



Editorial

After special issues on the Sahel, Resilience and the Environment, the 13th issue of *Humanitarian Aid on the move* returns to its initial format, with a number of different topics and contributions from external authors who are close to Groupe URD. Their analysis, like ours, is rooted in operational reality and explores less common terrain. Arnaud Dandoy's article on the security management methods used by humanitarian organizations, which he has studied in connection with our Haiti Observatory, and Laurent Saillard's article on the application of humanitarian principles in Afghanistan, which he has been following for a number of years, recall discussions that we have facilitated in Chad, Mali and Somalia and which need to be explored further, questioning things that are taken for granted in the dominant narrative. An experience sharing article looks at the experience of MSF in prisons (Jean-Marc Biquet) while another on the quality of aid focuses specifically on the quality of medical equipment projects (Barbara Comte and Cathy Blanc Gonnet). Finally, François Grünewald analyses the challenges for aid in the particularly complex Malian context.

All these articles are based on continuous to-ing and fro-ing between field experiences and attempts to share knowledge, and are therefore in keeping with the main objective of this review: to facilitate learning and the sharing of lessons drawn from experience. This objective is consistent with what our readers are looking for; a survey conducted during the first quarter of 2014 showed that they want information and analysis from action research in the humanitarian sector and are particularly interested in new trends and the quality of aid.

Véronique de Geoffroy

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Has rational humanitarianism replaced relational humanitarianism?

Arnaud DANDOY

This article responds to criticism of the Groupe URD Haiti Observatory report on humanitarian organisations and security in Metropolitan Port-au-Prince. It reiterates the main conclusions of the report and underlines the importance of situating the security policies of humanitarian organisations within a specific historical and cultural context; that of increased rationalisation of the humanitarian domain since the Cold War. The article concludes that there is a danger of limiting the question of humanitarian insecurity to technocratic issues of calculation and control.

In October 2013, Groupe URD's Haiti Observatory published its report about the security policies of humanitarian organisations¹. The topic of this study was chosen due to the fact that the security measures of the major international organisations, such as United Nations agencies, humanitarian NGOs and donors, were extremely strict and had not been revised since the earthquake of January 12, 2010. The report concludes that the systematic application and de-contextualisation of restrictive security measures, including for movement and mobility, is counterproductive and susceptible to put humanitarian staff in greater danger. Naturally, the idea was not to minimize the phenomenon of urban violence in Port-au-Prince, which remains extremely worrying. However, despite the existence of genuine risk for humanitarians, it is necessary to take a step back from the doom-mongering about insecurity in Port-au-Prince. Indeed, the myth of an endemic and omnipresent threat obscures understanding of humanitarian insecurity and leads to inappropriate security decisions. As such, it seems essential that the issue of security within humanitarian organizations should not be the preserve of those in charge of security. Security cannot be evaluated in isolation. It is profoundly influenced by political, social, environmental and economic issues². The aim of the study is to provide humanitarian organisations who want to revise their security approach in Haiti with elements that will help them.

The publication of the report sparked a great many reactions. Indeed, there is still a great deal of reticence, and even hostility, towards non-mainstream ideas which question the validity and legitimacy of the security policies of

humanitarian organizations. The study therefore caused an outcry among certain heads of security who took offence that their work and their authority could be questioned. And yet, by going against the ideas of the small number of "experts" who monopolise discussions about this issue, the report only re-established a certain balance. Indeed, one of the objectives of the study was to give humanitarian workers a voice as they are often silenced on account of their supposed ignorance or immaturity. Considering that humanitarian workers do not spontaneously espouse the views of their organisations in terms of security and often disagree with their heads of security, it is clear why some were unhappy with the report. The fact that there was a strong reaction to the study can only be for the better. The question of security is so important (a question of life or death) that it deserves to be debated and provided with constructive criticism. Not in order to be polemical or to engage in "aid bashing", as has been suggested, but to help to move discussions forward about the security policies of humanitarian organisations. To talk of aid bashing – a common refrain at the moment – often amounts to putting one's head in the sand and ignoring problems so that they do not have to be dealt with.

