventions governing the conduct of war, often using local cultural and historical reference points in the educational message (as recently in Sudan, Somalia and Burundi) (For current information, see *ICRC Update*, Geneva/Internet). The preventive effect of such educational/promotional activities are difficult to determine in any precise manner, but must be presumed to be positive, and, at least, is not harmful, thus complying with the minimalist "do no harm" principle.

Most humanitarian NGOs have traditionally be reluctant to engage in human rights monitoring, which is seen as secondary and possibly conflictual with their main mission (DeMars 1995). An increased interest in the early warning of impending crises has caused some rethinking on this point, especially after recent events in Somalia and Rwanda. Some NGOs, such as MSF International (the common secretariat of the three main MSF organisations), have explored the possibility of working with Amnesty by discretely providing information on human rights violations. Oxfam has formulated a pragmatic version of this approach:

"Some humanitarian agencies may be in a position to initiate or become actively involved in a mediation process. Others may see their role more in terms of human rights issues than humanitarian relief. In extreme

circumstances, some NGOs may prefer to close down their field operations in order to be able to denounce situations in which they feel powerless to be of effective help at an operational level... It may be decided that, if it is not already doing so, Oxfam should support the work of specialist human rights agencies as part of a comprehensive response to the situation, especially in situations where humanitarian work and aid workers become the targets of attack and repression" (Eade and Williams 1995: 858).

The decision-making process will naturally have to involve headquarters and field personnel, and is often difficult. Thus, the ICRC decided to walk a middle ground between denouncing and informing the outside world about the killings in Rwanda in April-July 1994, thereby seeking to continue its presence on the ground, yet using the media to call attention to the events.

While human rights monitoring may serve to mitigate or deter violence, donors appear to some agencies/organizations as less interested in supporting monitoring than in financing relief. This was the experience of Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF when considering ways of enforcing the rights of children during complex emergencies (cpr. internal discussion notes). The SCA also found that a traditional human rights reporting role distracted from more traditional relief work, and could strain relations with local authorities. The organizations which form part of the Save the Children Alliance have recently gone through an internal exercise to ensure that their relief programmes do not come to contradict their child protection role.

Moving in the other directions from human rights monitoring to humanitarian aid is the London-based human rights NGO, African Rights. In an unusual programme in the Nuba mountains of Sudan, the organization uses an extensive network of local informants who are supported with humanitarian aid. This system works on the basis of a partisan approach to the conflict and cannot serve as a model for the UN and other agencies that aspire to neutrality and impartiality.

### *3.4.1 Human rights monitoring in UN field operations.*

Until recently, most UN efforts to monitor human rights abuses consisted of the rapporteur system established by the Commission on Human Rights. This situation changed in the 1990s. Human rights monitoring contingents were included in UN peacekeeping operations in El Salvador and Cambodia, a monitoring mission was sent to Haiti, the former Yugoslavia and Guatemala, and the first field operation of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, established in 1994, took place in Rwanda. (Gaer 1996). Of these, the monitoring operations in El Salvador, Cambodia and Rwanda have recently been evaluated, and will be considered in particular here.

Human Rights Watch have analyzed the UN field operations in El Salvador, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Iraq (Human Rights Watch (1993). *Human Rights and UN Field Operations*),

In *Peace-keeping and Human Rights (1994)* International Amnesty (AI) analyzed the effect of UN peace-keeping operations on human rights conditions generally in El Salvador, Cambodia, Namibia, West Sahara, Angola, Mozambique and Liberia. AI also presented a 15-Point Program for Implementing Human Rights in International Peace Keeping Operations.

AI found UN operations in El Salvador and Cambodia to be the most successful. UN human rights officers are considered to have had significant mitigative and deterring effects.

"Their work has resulted in the release of detainees and the improvement of prison conditions. They have made important contributions to the legislative and institutional reform of the legal order for improving the protection of human rights in accordance with international standards and raising public awareness of human rights issues, including through education programs. Amnesty International considers that the relative success of these operations can be at least partly attributed to the serious, open and accountable procedures of the human rights divisions" (p. 22).

Another reason for the relatively successes in El Salvador and Cambodia, according to AI, is that the respective peace agreement specified which human rights the parties were obligated to guarantee, as well as international verification mechanisms to ensure their compliance. AI recommended that similar clauses should be included in all peace agreements.

Civilian human rights observers with a special investigative mandate also have an important role in preventing human rights violations, the report concludes. South Africa and El Salvador are examples on this. But mere presence of the UN is not sufficient. In Iraq, for example the UN humanitarian program did not have a mandate that directly addressed the human rights issues. The presence of UN security guards in northern Iraq did not do little to change the pattern of human rights repression, nor did it produce public information about what the guards may have witnessed.

In *Human Rights and UN Field Operations (1993)* Human Rights Watch examined five of the largest UN field operations in recent years; El Salvador, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Iraq, and concluded that with the exception of El Salvador, the operations have assigned low priority to human rights.

In El Salvador, human rights played a central role in the UN sponsored peace process. A large number of UN human rights monitors were deployed in the field six months before the peace treaty was signed so as to deter abuses and build a climate of confidence on both sides of the conflict. The monitoring continued after the peace accords were signed, and a commission was appointed to provide an official accounting of the abuses of the prior twelve years. While problems remained, Human Rights Watch found that the prospects for a lasting peace were better in El Salvador than in any of the other countries analyzed, and that the prominent role given to human rights was an important reason why.

In Cambodia, the UN mission was mandated to establish a neutral political environment for the elections prescribed in the 1991 peace accords. Yet, fearful of jeopardizing the elections, the UN adopted a cautious approach to human rights violations, the report maintains. In the former Yugoslavia, the UN initially gave little political or financial support to investigate and prosecute war criminals. A Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia, appointed by the UN Human Rights Commission, pursued his mandate aggressively, insisting on the relationship between human rights, regional security and humanitarian issues, but was ignored by those with the authority over UN operations in field.

In the UN operations in Somalia, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia, the UN focused on the logistical problems of delivering relief supplies, and not on human rights abuses, according to Human Rights Watch. In Somalia, the UN made no effort to document the atrocities attributable to the warlords, to establish tribunals to try them, or to exclude them from a role in Somalia's future. In Iraq, the Security Council established a safe haven and a no-fly zone in northern Iraq in 1991, but took a much less aggressive posture within the borders of Iraq. The lack of UN presence on the ground in Iraq allowed serious human rights abuses.

The above evaluations were undertaken by NGOs with an organizational mandate to promote human rights. Hence, a systematic bias may have affected their conclusions. In the case of Rwanda, the evaluation of the UN-supervised human rights field operations was undertaken by independent scholars. Covering the early phase of the operation, the assessment was extremely critical, highlighting poor training and performance of the monitors, and suggested the overall impact was negative (Joint Evaluation, vol. IV, 1996).



### 3. 5 Confidence building measures

*Supporting local norms conducive to conflict regulation.* Most humanitarian NGOs are reluctant to become involved in an explicitly political negotiation process, which they fear may undermine their primary mission. However, many see themselves as agents of change and educators (Mikkelsen 1995), and are prepared to operate on the civil level of action - i.e. in civil society - as distinct from what has been called the constitutional level of conflict resolution (Adams and Bradbury 1995).

One important area of work concerns collective memories. Efforts are made to select themes that are conducive to regulate conflict and prevent further violence, e.g. narratives of common historical experiences and symbols. This applies also to reconstruction of towns and cities after war and the establishment of monuments to the past. As Tunbridge and Ashworth point out (1996): "... we will never again look at a monument or exhibit without posing not only the 'whose heritage is this'? question, but also the insistent who is disinherited here and what are the consequences of such dispossession?"