The question of humanitarian security has, of course, been the object of a great deal of writing³. However, most research into the subject has consisted of proposing technical directives to improve risk management. As such, certain readers criticised the lack of recommendations in the report. The contexts in which humanitarians work are fragile, complex and nuanced and are not easily compatible with codes of "good conduct". On the contrary, this study questions the growth of such codes and guidelines, as well as the considerable development of Security departments and managers in charge of making sure they are respected. According to Larissa Fast, 'the explosion of research and documentation on this issue tends to support the notion that violence against humanitarian workers is increasing around the world'⁴ (Fast 2010). Discussions about this issue are dominated by the idea that a field of expertise in humanitarian security has been developed due to increased insecurity in shrinking "humanitarian spaces". But this is a highly contentious idea, both historically and empirically⁵. The question is why the humanitarian community reacts with such vigour and emotion to a risk which has not fundamentally changed since the creation of the International

The contexts in which humanitarians work are fragile, complex and nuanced and are not easily compatible with codes of "good conduct"

Committee of the Red Cross in 1863. A change in approach would make it possible to view the issue of security from outside technocratic confines and engage in an analysis with a genuinely sociological reach.

In fact, the growing influence of a security-based position within the humanitarian community could well be the consequence of the difficulty of coming to terms with the radical and rapid transformation of humanitarian bodies over the last two decades – what Barnett and Weiss (2008) describe as an “ontological crisis” which raises the question of the limits of humanitarian action. In connection with this point, the use of the concept of *moral panic*⁶ in the report may have misled certain readers, and understandably so, as this concept has lost so much of its eminently sociological meaning and has become just a label used for a reaction which is judged to be irrational or excessive⁷. Before being used in the media in a caricatured way, this concept aimed to place social reactions in the broader theatre of history – what the sociologist C Wright Mills calls showing *sociological imagination*⁸. For example, the bunkerisation of humanitarian agency offices needs to be understood in relation to the massive changes in the post Cold War world (analysed, for example, by Zaki Laidi in his book *A World Without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Relations*) and the contradictions which have affected the humanitarian field in the last two decades⁹.

In a general sense, we can imagine that humanitarian actors projected the malaise which came with the emergence of the new humanitarianism, breaking with humanitarian aid as it had traditionally been practiced since the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863¹⁰. As such, discussion of the politicisation and the militarisation of aid is as much the result of introspection to redefine the limits of the humanitarian field as it is a “new” threat for humanitarians¹¹. Similarly, the way humanitarian organisations have approached the new wars of the post-Cold War era has opened the door to strategies for conducting hostilities such as the kidnapping of humanitarian staff, which has led to a more rigid view of insecurity by humanitarians. Such a reading can seem incongruous, or even inappropriate, for those in charge of staff security in the field. But what happens in the field is far beyond their personal influence and needs to be seen within a wider historical and cultural context; that of a “risk culture” within which their actions take place. Though a wave of panic can decrease and disappear, it can have more significant and long-term consequences, such as the fortification of humanitarian organisation offices (see figure 1), or a more official and structured process of

institutionalisation, professionalization and standardisation of risk management within the humanitarian community. Moral panic of this kind can therefore have profound organisational and social consequences.

The construction of walls and barricades represents a collective project for “governing the Other”. From this angle, it is the open design of urban spaces which is considered dangerous. In response to this danger, spaces are built which can be defended and from which “undesirables” can be excluded (see figure 2). According to Fast, “Protection and dissuasion strategies focus on the construction of walls and barriers, and at a certain point, the separation between humanitarians and the people they are aiming to serve becomes such that it reduces their ability to see all stakeholders as human beings. Considering ‘beneficiaries’ as objects of fear rather than neighbours who need help is damaging to the principles which underpin and inform the humanitarian spirit and the way in which it is put into practice” (Fast 2010, p. 6, translated by Etienne Sutherland). This technology is combined with an individually-centred « self-governance » approach, which aims to produce new forms of subjectivity among humanitarians – what the political specialist Mark Duffield calls therapeutic self-governance. He writes, “As a way of avoiding and minimizing risk, aid workers are expected to act upon themselves, to change their own behaviour and lifestyles in order to make themselves fit for helping others¹².” It is not so much a question of resolving the “problem” of insecurity, but of minimizing risks by disciplining the behaviour of humanitarians so that they are capable of making rational and prudent choices. All aspects of everyday existence need to be programmed. Even romantic relationships need to be governed – in the name of security, which becomes the only criterion for assessing their behaviour.

As a general rule, “misconduct” is attributed to the (real or supposed) immaturity or ignorance of aid workers, without questioning whether humanitarian organisations’ security policies - quasi-totalitarian control over aid workers’ lifestyles - are fundamentally rational. Aid workers are not deemed to have sufficient autonomy to make informed decisions, and only the experts, those who know, have the ability to assess what is good for them. Of course, it is not clear how aid workers could make objective decisions regarding security when they are isolated from the external world. What is more, the views of the experts are not necessarily less subjective or more neutral than those of aid workers; on the contrary, the military or police background of many heads of security has a significant influence on the way they think and communicate about security. Though there is no doubt about the subjective nature of the perception of risk, it is the fact that the inter-

Discussion of the politicisation and the militarisation of aid is as much the result of introspection to redefine the limits of the humanitarian field as it is a “new” threat for humanitarians

pretative frameworks of the experts are given priority over the layperson's views that is problematic¹³. As such, the views of the experts often hide more than they reveal about the reality of the risks that aid workers face, by promoting a catastrophic vision of insecurity in Haiti. This vision, which is disseminated in security forums, for example, also creates feelings of fear and mistrust towards the local population. Though the success of these forums, which establish paranoia as a lifestyle, is largely debatable, they contribute directly towards the general representation of Port-au-Prince as an extremely dangerous place.

In Haiti, the humanitarian community has become obsessed with notions of risk (for example, risk assessment, risk management, risk threshold, acceptable risk), which is more the reflection of a fearful state of mind than of objective reality. Public space is no longer a place of interaction and exchange but a place where there is risk, which needs to be controlled by building walls and limiting movement. The introduction of notions of risk into humanitarian language reflects a broader movement of rationalization of the humanitarian field during the turbulent 1990s, "like a sign of social anxiety and cultural alarm and an emblem of a calculating reason and technological control" (Wilkinson 2010, p.16)¹⁴. Humanitarian security is becoming a rational and actuarial form of calculation based on risk assessment methods, with the goal of "governing" the behaviour of humanitarian actors. As Michael Barnett points out, the process of rationalising humanitarian aid is generally celebrated because it allows humanitarian agencies to act in a more effective manner and reach their organizational objectives¹⁵. In other terms, minimising risks makes it possible to help more people. Though it is difficult to argue with this kind of assertion, it nevertheless hides more troubling tendencies. Abby Stoddard and her colleagues reduce the notion of risk to a mathematical formula: Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequences. From this perspective, the reality experienced in the field by humanitarian staff and by those who attack them is reduced to rigorously controlled categories of "riskitude". As underlined by the criminologist Jock Young:

The actuarial stance is calculative of risk, it is wary and probabilistic, it is not concerned with causes but with probabilities, not with justice but with harm minimization, it does not seek a world free of crime but one where the best practices of damage limitation have been put in place, not a utopia but a series of gated havens in a hostile world (Young 1999, p. 66)

Notions of risk act as an "iron cage" which encloses the problem of humanitarian insecurity within a way of rea-

soning based on calculation and control¹⁶. When priority is given to technical directives for the evaluation and the management of risk, very little effort is made to address the fundamental causes of humanitarian insecurity. As such, the complexity of the phenomenon of urban violence in Port-au-Prince, notably towards humanitarian workers, is reduced to being one risk among others, in the same way as road accidents and diseases. The issue of security requires a different approach, an adaptive approach which is not limited to ready-made answers or pre-defined standards. The skills needed have to be more flexible and more intuitive than those required for the rational and actuarial approach. Security management is above all a practice, rather than a number of rules and bureaucratic procedures which destroy the flexibility of adjustments and undermine the very foundations of humanitarian aid, which is to be there for others. In Haiti, as elsewhere,

rational humanitarianism has replaced relational humanitarianism, by becoming increasingly rigid and impersonal. The philosopher, Zigmunt Bauman, points out that, 'when we obscure the essential human and moral aspects of care behind ever more rules and regulations we make the daily practice of social work

ever more distant from its original ethical impulse'¹⁷. In a country where more than 60% of the population say that they have no confidence whatsoever in NGOs, the real danger of security regulations is that they weaken the already fragile social relations between humanitarians and the local population¹⁸.