Because of the sensitive and complicated issues involved in "rewriting history books", as UNESCO's Federico Mayor has noted, many aid NGOs have stayed out of this area. UNESCO has faced it squarely through its Culture for Peace programmes, which seek to highlight those strands in a tradition that transcend rather than reinforce conflict. In an initiative designed for Operation Lifeline Sudan in 1995, for instance, UNICEF proposed

"a programme promoting awareness of and adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international conventions relevant to children in war, as well as internationally recognised principles governing humanitarian assistance, such as neutrality, impartiality and accountability. A key strategy is to link these with traditional Sudanese values, which clearly seek to protect children and civilians in crisis, and to encourage the Sudanese to take a lead role in promoting humanitarian principles" (*Consolidated Appeal 1995/1996*, p.26).

In a related area, the importance of disseminating information that counteracts fear and hate propaganda has been increasingly recognized, especially after the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia (Article 19 1996). The effort of organisations like Reporters Sans Frontieres in the Great Lakes region and the Balkans is a prototype of this form of action.

Aid organizations that work on both sides of the conflict often claim that this helps to reestablish community and commercial links, which in turn increase contacts and build confidence across political lines. In a recent review, Prendergast (1996: 212) views this form of humanitarian aid as an important

contribution to "frontline diplomacy", and cites as examples Sudan, the Ethiopia/Somalia/Somaliland border area, and Rwanda/Zaire. The problem, of course, is that community and commercial exchanges often coexist with parallel patterns of continued violence (as noticed e.g. in Afghanistan and on the Zaire/Rwanda border), hence the preventive or confidence building impact of new exchanges is difficult to assess.

*Providing channels of negotiation.* Most humanitarian NGOs do not engage in formal mediation work. Yet opportunities to do so are considerable given their wide contacts on the community level, and growing transfer of donor resources to conflict prevention from other sectors (e.g. in the Finnish aid program). Oxfam, in an institutional learning exercise, defined its role in conflict prevention as conflict resolution at the grass roots level (Oxfam's *Work in Conflict Situations*, report prepared by Rebecca Buell, 1996). Other NGOs see themselves as a platform on which conflict resolution can begin, e.g. by building committee-like structures which are primarily intended to resolve technical and sectoral issues, but facilitate informal preliminary contacts between hostile parties. An umbrella organization of humanitarian/development NGOs in Sri Lanka has moved in this direction (CMI 1996).

Some humanitarian NGOs recognize their lack of expertise in mediation and are developing awareness or skills in conflict regulation. CARE International, for example, held a regional workshop for conflict resolution in Nairobi in January 1996. The aim was not so much to develop a conflict resolution capacity in an organisation which sees itself as a relief and development body, but, more modestly, to heighten awareness among staff that their work holds a significant potential in this area.

Confessional institutions (notably the Community of St. Egidio) and NGOs who see mediation as their primary mission have moved aggressively into "second-track diplomacy". As noted above, a substantial literature and institutional experiences have accumulated in this area, which lies beyond the scope of this review.

*Creating super-ordinate goals.* The term is drawn from the work of Stephen Ryan (1995) on resolving ethnic conflicts and refers to the introduction of common aims that transcend the conflicting interests of the parties concerned. By working together to achieve a common aim, patterns of cooperation and mutual confidence will be generated that serve to overcome the original conflict. This, at least, is posited by the so-called functionalist theory of cooperative integration developed in sociology and political science.

Consciously or not, the theory has been adopted by several humanitarian NGOs that work in post-war rehabilitation/reconstruction phases. The prototype, perhaps, is a project in Rwanda for multi-ethnic brick-making to rebuild houses

that were destroyed in the ethnic violence in 1994. Several Norwegian NGOs have similar projects (see chap 4). Others have been described in relation to repatriation of refugees during ongoing conflict (Cuny and Stein 1989). The so-called Quick Impact Projects, first developed by UNHCR with local NGOs in Nicaragua, similarly sought to foster cooperation by involving both parties within the local communities.

## **4 THE INFLUENCE OF HUMANITARIAN PRESENCE: EXPERIENCES OF NORWEGIAN NGOS**

This section seeks to systematize some aspects of the experience of Norwegian NGOs with respect to the consequences, including the mitigative and preventive effects, of humanitarian presence. The analysis is based on interviews with the NGOs, hence it records experiences as perceived by the NGOs themselves. It is therefore not a complete analysis, but only taps the component known as "institutional memory".

The following were interviewed: Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (NORDEM) which is primarily engaged in democracy or peace building activities, and the five principal humanitarian NGOs: Norwegian Red Cross (NRC), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), Norwegian Save the Children (NSC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

### **4. 1 Human Rights Monitoring**

Human rights monitoring is a relatively recent activity that expanded when the Cold War ended. Monitoring is an important part of the broader process of promoting human rights. In this report, election monitoring is treated as a subset of human rights monitoring activities. All the Norwegian NGOs interviewed carry out some monitoring activities, but the emphasis varies in accordance with organizational objectives.

#### **4.1.1 NORDEM**

NORDEM seeks to promote democracy and human rights by seconding Norwegian personnel to situations where their expertise is relevant and needed. Human rights monitoring, and election assistance and observation, constitute over 90% of NORDEM's workload. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is the main channel for NORDEM missions which also include assistance from the other governments, the UN, and other and international and regional organizations. The idea to establish a Norwegian resource bank for democracy and human rights was conceived in 1991, after an OSCE seminar on democratization and institution building pointed to increased needs for assistance in this area.

In human rights monitoring, NORDEM has found it important to maintain a positive dialogue with the respective national authorities in order to have a long-term impact. To enter into a dialogue does not exclude using certain kinds

of political pressure. Human rights monitoring typically conflicts, however, with national sovereignty, hence it is important that national authorities are consulted and take part in formulating a plan for improving the human rights situation in the country.

The second objective of human rights work is to survey national needs. Monitoring is necessary to identify needs, and, if dealt with constructively, may lead to the establishment of human rights institutions. Observation of police violence, for instance, can lead to the development of educational measures for the police force in human rights questions. Institution building involves education and counselling as well as practical and material assistance. NORDEM personnel has, for instance, participated in seminars, debates etc. to give advice on constitutional amendments (South Africa), electoral training, registration of data, assessment of judicial systems etc. These are generally low-cost projects (100 - 200 000 NOK).

NORDEM finds that a general problem in human rights work is the lack of coherent methods. As of today, no uniform manual exists for field operations. In this respect, human rights monitoring is lagging far behind election monitoring, which is well ahead when it comes to co-ordination and coherence of methods. The problem of manuals can not easily be solved, as there are several different international agencies involved in human rights monitoring field operations. The main ones are the UN Department of Political Affairs/UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (responsible for human rights operations in Haiti, Cambodia, Guatemala, El Salvador), OSCE (responsible for Human rights work in former Yugoslavia) and UNHCHR (responsible in Rwanda).

In 1995, the training for NORDEM personnel was a 3-days seminar. This was extended in 1996 to a 4-5 days training session. The training focuses on a comprehensive understanding of human rights field operations; identification of actors and interests, the UN system, methods, means, objectivity. NORDEM is at present working on a proposal for methods and approaches which is scheduled to be completed in January 1997.

In November 1996, a meeting was held in Dublin, with delegates from IGOs, NGOs and INGOs which recognized the need for coordination and uniform objectives in human rights work. The meeting concluded with a "statement of needs" that underlined the importance of official evaluations of human rights field operations (*Dublin Round Table on the Promotion of the Rule of Law through Effective Training for Human Rights Field Tasks*, 28-29 November 1996).