Arnaud DANDOY

Arnaud Dandoy is a jurist and a Doctor in Criminology. His research specifically focuses on the question of humanitarian insecurity, and more generally on the phenomenon of violence in humanitarian contexts. He is currently director of Criminology at Haiti State University (Port-au-Prince). He is also the co-founder of the Criminology of Humanitarianism Research Network: <http://www.jus.uio.no/ikrs/english/research/projects/criminology-of-humanitarianism/>

¹ Link: <http://www.urd.org/Study-Security-and-Humanitarian>

² See the work of Groupe URD « Pour une gestion programmatique de la sécurité », 1999, www.urd.org

³ For a literature review, see: Schreter, L. and Harmer, A. (2013) *Delivering Aid in Highly Insecure Environment. A critical review of the Literature, 2007-2012*, London : Humanitarian Outcomes

⁴ Fast, L. (2010) 'Mind the gap : Documenting and explaining violence against aid workers', *European Journal of International Relations*, 16 (2), p. 1-25

⁵ Dandoy, A. and Pérouse de Montclos, M-A (2013) 'Humanitarian Workers in Peril? Deconstructing the myth of the new and growing threat to humanitarian workers', *Global Crime*, vol. 14 (4)

⁶ The concept of moral panic was developed by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in his book (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics : The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, London : Routledge

⁷ For a critical analysis of the concept of moral panic, see Garland, D. (2008) 'On the concept of moral panic,' *Crime, Media and Culture*, 4(9), p. 9-30

⁸ Mills, C. W. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*, New York: Oxford University Press

⁹ Laidi, Z. (1998) *A World Without Meaning : The Crisis of Meaning in International Relations*, London: Routledge

¹⁰ Fox, F. (2001) 'New Humanitarianism: Does It Provide a Moral Banner for the 21st Century?' *Disasters*, 25(4), p.275-89; Rieff, D. (2001) *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*, New York: Simon & Schuster

¹¹ Dandoy, A. and Pérouse de Montclos, M-A (2013) 'Humanitarian Workers in Peril? Deconstructing the myth of the new and growing threat to humanitarian workers', *Global Crime*, vol. 14 (4)

¹² Duffield, M. (2010) 'Risk management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday life in Post-Interventionary Society', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 4, p. 453-74

¹³ Wynne, B. (1992) 'May the Sheep Safely Graze? A reflexive View of the Expert-Lay Knowledge Divide', in S. Lash (ed.) *Risk, Environment and Modernity*, London: Sage Publications

¹⁴ Risk is defined by the authors of the Good Practice Review (2010) as 'a measure of vulnerability to threats in the environment. In other words, risk is about the potential for harm: the likelihood of something harmful happening and the extent of that harm if it does. ... The combination of threat and vulnerability to that threat constitutes risk (Van Brabant 2010, p. 28).

¹⁵ Barnett, M. (2008) 'Humanitarianism as a Scholarly Vocation' in M. Barnett and T. Weiss (eds.) *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, Second edition, London : Cornell University Press

¹⁶ This concept was introduced by Max Weber in *The Protestant Work Ethic* (1905) to underline the consequences of bureaucratisation and rationalisation on the meanings of social life.

¹⁷ Bauman (2000), cited in Smith, M. (2006) *Rethinking Residential Child Care: Positives Perspectives*, Bristol: The Policy Press, p. 166

¹⁸ Gilles, A. (2012) « The Social Bond, Conflict and Violence in Haiti », PRIO, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/social-bond-conflict-and-violence-haiti>



Fig.1: Office of Médecins Sans Frontières (Pétion-Ville)



Fig.2: Sign at the entrance of the closed community of Belvil (Pétion-Ville)

Organization and governance in the era of digital humanitarianism

Andrej VERITY & Mary MILNER

Humanitarian Affairs is seeing the emergence of “digital humanitarians”, often referred to as Volunteer & Technical Communities (V&TCs), who are harnessing new technologies to bridge the gap between affected populations and responding agencies. Historically volunteerism and technology have been major drivers of innovation within the sector and modern V&TCs have the potential to revolutionize it again. However, because these networks are often nebulous and ill-defined, formal humanitarian organizations are struggling to integrate and collaborate effectively. To ensure this innovation has a positive impact, appropriate governance, engagement from both sides, and a neutral interface such as the Digital Humanitarian Network will be needed.