When it comes to investigating human rights violations, there are no problems related to manuals. NORDEM is using the established UN manual for this type

of work. At present, there are three NORDEM investigators in Bosnia and five in Rwanda.

#### *4.1.2 The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)*

The NRC has a large civilian stand-by force with human rights work as its main activity (this force co-operates with NORDEM). The stand-by forces include investigators, observers and analysts in human rights work and are used by various UN agencies. Human rights assistance is closely related to election monitoring, where human rights work often is undertaken prior to the elections. In Cambodia, for instance, observers provided through the NRC observed the electoral process for 14 months ahead of the elections themselves. The NRC is also doing human rights monitoring related to refugees: for instance, in the border area between Iraq and Turkey NRC monitored possible violations of international refugee law. In another type of monitoring, NRC observers in Hebron report human rights violations to the different parties.

Human rights monitoring also is part of the practical work of the organization. Practical work can produce a spin-off effect on the human rights situation even though it does not directly involve monitoring. Each situation has a general mandate of operations, and the NRC defines its own operations within this framework. To what extent human rights monitoring is done depends on the mandate for the whole operation, and has thus a degree of ad hocism to it.

Human rights violations are reported to the contracting organization, not the NRC. The NRC also keeps the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs continuously informed through letters and reports, but there is no formalized reporting system. The procedures for reporting is given by the contracting organization for each operation. However, the problems stated by NORDEM on the lack of manuals is echoed by the NRC in their calls for the establishment of uniform manuals and procedures in human rights work. According to the NRC, reporting to UNHCR (the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and UNHCHR (the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) is quite efficient due to the existence of formalized manuals within these agencies. On the other hand, the NRC doubts the usefulness of creating one manual for human rights work, either for the NRC in particular or NGOs in general. There are numerous different situations and a variety of mandates and conventions involved. The NRC's work is multifaceted, as is the work of many of the humanitarian NGOs. How can one single manual then be established?

The NRC does not see itself as a specialized organization. Its generalist orientation makes it necessary to give its staff broad rather than specialist training. The organization already has a basic training program, but to improve the quality, the NRC is working to establish a set of minimum standards for use

in human rights related work. The NRC sees human rights monitoring as a rather new activity, with field operations only starting from 1992-93.

There are NGO networks seeking to develop procedures for human rights reporting, this is e.g. an issue in International Council for Voluntary Organizations (ICVA), an umbrella organization of NGOs where the NRC has been very active. Humanitarian Liaison Working Group, ICRC and UNHCR have organized a joint conference on the co-operation with UNHCR/PARINAC (the UNHCR mechanism for cooperation with NGOs). The conference sought to formulate a handbook for human rights activities, but the work was abandoned as it proved difficult to agree on the contents of a common manual.

The NRC finds that a general problem of reporting is related to the varying quality and availability of information, as well as the competence of monitors. The main problems arise from the manipulation of information (by the authorities and/or various interested groups). Reports to the NGO headquarter from personnel in the field is important for the internal policy debate of the organization. But the lack of reporting procedures creates little or no feedback from the reports. Input does not necessarily lead to impact. The reporting must be formulated and directed at the authorities in a way that is likely to be noticed. According to NRC, improved procedures for reporting would increase the impact.

How "loud" the reporting should be depends on the parties involved, their interests, and what they are willing to accept. One dilemma relates to the inadvertent and sometimes undesirable recognition which reporting confers on the offending party. In contemporary conflicts, one of the parties is likely to be non-governmental. Reporting can accord a certain international recognition, even though the reasons for reporting are fundamentally negative (cf. the Serbs in Krajina).

The NRC is presently involved in a human rights project in Hebron, where the parties have asked for Norway and other countries to monitor human rights and report on violations. It is hard for NRC to judge whether it is the explicit reporting, or the presence more generally, that has the effect of reducing the level of violence. The NRC nevertheless finds that Hebron is the least violent city in the area, and concludes that this is related to human rights monitoring/presence. To assess the impact further, the NRC is about to start evaluating the project.

The NRC sees its work on repatriating Vietnamese children without families as another example of successful human rights monitoring. In this operation, NRC guaranteed the safe return of these children. The operation involved a large number of personnel, and reports were made on any violation of human rights.

The project was partly human rights work and partly social work, and, according to the NRC, was a hundred percent success story in that no violations were recorded.

The NRC distinguishes between individually-oriented and system-oriented human rights work. The ICRC is oriented toward the individual, whereas Amnesty International is working toward the system. On this spectrum, the NRC has adopted a pragmatic approach by adjusting its mandate to the needs of each particular situation. The organization points out that there is a certain division of labor between the NGOs present in a conflict; not all of them need to be reporting on the human rights situation. There is often an explicit or implicit division of labor. For instance, one NGO can place itself in the most vulnerable position by reporting "loudly" on human rights violations and thus running the risk of being expelled by the national authorities or other parties to the conflict. By keeping quiet, the remaining NGOs can remain to concentrate their work on traditional humanitarian relief.

One general problem in NGO work, according to the NRC, is the frequent discrepancy between the policy of the organization and the actions of local workers. Individual workers may in effect end up representing themselves rather than the policy of the organization. There are many examples of this from the refugee camps in Goma (Zaire), for instance.

#### *4.1.3 Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)*

The NCA does not include human rights monitoring as a major part of its mandate, which it defines as humanitarian work. However, human rights, conflict resolution and peace building are increasingly being incorporated as dimensions of relief work.

The growth of interest in human rights work, which the NCA dates to the end of the 1980s, is attributable to several causes. One is the type of conflicts labelled "complex emergencies". NGOs working in these situations recognized that human rights had to become an integrated part of traditional relief work. These experiences are reflected in NCA policy documents from the early 1990s. The ending of the Cold War is also seen to have affected the traditional views on humanitarian work by making it easier to address human rights violations.

There is a changing perspective in relief work, from emphasizing basic needs to emphasizing basic rights; this also applies to long-term development work. The growing emphasis on rights also has meant more awareness of the different "generations" of human rights. The NCA has become more concerned with political rights. The organization is planning a review of the different rights



“generations” in order to produce “checklists” for what to do in various situations.

For human rights monitoring and democratization work, the NCA co-operates with NORDEM or the World Council of Churches. But the NCA does not have routines, procedures, strategies or training on how to report on human rights violations observed through conventional relief work. An example of NCA reporting on human rights violations is Sudan, where the NCA worked actively and overtly to produce and present documentation on the human rights situation. The NCA reports to the existing channels: authorities, other NGOs, the UN, and the Norwegian MFA. Most often, the reports are not structured and analyzed accounts, but based on anonymous descriptions.

The impact of reporting cannot easily be assessed. It also raises complex issues relating to organization roles. The NCA wants to follow a “transparent” policy where humanitarian relief is their main objective. On the other hand, the NCA sees it as essential that national authorities are aware of the organization’s knowledge about the human rights situation. This creates a two-sided relationship with the authorities of a country.

#### *4.1.4 The Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA)*

The NPA has entered an internal debate on the organization’s role in matters of human rights monitoring. Yet, it has already been involved in such activities in Bosnia and in Guatemala. In Bosnia, the NPA reported on violations of women’s rights, particularly concerning rape. In Guatemala, the organization reported to the archbishop’s seat, in Kurdistan to the Norwegian MFA. There has been no systematic reporting from the organization however, and, like the others the NPA, considers the lack of manuals to be a problem.

The effects of reporting is seen to vary greatly. The NPA concludes that it did have an effect on the issue of rape in Bosnia. The reporting helped create attitudes condemning the use of rape. The NPA also notes how co-operation among NGOs on reporting can enhance impact. In a situation where human rights violations have been observed, the NGOs can agree on who is to speak out loudly. The organization that reports runs the risk of being expelled by the authorities, but the others can stay and continue their work. This strategy was followed e.g. in Ethiopia. Ethiopian authorities were taking refugees from a camp during nights. Two NGOs were present: one of them reported and had to leave the country, the other stayed and continued the relief work. There is also an element of danger involved in reporting, NPA cites Zaire and Tanzania as examples of this. In refugee camps, the NPA most often works with UNHCR, in which case UNHCR is responsible for reporting.

The NPA does not have much written evaluative material on its human rights reporting.

#### 4.1.5 Save the Children (SC)

Save the Children is particularly concerned with children's situation and children's rights in a conflict situation. The SC is working to establish this as an issue: the organization wants to draw more attention to the fact that children are among those most strongly affected by war or conflict. Greater respect for children's rights will have a positive impact at least on the consequences of conflict.

The specialized focus of the SC distinguishes the organization in the field of humanitarian work. The organization's work is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. The SC works through national SC societies with local personnel. Regular human rights monitoring would be difficult or dangerous for the local personnel. Still, international delegates are present in many situations, and the SC is seen and treated as an international NGO (INGO). These factors make human rights reporting possible despite the dangers.

In Sri Lanka, for instance, the SC reported on human rights violations. Many children lacked birth certificate as a result of the war, and thereby lost the right to education etc. The authorities were informed of this problem, and measures were undertaken to deal with it. In Ethiopia, the SC reported to the government on the use of child soldiers, the official reactions to this were negative. The SC has also reported on child abuse by UN soldiers in Mozambique (Ernst Schade, 1995. *Experiences with regard to the United Nations peace-keeping forces in Mozambique*. Redd Barna Report, November 1995). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, The OSCE Commissioner for human rights has suggested the establishment of an agency to monitor children's rights. The agency will be financed via OSCE for the first five years, after that it will be handed over to the Bosnian federation. The Norwegian SC assists with expertise and material aid. Similar projects in East and Central Europe are called Children's Rights Centers and may develop into an ombudsman function.

Save the Children Alliance is developing manuals for field operations regarding children's rights. However, the general lack of routines and procedures in overall human rights work complicates this problems insofar as children's rights work is sub-set of human rights activities generally.

The SC sees relief and human rights work are part of in a long-term process. The organizations therefore follows a policy of *not* speaking out loudly in human rights questions, as this may jeopardize continued. This applies e.g. to a post-war reconstruction phase: The SC is focusing on children's development. The early post-war period is crucial. Children cannot wait, it is therefore important not only to be present, but to increase assistance in this period.

#### *4.1.6 Red Cross*

The International Red Cross Federation does not have much experience with man-made disasters. As a humanitarian organization it has to react to human rights violations, but the dilemmas are identical with those of ICRC (see chap. 3). The Federation works on all sides of a conflict, and hence must maintain a low profile in human rights questions. IFRC encourages other organizations to report on violations. Those organizations who take side in a conflict are in a better position to do so, according to IFRC.

IFRC has been working on the Rwandan border since May 1994, with Hutus as well as Tutsis. In this situation it is practically impossible to report on human rights violations. In conflict, the different parties tend to simplify (black - white thinking), this further complicates reporting on violations.

#### *4.1.7 Election monitoring*

Of the Norwegian NGOs considered here, only NORDEM participates in election monitoring.

The monitoring has two main objectives: (i) to verify that the elections are "free and fair", and (ii) to prevent violence and conflict during the election process. With regard to the first objective, a general problem is the lack of coherent manuals for the international observers. In cooperation with the Helsingfors Committee, NORDEM has prepared its own manual which will be adjusted in accordance with the OSCE manual. Internationally, there is a stronger focus on the need to coordinate manuals and methods, but NORDEM has no influence on UN or OAS in that respect.

International election observation started in the early 1980s and a more consistent framework has gradually evolved. Today, there is also a broad international agreement on the need for uniform methods in this work. However, the coordination remains rather poor in the field, this is considered a problem by NORDEM. In election monitoring, the international observers act as one single body when reporting to the employer (e.g. UN). In addition, the different national units produce their own reports which include matters not mentioned in the main reports (e.g. criticisms). The national reports are distributed to various national instances, e.g. the Norwegian MFA, and can contribute to an ongoing national debate.

A potential problem, according to NORDEM, is that political motivations may govern the decision to certify or reject an election result. This is particularly so when political organizations are involved in election observation. The decision whether or not to certify is based on several factors. "The good will of the people" may compensate for technical errors and problems (as for instance in Lithuania 1996). In such cases the positive impact of approval is considered

more important for the further democratization of a country than a rejection based on technical assessments. However, there is a need for coordination and uniform procedures also with regard to this decision making process. No formal international evaluation of the result of election monitoring has so far been undertaken, although some agencies have undertaken their own assessments. NORDEM sees OSCE as having a strong interest in evaluating and subsequently improving field operations in this area, and The European Council and UN are less so.

Election observation also has preventive objective: to prevent violence, fraud and other abuse of power during the elections. During the elections in South Africa, Mozambique and El Salvador, for instance, the UN sent in large numbers of international observers because it was believed to have positive impact on the situation. In NORDEM's view, the election monitoring has a positive preventive impact. However, no systematic assessment has been undertaken.

There is a growing recognition of the importance and impact of such long-term observation. Observers are present over a longer period of time, including the electoral campaign. In this way, essential rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly etc. are also being promoted.

#### *4.1.8 Summing up*

None of the five principal NGOs cited human rights monitoring as a main task. Nevertheless, as "complex emergencies" have come to be viewed in the international aid community generally as having a human rights component, also the Norwegian humanitarian NGOs have moved in this direction. Most of them now see human rights monitoring as an important extension of their traditional mandate. For NORDEM, human rights monitoring is a principal activity, particularly election .

A general problem stated by all the actors is the lack of coherence in the field of human rights work. How to report, on what cases, to whom, what impact etc. Some of the organizations are preparing their own standardized manuals. However, they all underline the problem of creating one common standardized manual for human rights work, as there are several different human rights conventions, and different mandates in different situations. The problem is also acknowledged within the human rights movement generally, see Karen Kenny (1996). *Toward effective training for field human rights tasks. Recommending an on-going international process to codify best human rights field practice.* International Human Rights Trust (Commissioned by DFA, Ireland), and Paul LaRose Edwards (1996) *UN Human Rights Operations: Principles and Practice in United Nations Field Operations.* Ottawa: Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and Justice Division).

Another generally perceived problem is the too low quality of reporting and training. This is partly attributed to the recent advent of human rights monitoring.

The potential conflict between human rights monitoring and maintaining other forms of humanitarian presence was noted. To reduce such conflicts, NGOs have developed cooperative strategies based on division of labor.

The NGOs generally considered that human rights monitoring had a positive impact, but noted that a) it was difficult to assess, and b) they lacked systematic evaluations to make assessments.

## **4.2 Humanitarian presence**

### *4.2.1 General views*

All the humanitarian NGOs claim that presence generally has mitigative and preventive effects on violence, if not the underlying sources of the conflict. However, the only evidence cited in support of this claim was anecdotal. Systematic evaluations/assessments on the subject had not been undertaken, or were not known to exist.

*According to the NCA*, the protective effect of humanitarian presence is somewhat mythical. Yet the organization maintains that the most efficient protection does not stem from active reporting to external parties, but from making it clear within the conflict area that human rights violations are not tolerated. The NCA sees a need to develop more conscious strategies for the protection of civilians as a function of INGO presence. When the authorities or the parties to the conflict limit the operational field of NGOs, the organizations have to develop strategies to counteract these limitations. There is a need for more active strategies also to communicate visibility. Presence may limit violence, for instance, if NGOs move their headquarters to an area where violence is known to take place, or by simply being more visible. This can easily be done for instance by driving cars marked with NGO emblems.