A lot of people like to write about the fact that we need to change in terms of governance, but little has been done to figure out exactly how to make such changes. As well, there is always a lot of discussion about how slow the humanitarian community is to adopt new technology and new approaches. A recent report - *Collaborative Innovation in Humanitarian Affairs - Organization and*

*Governance in the Era of Digital Humanitarianism*¹⁻ has tried to find some answers or directions, based on an extensive literature review.

History: volunteers and technological innovation

Volunteers and Technology are the basis upon which humanitarian affairs is built. Historically, both volunteers and new technologies have been the spark which spurred innovation in humanitarian affairs. In fact, the humanitarian system was originally started by volunteers, has been spurred by technology and is, in and of itself, an innovation in the established system of international relations based on sovereign states. Nineteenth century technologies such as the telegraph and the steam engine shortened the distance between suffering abroad and public interest at home. As a result of this increasing connectivity, and the “universality of the Red Cross movement,” there was significant political and civil mobilization behind the effort to establish the organizational structure and international legal framework for humanitarianism. The League of Nations and the United Nations allowed the humanitarian

system to develop above the level of nation states and was a major development in international law and international relations - an innovation. This shift away from absolute sovereignty could be said to have begun the erosion of the power of 'the state' - a process which today is seemingly accelerated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Thanks to instantaneous broadcast media bringing horrific and highly visible civil wars to living rooms around the world, the international community surged in its efforts at peace keeping and humanitarianism following the end of the Cold War. In fact, "from 1948-88, the UN undertook only five peacekeeping missions; [whereas] from 1989-94 it authorized 20 missions and increased the number of peacekeepers from 11,000 to 75,000." This dramatic increase in international efforts, coupled with the now vast network of NGOs, meant that the humanitarian system needed greater coordination in order to be effective. In 1991, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/182 on the 'Strengthening of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations' which established both the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which would later become the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in 1998.

Recent past: emergence of V&TCs, horizontal governance and effective collaboration

Innovation has become a way for private firms to be competitive yet humanitarian/disaster response has been protected by high barriers of entry. With modern technology, outside actors have started to develop new networks, tools and initiatives that better meet the needs of the public. Perhaps the first major aspect of this trend in humanitarian affairs is the emergence of the Volunteers & Technical Communities (V&TCs) who are communities of volunteers and/or professionals who seek to leverage their skills and today's technologies to assist formal humanitarian response and affected populations during times of crisis. These networks of digital global citizens have identified, and moved to fill, gaps in international crisis response. In many ways they fit the description of a Global Solution Network² as defined by Don Tapscott³.

In trying to figure out ideal governance for a horizontal structure, we looked outside the V&TCs for examples. Open-source software communities, Occupy Wall Street, and Wikipedia have forged a new path towards horizontal organizational structure. However, they have also experienced significant downsides in the absence of predetermined organizational and governance structures. The main finding was how important defining governance structure, in advance if possible, really was to the long-term survival of the entity. A disregard for governance

structure can actually result in an unrestricted, hyper-political, and detrimental power structure within a 'leaderless' entity. In some of the cases, the research showed that an aversion to articulating good governance for a network leaves it vulnerable to the occurrence of informal hierarchy - that is, the type of hierarchy that develops 'naturally' between individuals. This type of hierarchy can actually be far more detrimental and debilitating to a network than a predetermined organizational structure. Analysis of research related to hierarchy within network organizations found that despite the initial intentions to be hierarchy free, hierarchical structures emerged over time. Although V&TCs should continue to be inspired by these groups, we must seek to improve upon their models.

Now: disruptive innovation in humanitarianism

When looking back at the evolution of the humanitarian system, one realizes that the current structure is the result of a century's worth of innovation - experimentation, success and failure. Yes, the increased systematization of humanitarian action into standards, codes of conduct, policies, and procedures - or in other words, a ballooning of organizational structure - is the result of a century's worth of innovation. V&TCs are now challenging the 'status quo' of humanitarian affairs and are regarded within the humanitarian community as having both benefits and risks for the system. They are presenting the humanitarian system with disruptive innovation.