*The NPA* maintains that presence per se has an important preventive effect on the level of violence and on the overall conflict. The presence of international delegates, for instance, makes the local employees feel safer. The NPA cites Kurdistan as an example of this, where the presence of Norwegian relief workers "guaranteed" the safety of local personnel who received threats from the regime.

*The Norwegian Refugee Council* is convinced that presence means prevention, and exemplifies this by pointing to the presence of NGOs in Bosnia. The NRC moved had 30 000 convoys of relief materiel into Bosnia, and the organization assumes that the visible presence this entailed did have a positive effect on the level of violence. The NRC also emphasizes that presence is a precondition for reporting, and thus to achieve the preventive effects associated with reporting. The NRC questions the relation between resources and impact, however, and asks if a better, more formalized reporting necessarily leads to increased impact.

*The Norwegian Red Cross* points to the experience of the ICRC, which suggests numerous mitigative and preventive effects (see section 3).

*Norwegian Save the Children* believes the presence of NGOs has several positive preventive effects. However, these can be indirect as well as direct, and are difficult to estimate. In Sri Lanka for instance, many local civilians have been involved in SC work, and this has apparently been important for their survival. Moreover, the presence of the SC in conflicts helps prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. The general psychological effect on the civilian population of international presence is also very important. If the SC develops into a strong international alliance like the Red Cross movement, the impact of their presence will increase. At present, the alliance is working toward this objective through better coordination of the alliance's relief work, stronger alliance structure, etc.

The SC recognizes possible negative effects of presence, such as the so-called CNN-effect. This can be negative if NGOs use crises and tragedies in order to sell their "product" - emergency aid. This question touches the ethical dimension of relief work. SC has a code of conduct for all situations, but what is needed is an ongoing debate on these issues. NSC also works through other partners: ministries, other NGO etc. NSC has established a stand-by task force (in co-operation with Swedish SC) that can be used to assist UNHCR in complex emergencies.

#### **4.2.2 Relief assistance**

All the humanitarian organizations noted that the level of consciousness concerning the different effects of humanitarian aid is much higher than in it was in the 1980s and before. Most respondents focused on food aid and other forms of relief assistance when discussing the multiple and sometimes contradictory effects of aid on the conflict and the beneficiary society(ies). Their experiences differ, however, with respect to strategies that may reduce the negative effects of relief assistance, and the extent to which this is possible.

*The NPA* experienced in Sudan in 1980s that food deliveries made the local population wait for aid in delivery areas instead of harvesting their crops. As a result, the need for further deliveries was maintained and even increased. The NPA believes that a similar situation is unlikely today, but notes that emergency relief can still create passivity. This risk must be balanced against the acute needs of the population in question. While humanitarian aid and supplies can prolong the conflict, lack of resources is often the main reason for conflict, and food shortages can obviously lead to violence.

*The Norwegian Red Cross* points out that the Red Cross Movement offers protection and medical assistance in conflicts. Protection is only for non-combatants and soldiers *hors de combat* (wounded or deserters). Still, there are cases where soldiers have been fed and protected by humanitarian organizations. In East Zaire, to mention only one example, it is well-known that medical help and food deliveries have kept and soldiers and militia members alive in the refugee camps. This has probably also happened elsewhere.

The delivery of food in conflict situations has been criticized since some of it will go to the warring parties. But the armed parties will get food anyhow, by taking it from civilians etc. Food is a resource which can be exchanged for other resources when food is scarce, e.g. sold to buy weapons. In the Somalia famine in the early 1990s, food was handed out as ready-made meals in order to reduce the stealing and trading of food. There are ways of separating civilians from soldiers when handing out food, but in many situations it is preferable to supply as much food as possible. Creating an abundance or surplus of food will reduce the potential for conflict, according the Norwegian Red Cross.

*The NPA* also acknowledges that food supplies can end up feeding the soldiers and thus prolong or increase the conflict, but has found that NGOs can do little or nothing to disarm soldiers or militia-members in the camps. The armed forces will always get "their share". An informal objective is that no more than one-third of the supplies should go to the armed forces, but there are cases where they get/take virtually all. There are also cases where food aid turns up at the local market even before the donor has finished distributing it.

Another potential negative function of emergency relief noted by the NPA experience, is that creation of new economic structures that are kept alive artificially through continuous deliveries, and thus undermining traditional and otherwise viable structures.

*The Norwegian Refugee Council* notes that there are possible negative effects of humanitarian aid, but believes that the positive effects by far exceed the negative. It is naive to exclude the possibility that food deliveries may prolong

a conflict, but the humanitarian imperative is always more important. The organizations should not stop bringing in deliveries to civilians even if it keeps the warring parties going.

*The NCA* cites cases where humanitarian action has worsened the human rights situation (Srebrenica). This may happen also in remote areas where food deliveries attract large number of people, thereby increasing local tension (Keren in Ethiopia).

#### 4.2.3 Neutrality and impartiality

The organizations have found that humanitarian aid generally have political consequences, but that policies of "impartiality" - which most distinguish from "neutrality"- still are possible. Approaches to the impartiality/neutrality question differ, however.

In *the NCA* experience, humanitarian aid has had political consequences even though the NCA did not have specifically political objectives. In Ethiopia, for instance, NCA aid helped people to take control of their own lives; this again had political implications by contributing to the development of a civil society which supported a political opposition. Hence, humanitarian action cannot be neutral. However, neutrality is distinct from impartiality, and the NCA strives for impartiality. For instance, cross border deliveries (e.g. in Ethiopia) do not necessarily equal neutrality. NCA was not neutral in Ethiopia even though working on both sides.

*The Norwegian Save the Children* regards itself as politically neutral. Still, the organization has found that its work inevitably has a political dimension even though the main objective is to improve the lives of children. The SC often works on both sides of a conflict. In Sri Lanka, the SC is probably considered a pro-Tamil organization even though it works on both sides. In Eritrea, however, the SC successfully avoiding the label "Eritrean solidarity organization".

The organization has found that there are ways of regulating/controlling the political consequences of aid. In Sri Lanka, the SC provided support to primary schools, but withdrew aid when it was discovered that the schools were used for propaganda purposes. Strong mechanisms for advice and support of personnel is important, this includes training of staff, regular consultancies with people coming in from elsewhere (national headquarters and international), and written guidelines. The SC establishes local/national SC organizations and works through these.

*The NPA's* policy permits partiality, *inter alia* when this facilitates access to certain areas. This is the case in Sudan, where the NPA does not co-operate



with the Sudanese government and therefore does not wait for its approval, as do NGOs in Operation Lifeline Sudan. Generally, however, the NPA's experience is that it is useful to co-operate as far as possible with national governments and with the UN.

*The Norwegian Refugee Council* finds that the current debate on neutrality in the aid community is the same as in the 1960s and 1970s, but there is a need for a new understanding of the question.

The NRC follows a policy of being neutral - i.e. politically non-partisan - in relation to the conflicts where it operates. However, the different parties to a conflict do not necessarily see the NRC as neutral, mainly because of NRC reporting on the conflict. Moreover, the NRC has found that political neutrality can only be intended, and not fully achieved, because presence in a conflict necessarily carries a political dimension. "Impartiality" is thus a better word than "neutrality". The NRC also points out that not taking sides on grounds of "neutrality" does not always mean being neutral. Not seeing or hearing is not neutrality, but an indirect support of the stronger part.

In the NRC experience, it is important in such cases to report with reference to conventions/agreements. For instance, the NRC reported that the Serbs were ignoring the UN Convention on refugees in former Yugoslavia.

*The Norwegian Red Cross* points out that the long experience of the Red Cross movement is based on the principle of neutrality (see section 3).

### **4.3 Confidence building**

Some of the organizations are engaged in activities that can be grouped under the general heading of confidence building measures (including reconciliation and negotiations related to a peace process), others find that their regular work has confidence building effects. The organizations work at different levels (state level, community level, individual level), but all emphasize the importance of the local level. Some have found indirect, low-profile projects most useful; here groups work on concrete projects and "confidence" or "reconciliation" appears as a positive side-effect.

*The Norwegian Red Cross* and the IFRC (The International Federation of the Red Cross) are not actively involved in what might be called "confidence building measures". Various Red Cross activities, including those of the ICRC, however, are considered to have confidence building and hence preventive effects (see section 3).

To exert a preventive effect, the RC Movement has found it is essential to be present at an early stage of a conflict, or even before a conflict starts. Early

warning of potential areas of conflict or natural disasters requires institutional networks. The national RC societies can serve this purpose, and are being developed with local branches that cover the entire country.

The idea that local agencies will have a stronger preventive effect emerged in the 1990s. The establishment of local RC societies is a continuous task, and in Africa goes back to the 1970s. Until the late 1980s, however, the IFRC concentrated on strengthening the central agency of the national societies, and hoped for a cascading effect downwards (local branches). As experience showed that this was rare, institutional strategy shifted to focus on local branches as well as national headquarters.

Similarly, both the ICRC and the IFRC have until recently worked mostly top-down in human rights education. But renewed conflict in Liberia led staff to question this approach. Increasingly, efforts are made to work locally in human rights and tension reduction programs by educating locals, building on local, traditional values, etc.

*The NPA* undertakes local-level confidence building activities in several places. The NPA supports existing grass root movements as well as the establishment of new local organizations. The organization has found that the most important task is to build or rebuild confidence to "others" and to key social structures. When supporting local organizations, the NPA assists with expertise and provides material. It seeks to create channels of contact between organizations and the authorities. In Bosnia, the NPA has provided training and seminars for women over a 3-three years period. In Kosovo, the NPA is working with a group called the "post-pessimists". Young people from Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia come together to communicate and discuss war experiences. This project aims at changing the concept of "the enemy", and thus contribute to sustain peace. The NPA has also helped establish a local radio station in Bosnia.

While no systematic assessments of impact have been done, the general conclusion in the NPA is that confidence building can work. For instance, in Tuzla, the only remaining multicultural municipality in Bosnia, the presence of NPA and the NCA and other international agencies is considered to have enabled the population to resist ethnic cleansing.

In South Sudan, the NPA helps develop local community structures. In South Africa, the NPA is working to change the structures that affect social violence by provide education and human rights information. In Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, the NPA is doing electoral training. In Rwanda, the NPA has a project that provides on free legal advice to returning refugees who have problems recovering their property, and those who are dispossessed by

returnees. The NPA also works with Rwandan authorities to restore the judicial system.

*The NCA* has several confidence building activities, working on both the local and national levels.

Two current "multicultural projects" are underway in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. A 3-year project for persons from the former Yugoslavia seeks to educate "multicultural" opinion leaders from different parts of former country. In Rwanda, the project is aimed at women from different ethnic groups. The women work together to find solutions to common problems. The project has practical focus, but the process of problem-solving is expected to promote communication between the different ethnic groups. A review of the project concluded: (i) the project was most successful when building on already existing groups, and (ii) problems experienced were related to insufficient training and knowledge of personnel, as well as lack of clearly defined objectives.

In 1995, the NCA was involved in the peace process in Mali. The civil war created fear among the population, and popular meetings (arranged by the UN and other international organizations) were designed to restore confidence. At these meetings everybody except politicians was allowed to speak out. Various problems were freely discussed and contacts were established. Forty meetings were held and the general confidence generated was considered an important reason for the subsequent restoration of normalcy: markets started to function again, economic activities generally were resumed, and a peace agreement was reached, complete with a ceremony for burning of weapons. The NCA has reviewed the case in a 1995 report Kåre Lode (ed.) *Synthese du processus des rencontres intercommunautaires du Nord du Mali*. Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolens forlag). The report concludes that the foundation for peace was a bottom-up socio-political movement, with negotiation at a lower level than the government.

The NCA is also involved in peace building in Afghanistan. This work includes support for local organizations, human rights training, and education in international humanitarian law, democracy, reconciliation etc. In Guatemala, Mali and the Sudan, the NCA was involved in the negotiations to promote a national peace process.

The NCA is also involved in psycho-social work and rehabilitation of war-victims. In Mozambique the NCA works via local partners, one important project is "Weapon for education", where child soldiers are given education. A similar project is going on in Angola.

*The Norwegian Refugee Council* is not involved in confidence building measures at political levels, but works to bringing together people from different sides of a conflict in various activities. Confidence building is considered a positive spin-off effect, and not the main objective.

In Aserbadjan/Armenia, the NRC has been involved in the process of bringing the two parts together. Local capacity building is an important objective in any project, this includes public administration, organizations and individual capacities. In the NRC project, maximum two staff members are Norwegians, the others are locals. The NRC has also tried to combine human rights reporting and local capacity building in Africa. An example of this is the establishment of an African stand-by force for disasters. In another form of peace-and confidence building measures, the NRC has a human rights education project in the Caucasus where the use of theater is one component.

*Save the Children* is not involved in explicit reconciliation or confidence building activities. The organization's experience is that this is an extremely complex area of work. Reconciliation is seen as a private and personal matter, and the SC finds that the work of the international community in this regard is too mechanic. The starting point for many individuals or societies is a reluctance to even speak about the war. If one moves into this area at all, community workers must be carefully trained and be able to create confidence at least to themselves as individuals. Indirectly this may in turn lead to creating confidence toward others. Reconciliation works at a slow pace: direct reconciliation work must be avoided, even the word "reconciliation" should not be flagged.

In conflict areas, considerable aggression is generated towards the international community, as local people feel they have been neglected. Relief work should therefore have concrete foci were people working together to solve common problems. This type of co-operation (as in Bosnia) may produce a spin-off effects in terms of reconciliation.

Children's problems in the aftermath of war affect the entire society. In Mozambique, the SC has been trying to identify the effect of war on children through interviews in the communities. The answers do not focus on individual experiences but on the changed relationships between generations. Children take part in activities that used to be restricted to adults (e.g. young marriages). Many children and youth participated in the war. There is a high level of distrust in the community; this is a general problem in a post-conflict period.

The impact of armed conflict on children has also been studied more systematically, e.g. in a report prepared for the UN by the Mozambique-based Gracia Machel Foundation. It also contains assessments, proposals and

recommendations for future operations. (GA/51/306. *Promotion and protection of the rights of children. Impact of armed conflict on children.* August 1996).

The SC has been working to make reunification of families part of the relief and rehabilitation response to conflicts. UNHCR has become involved, and the situation has improved remarkably compared to the 1980s (e.g. through better registration). The SC has found the practice of building institutions to care for children to be counterproductive and damaging. Some NGOs nevertheless do this, including SOS Children's Villages and church organizations. The SC experience demonstrates that it is far more useful to participate in rebuilding a social system and place presumed orphans in families.