V&TCs and the services they provide offer massive potential to benefit disaster response and affected populations. Therefore, it is the responsibility of both the V&TCs and the formal humanitarian community to ensure that their efforts are sustainable and continue to grow, adapt, and integrate. As seen through history, the problem of integrating volunteer movements and new technologies into humanitarian affairs is not new. Digging deeper into some of the "successful" V&TCs, it is clear that they are not so much a departure from the traditional system as one might expect, and therefore, the greatest obstacle to their integration may not be policies and procedures, but an acceptance from both sides that they are similar in nature will mutually benefit each other once they start working together constructively. But, how can they better contribute to the humanitarian system as it already exists? This question remains unanswered and, therefore, V&TCs as actors are seen to be a nebulous, unfamiliar, and unfortunately at times, an unwelcome addition to humanitarian affairs.

In looking back on past collaboration efforts between formal humanitarian organizations and V&TCs (Libya, Japan, Haiti and most recently the Philippines), it became very clear that effective collaboration is possible when a framework is established that allows the volunteer network

to work organically, while still ensuring the reliability and protections that the humanitarian system requires. Such a framework is exactly why the Digital Humanitarian Network⁴ (DHNetwork) was established and why guidance material has been drafted (Guidance for Collaborating with V&TCs⁵ | Guidance for Collaborating with Formal Humanitarian Organizations⁶). It is also why V&TCs have pushed for clarity of Decision Makers' Needs⁷ which has resulted in the Decision Makers Taxonomy⁸ and the workshop to define Decision Makers Needs in Sudden Onset Emergencies⁹. Providing relevant, targeted and properly presented information during emergencies is key.

UN-OCHA¹⁰ has recently initiated a modest effort to define detailed use cases where V&TCs can improve, augment and amplify existing UN-OCHA products and processes. But this is just a tiny step towards the integration that is needed. UN-OCHA, and others, still need an interface with the V&TCs. This niche is where the DHNetwork has the potential to become the vehicle through which integration and effective collaboration between V&TCs and the formal humanitarian system can happen.

Going forward: integration and the Digital Humanitarian Network

Logically, individual V&TCs need to consider taking an active stance towards governance and organization models in order to prevent against the negative aspects of informal hierarchy, elitism, and hyper-politicization that occur within naturally evolving networks. This is entirely possible to do while retaining a flat organizational structure and distributed decision making. This effort will go a long way to building the sustainability, legitimacy, and reliability that is required from the formal humanitarian system before V&TCs can become an equally weighted force in disaster response. It has become clear over time that in order for the work of V&TCs to meet its true potential, they will have to meet formal organizations halfway. Likewise, the humanitarian system must take responsibility for ensuring that this work is encouraged, supported and integrated - in order to better meet the needs of affected populations. As such, both sides need to invest in a neutral space for collaboration, discussion, development and problem solving.

If given proper attention from the formal humanitarian system and the V&TCs, the DHNetwork has the potential to become the 'interface' which would enable the full integration (not assimilation) of the V&TCs into the

humanitarian system. The DHN as a coordination body could:

- Provide support to its members in terms of organizational development, project management and collaboration arrangements;
- Facilitate dialogue, collaboration and partnership between groups - operationalize the recommendations set forth by the Guidance for Collaborating with Volunteer & Technical Communities and the Guidance for Collaborating with Formal Humanitarian Organizations;
- Support the sustainability of its members by leveraging the idea of a participatory aid marketplace or by securing private and public partners to fund the further development of V&TCs and their initiatives;
- Raise public and institutional awareness about the V&TCs and what they offer;
- Actively liaise with formal humanitarian organizations to mesh policies, procedures, standards and mechanisms;
- Create a neutral space for the mediation of disputes between V&TCs themselves and with the larger humanitarian system
- Continue to act as an activation mechanism for V&TCs by the formal organizations.

A fully formed DHNetwork would relieve pressure on both sides by allowing each to focus on what they do best, while taking on the administrative and integration issues. Further development of the DHNetwork and individual V&TCs will also open up the possibility of sustainable funding that could enable these networks to better manage their volunteers, increase surge capacity, and allow for paid staff to be consistently dedicated to the effort. In order to achieve this goal however, the DHNetwork itself will have to undergo significant organizational development and will require investment from both the V&TCs and from the formal humanitarian system.

Andrej VERITY & Mary MILNER

Andrej Verity is an information management officer at the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mary Eileen Milner is a Master of Global Affairs 2014 candidate at the Munk School of Global Affairs in Toronto, Canada

*Article based on the blog of Andrej Verity:
<http://blog.veritythink.com/>*

Aid delivery in Afghanistan – Are military forces really responsible for the deterioration of humanitarian space?

Much has been written about aid delivery in conflict-affected environments, with particular areas of concern being shrinking humanitarian space, civil-military interaction, and the blurring of lines between humanitarian and military interventions. In 2009 and 2010 I was the director of ACBAR, a coordinating body for NGOs in Afghanistan. At that critical time for the country, I was ideally placed to observe the behaviour of both humanitarian actors and armed forces and how they interacted. This opened my eyes to the *modi operandi* of aid organizations and how shifting donor interests can quickly transform the priorities of the humanitarian community working in a crisis.

My purpose here is to share my own observations after nearly nine years spent in one of the world's most militarized contexts in order to highlight some of the problematic behaviour of humanitarian aid actors. In the Afghan context, where the tough operating environment calls for extreme discipline and consistency, many organisations instead succumbed to short-sighted actions and behaviour, losing track of the longer-term implications for themselves and for the sector as a whole. When humanitarian principles are distorted to the point where they become meaningless, it is time for all actors to take a step back and critically examine the impact of their own behaviour on future humanitarian action.

Principled action: different interpretations, applied differently

The principles that are supposed to guide the work of humanitarian actors are understood in many different ways. Consequently, they are implemented in many different ways too. However, the ways in which I have seen these guiding principles applied and misapplied has sometimes made me question the intellectual honesty of certain actors and wonder whether they are understood or taken seriously at all.

An example that comes to mind is the fact that numerous aid organizations willingly accepted funding from Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) – funding which was distributed across Afghanistan to support politically and/or

This kind of extreme flexibility with principles is highly regrettable from an ethical point of view, as it constitutes a breach of the moral contract between victims and aid workers

militarily motivated projects – while, at the same time, these same organizations were active in delivering relief assistance to victims of the conflict. The position of these organizations was therefore seen to be confusing and inconsistent by external actors, such as armed groups and even beneficiaries of assistance. As a consequence, they lost credibility.

and especially important in conflict-affected environments such as Afghanistan, it directly endangers the lives of both civilians and aid workers.

This kind of extreme flexibility with principles is highly regrettable from an ethical point of view, as it constitutes a breach of the moral contract between victims and aid workers. But perhaps more seriously,

Without a doubt, we need to be realistic and accept the fact that differences of opinion and interpretation between different actors are unavoidable and can potentially even be a healthy sign in a community with diverse backgrounds. But nevertheless, the fact remains that the notable lack of consistency in this domain has concrete and serious effects on the delivery of aid and the possibilities for coordination. As a result, certain actors, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) tend to feel that that it is necessary to distance themselves from other humanitarian actors by, for example, not being associated with any collective communication initiatives or only having observer roles in coordination forums.

Donor money: too much, too fast?

The aid community in Afghanistan saw a big shift to a new dynamic after 9/11. From relatively modest budgets during the Taliban regime, numerous aid agencies and international organizations saw their budgets increased to up to ten times their previous levels within two or three years.

This dramatic change should not only raise concerns about how well taxpayers' money from donors was managed. The change in the level of funding was accompanied by a rapid shift in the aid community, from having a fairly

principled – especially in terms of independence and impartiality – and widely respected humanitarian approach, to something different.

What exactly has taken the place of this approach is still unclear. Have aid organizations mainly turned into implementing partners of the newly established Afghan government? Are they part of the Western-backed counter-insurgency strategy aiming at dissolving the Taliban in its entirety? Are they reduced to simply competing against each other for funding in a competitive market, based primarily on efficiency with little regard for principles? These new roles are all present, but to different degrees among different organizations.

While this development might be seen as serious enough in itself, it became especially so for those organizations that in this ever-changing landscape tried hard to stay true to their principles. For the ICRC, it was not an easy task trying to explain its approach to representatives of the Bush Administration, who would bluntly reject the concept of humanitarian neutrality.