Healing the scars of war on children is thus viewed as a part of a broader social healing after conflict. In this area, expertise is more important than financial resources. SC has found it critically important to build on local culture, traditions and concepts (e.g. when is a child considered orphan, any important rituals etc.). The SC role in so-called psychosocial work is not individually oriented. The organization tries to establish general principles of work, as e.g. in a working paper from the ISCA entitled *Promoting psychosocial well being among children affected by armed conflict and displacement: principles and approaches* (WP no 1, March 1996). The paper outlines seven principles for psychosocial work for children, these are:

1. Apply a long-term perspective that incorporates the psychosocial well-being of children
2. Adopt a community-based approach that encourages self-help and builds on local culture, realities and perceptions of child development
3. Promote normal family and everyday life so as to reinforce a child's natural resilience
4. Focus on primary care and prevention of further harm in the healing of children's psychological wounds
5. Provide support as well as training for personnel who care for children
6. Ensure clarity on ethical issues in order to protect children
7. Advocate children's rights

## 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Principles

This brief review of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and social conflict is based on principal sources in social science, reports of aid agencies/organizations, and experiences of select NGOs. The review suggests four major conclusions. All refer to humanitarian assistance in so-called "complex emergencies" where aid actors operate in (or near) a conflict area, and violence is man-made but exacerbated by natural conditions.

1. *Humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for political action.* The current conventional wisdom echoes the major findings of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996). Humanitarian assistance has only a limited, moderating influence on the political forces and the nature of violence in the target area. The same applies to humanitarian presence generally. Hence, it is unrealistic and counterproductive to assign to humanitarian assistance an ambitious agenda in terms of mitigating existing violence or preventing further conflict. Not only does this raise false expectations, it may encourage political passivity towards the conflict and its underlying causes.

2. *Humanitarian assistance has manifold consequences in the conflict area: negative as well as positive, unintended as well as intended.* There is growing awareness among humanitarian actors and independent observers that humanitarian assistance has quite complex consequences in the target area. There are significant short-term positive consequences (saving lives), but there is increasing awareness of negative, unintended and indirect consequences such as helping to prolong a conflict, enhancing the vulnerability of beneficiaries - e.g. by attracting people to feeding areas that become "killer traps", as the French-based *Medicins Sans Frontieres* describes the aid pattern in Ethiopia in 1984 (*World in Crisis*, 1997) - or by undermining local coping and long-term strategies. There is growing articulation of the argument made by William Shawcross in his study of Cambodia already in 1984 - *The Quality of Mercy* - that the aid agencies have a vested interest in channelling relief resources, and hence become willing participants in the institutional accommodation which the North is fashioning towards the repeated or permanent emergencies in the South. In this view, elaborated by the British scholar Mark Duffield in *The Symphony of the Damned* (1996), humanitarian aid becomes for the North a principal mechanism of conflict management in the South.

3. *A guiding principle of humanitarian assistance must therefore be minimalist - "Do No Harm".* The mounting awareness of the negative effects of humanitarian assistance has been countered variously. One response is that aid agencies operating in conflict areas should adopt the physician's motto "first do no harm". Articulated in a 1989 book by US-based experts Mary Anderson and

Peter Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes*, the "do no harm" approach has become increasingly accept by aid agencies and NGOs. The principle formed the point of departure for a major conference of North American-based NGOs and aid agencies in 1996 that sought to develop concrete strategies of action (see below).

4. *Growing awareness of the complex consequences of humanitarian assistance has sharpened the division between the "pure humanitarians" and the "solidarity humanitarians"* An old debate has intensified. The "age of innocence" has passed as it is increasingly recognized that humanitarian assistance necessarily have political consequences. However, the purists - exemplified by the Swiss-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) - argue that the principle must be to provide neutral and impartial assistance, and that ways can be devised to reduce the political consequences. The "solidarity" view, on the other hand - increasingly exemplified by the MSF - maintains that neutrality is a form of moral bankruptcy. Humanitarian organizations must take sides in the struggle against injustice and inhumane practices.

## 5.2 Practices

Humanitarian organizations have shown some reluctance to become involved in explicit conflict management, as well as less direct forms of protection such as human rights monitoring. The reluctant ones fear such activity may jeopardize their presence in a conflict area and hence their primary mission of delivering aid. Nevertheless, as "complex emergencies" have come to be viewed in the international aid community generally (especially in the UN system) as having a human rights components, humanitarian NGOs increasingly have moved in this direction as well. The major Norwegian NGOs fall in this category.

Humanitarian NGOs that work in "war-torn societies" increasingly include reconciliation or confidence building dimensions in their projects. Consciously or not, these NGOs typically base their work on a sociological theory of integrative cooperation which holds that by working together to achieve a common aim, preferably a concrete task, the parties will generate confidence and mutual trust that transcend their conflicting interest. For many NGOs involved in rehabilitation projects, this appear as a natural and relatively simple extension of traditional activity. A prototype object is multi-ethnic brick-making in Rwanda to rebuild house that were destroyed by ethnic violence in 1994. Norwegian NGOs have adapted rapidly in this area.

Humanitarian NGOs that deliberately take on conflict management/resolution tasks use three tools: i) handling of information (overtly or "quietly"), ii)

providing good offices, iii) using the power of the resources which they introduce into the conflict area to extract concessions from the conflicting parties. The first two are most commonly used. As for (iii), given their position as providers of very significant resources in situations typified by extreme scarcities, NGOs have in theory a significant bargain position. Humanitarian imperatives limit, however, their willingness to manipulate emergency aid for political purposes. The major and partial success story in this respect is Operation Lifeline Sudan, as recounted by a team for the Humanitarianism and War Project of Brown University (USA) (Minear 1991).

Less dramatic ways to enhance the positive effects of NGO presence in terms of mitigating existing violence, and preventing further conflict, have been identified by US-based NGOs (US Institute of Peace, 1996). These are:

- Closer dialogue with donors that have limited field knowledge so as to avoid unrealistic restrictions and inappropriate mandates on NGOs;
- Improved planning to (i) assess needs more accurately, (ii) analyze the consequences of agreements negotiated to gain access to needy populations and obtain security for NGO personnel;
- Provide aid that will have the longest term benefit to targeted groups and empower local institutions;
- Deploy human rights monitors to help protect local populations from the fighting factions;
- Coordinate closely with other aid organizations that operate in the same conflict area;
- Contract for independent monitoring and evaluation of assistance programs to reduce mismanagement and the diversion of supplies.

In a more targeted strategy, NGOs have identified at least three ways of using provision of resources in a conflict-preventive manner. If conflict is a rational choice in the context of shrinking resources, humanitarian aid can be used to reshape opportunity structures in desired directions by

- providing alternative channels for conflict-oriented leaders, (ex-)soldiers and militia
- supporting moderating distributive institutions
- reducing resource scarcities in conflict areas

A traditional means of mitigating violence in a conflict area is to establish protected areas. In its classic humanitarian form, these were Red Cross zones (hospitals, etc.), protected only by a symbol and, implicitly, by the value of the medical services provided to the parties to the conflict. Non-military protected areas have developed in the 20th century to take many forms. Experience shows that they are mostly effective when they

- are demilitarized
- serve the humanitarian needs of both/all parties to the conflict



- are established with the consent of the parties concerned

Protected areas of this kind serve to modify the *symptoms* of conflict in the sense that they limit the extent of violence and reduce the suffering of victims. As such they have a mitigating rather than preventive effect, and do not address the underlying causes of the conflict.

### 5.3 The “state of the arts”

In the discussion of preventive measures - both in the social science literature and among aid actors - there is considerable unclarity about two critical issues:

What is to be prevented?

What are the limits of preventive action?

It is necessary to be clear about precisely *what* so-called preventive policies are to prevent. The classic trade-off between peace and justice cannot always be avoided. A policy designed to prevent “conflict” could easily disguise a policy to preserve (an unjust) status quo, or to defend one social order at the cost of another. Given different concepts of social order and rights - differences that some observers claim are increasing in the 1990s (Huntington 1993) - these are unavoidable implications of a preventive policy. To some extent, these dilemmas are sidestepped by focusing on preventing *violence* as an instrument of social change.

The logic of preventive action, moreover, suggests modesty of ambition. Social science tells us quite a bit about why social contradictions sometimes develop to produce violence. Recently, this has generated considerable writings on “preventive diplomacy” as one powerful arm of preventive action (Lund 1996, Rupesinghe 1993). Yet, as noted by Zolberg and Suhrke (1995, 1997) knowledge of causes does not readily translate into policy. There are reasons of scientific logic: most simply put, the complexity of social reality makes it difficult to anticipate the consequences of intervention. More fundamentally, because any situation has roots in the past, preventive interventions constitute in some measure attempts to remake history. This poses formidable challenges for policy, and the part that humanitarian assistance can possibly play must be adjusted accordingly.

As noted at the outset, the present literature on the mitigating and preventive functions of humanitarian assistance is quite limited. The recorded institutional memory of NGOs is fragmented. Part of the problem is methodological: in the field of preventive measures, it is more difficult to assess failures than successes, since we do not know precisely what was prevented if prevention really worked. These problems are not insurmountable, however, as the increasingly case-study based literature on of preventive diplomacy demonstrates (cpr. Jentleson 1997).

An important step towards filling the present gaps in knowledge about the impact of humanitarian action on social conflict would be to collect and systematize the very considerable experience that the NGOs have accumulated. In a very modest way, this review has started to do this with respect to the major Norwegian NGOs.

It was beyond the capacity of this review to make a systematic survey of evaluations/studies undertaken by, or for, the major international NGOs. To do so, should be the next step. Secondly, systematic evaluation of NGO activities in particular conflict areas would yield critically important knowledge. The work of humanitarian NGOs is increasingly being evaluated, but so far with reference to criteria of efficiency or impact that do not include the impact on the conflict in which the organizations are working, and the implications for mitigating and preventing violence.

## Appendix I

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## **Bibliography for chapter 4: The influence of humanitarian presence: experiences of Norwegian NGOs**

### **Interviews:**

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Norwegian Red Cross: Reidar Shanning, Oslo 11.12.96

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## **Appendix II: Terms of reference**

### **Humanitarian presence and the prevention and mitigation of conflict: A "state of the arts" report**

**Revised version, November 1996**  
**Chr. Michelsen Institute**

#### **Summary**

The proposed report will focus on the contribution of non-state actors, primarily NGOs, to prevent or mitigate violent conflict by providing various forms of humanitarian assistance and confidence-building measures. The report will summarize and analyze the state of our current knowledge based on the literature, as supplemented with interviews with principal actors. Preparation of the report will take 6 months, with completion date on January 31 1997. Researchers attached to the Chr. Michelsen Institute will carry out the work under the supervision of CMI senior fellow Astri Suhrke.

#### **Output**

A "state of the arts" report (50-60 pages) will present the main findings, identify critical gaps in the literature, and where appropriate, indicate policy relevance. After presentation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this report will be published by CMI.

A summary report based on the main report (10-15 pages) will be prepared especially for the ministry and relevant circles in the policy-making and NGO community.

Proposal for follow-up activity in the form of additional report, seminars and research etc. based on gaps in existing knowledge as identified in the main report.

Presentation of the report at a seminar in Oslo with the Ministry and NGOs.

#### **Background**

With the international community channelling very considerable assistance to so-called complex humanitarian emergencies, there is increasing emphasis on preventive diplomacy. The question is also asked how humanitarian assistance and other forms of international civilian presence itself can contribute to prevent and mitigate conflict. A small but significant literature has emerged in this area. Apart from the social scientific work, there are internal reports and project documents prepared by NGOs or international organizations. It is therefore useful at this point to systematize our present knowledge in a state of the arts report that can be relevant to policy makers as well as a guide for generating further knowledge.

#### **Scope and methodology**

The report will analyze four types of humanitarian or international civilian presence:

- i) human rights monitoring;
- ii) medical assistance (traditional Red Cross functions);
- iii) "conventional" humanitarian assistance in emergencies (food, water, shelter); and
- iv) confidence building measures (including "peace-building" measures, informal mediation and contact facilitation).

For each of the four types, the study will identify typical activities representing the form of international civilian presence, and if analytically meaningful the report will contain a revised typology based on activity/type of intervention.

The report will be based upon a selected number of examples from humanitarian presence. For each of the cases, the key actor(s) will be presented and a brief description made of their role in the conflict, and the background of their intervention.

The key questions to be asked are: what do we know at this stage about how and why such presence can help prevent and limit conflict? What are the conditions for failure, or alternatively, of positive impact? Is success or failure explained primarily by the function/capacity of the actor in question? by the situation? by the nature of the activity pursued? by what combination of all four factors?.....

If the focus is on prevention, it is easier methodologically to study failures than successes (since we can never know precisely what was prevented if prevention really worked). Hence, most of the relevant literature for this report deals with failures of preventive diplomacy, or efforts to mitigate and mediate in a conflict that is clearly under way, or on the downswing. Among these, the report will emphasize violent conflicts of the kind usually called "complex humanitarian emergencies".

In this connection, it is important to recognize that since conflict is a process, so is prevention. Preventive action can occur at several different phases and levels of the conflict, both on the upswing of the cycle (where conflict in theory and up to a point can get worse), and also on the downswing (where strife may be revived and start a new cycle). The report will therefore include studies of preventive activities through the conflict cycle.

Similarly, there is no sharp distinction between mitigation and prevention. reduction of violence at one time and place has a preventive effect if it is reasonable to assume that violence otherwise would have continued or worsened. Creation of pockets of peace or "humanitarian zones" within a theater of conflict can have such effect, as can use of assistance to negotiate strife. Humanitarian personnel may provide protection simply through presence, as can human rights monitors deployed specifically for this purpose. The same applies to confidence building measures that typically occur after a conflict has erupted and in an effort to repair the situation. Consequently, knowledge about such mechanisms for reducing violence will be included in the report.

Where appropriate, knowledge relevant to Norwegian humanitarian assistance (by type and geographic region) will be given particular emphasis.

While significant, the relevant literature appears to be relatively small, scattered and not easily accessible. We therefore decided to supplement the analysis of written works with some interviews so as to identify key conclusions in the experience of some principal actors as they themselves perceive it. We chose two kinds of actors: a) the five principal Norwegian NGOs - because of their relevance to Norwegian policy, and b) NGOs engaged in peace- or confidence-building measures - because this is a rather recent activity with a limited literature.

#### **Schedule of work and personnel**

The work will commence August 1, 1996 and be completed January 31, 1997. The research will be carried out by

Emery Brusset, a Ph.D. candidate at the London School of Economics who is writing his dissertation thesis on the subject of aid in the prevention of conflict. Brusset has previously worked with the UN and was part of the Rwanda-evaluation project where he also worked with CMI researchers.

Gro Tjore, "hovedfagsstudent" in comparative politics at University of Bergen, and attached to CMI, is writing her thesis on Norwegian refugee policy. She will complete her work in the fall of 1996.

Bente Hybertsen, "hovedfagsstudent" in comparative politics at University of Bergen, and attached to CMI, is writing her thesis on emergency relief. She will complete her work in the fall of 1996.

Over-all guidance and final responsibility for the report rests with Astri Suhrke, Senior Fellow at CMI.