In defence of the aid organizations taking on new roles after 9/11, the options for how to rebuild a country devastated by conflict were limited, and donors naturally looked to the aid organizations and agencies that already had experience working in the country. Aid agencies were not forced into these new and bigger roles, often as strategic partners of the newly formed government, but they were definitely strongly “encouraged” by most donor agencies to take them on, starting with USAID and DFID and followed by other NATO Member States supporting the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The decision to enter, the decision to stay

Some organizations and agencies may have made a conscious decision to enter this context, taking into account the potential risks for their staff and their beneficiaries, as well as for their image. From my discussions with people in different organizations, I know that several were at least aware of the fact that there would be a price to pay for taking on this kind of role. However, many may have just gone with the flow, not really considering the possible long-term consequences.

This might have been an excusable choice in the situation immediately following 9/11 when everyone thought the Taliban regime was as good as gone. It is true that, for nearly three years, Afghanistan enjoyed a period of hope and contagious euphoria. Why adopt a neutral attitude when the “battle against evil” would soon be over anyway?

Once it became clear that the war was in fact not over, all humanitarian organizations and agencies should have suspended a number of projects that were potentially harmful or compromising. Aid providers should have joined forces in order to push for a Memorandum of Understanding that was approved by all warring parties that could have defined the conditions under which humanitarian actors could continue to operate in the country.

This was indeed what MSF did before resuming activities in Afghanistan after nearly seven years of interruption, with a document that was signed by the three main parties involved in the conflict: the US military command, the Afghan government, and the Quetta Shura, represented by the former Minister of Public Health during the Taliban regime. The rest of the aid actors, on the other hand, kept debating the issue while at the same time carrying on with business as usual.

Shifting the blame

It was only when security deteriorated substantially that the humanitarian community started revising the way they were operating in earnest. Even at that stage, they were in general still not truly questioning their interventions. In this confusing atmosphere, military actors who were involved in aid delivery, aiming at “winning the hearts and minds” of the Afghan people, either directly or through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), became an easy scapegoat held responsible for shrinking humanitarian space.

Most NGOs and UN agencies forgot or refused to even consider that they were in fact actively participating in the implementation of the Counter-Insurgency Strategy supported by the coalition, and that this was perhaps the main reason for the greater challenges they were facing. It was easier to blame armed actors for their involvement in activities traditionally implemented by aid agencies than to look critically at what the aid community had become in the Afghan context. The underlying issue had in fact little to do with the involvement of armed actors in aid delivery. On the contrary, it was the new role of the aid community and its ambiguous – not to say schizophrenic – behaviour that were responsible for how humanitarian actors in the country were now being perceived.

Supporting reconstruction efforts in a time of peace not only makes sense, but is also an obligation that the aid community bears collectively. However, doing the same in a time of war, and as part of a reconstruction strategy heavily influenced by military objectives, is a whole different story. Aid actors should have acknowledged this unanimously, had they been true to their commitment to basic humanitarian principles.

Refocusing on the underlying causes

Holding armed forces responsible for the radical change in perception of the aid community was not only intellectually dishonest but also prevented most aid organizations and agencies from looking at the true causes of their increasing difficulties to operate. Humanitarian actors have been incapable of taking a step back and assessing their own strategies and actions, and therefore incapable of taking the necessary steps to regain credibility, access, and the confidence of the beneficiaries and conflict stakeholders. The situation has become more and more confusing and chaotic to the point where even the most principled humanitarian actors become a target, as was the case with the attack on the ICRC in Jalalabad in May earlier this year.

I do not in any way justify attacks perpetrated against aid agencies, even if their neutrality has been long gone in the valleys of the Hindukush Mountains. Attacks against civilians, including political activists, cannot be justified at any time. They remain a violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, and as such must be condemned.

However, the aid community must look at what has happened in Afghanistan, and what is still continuing to play out. The time has come to objectively and honestly draw the right conclusions and make amends. Abraham Lincoln once said that it is in the darkest of times that principles show us the way. That time has come. It is now that NGOs and UN agencies should remember the true meaning of these wise words. Wars and conflicts are unlikely to ever end completely. What we can do, however, is stop repeating mistakes and instead learn from the ones that we have already made.

As I write this article, Syria and Somalia come to mind. The reasons for the conflicts might be different, but the needs are the same, the general drivers of conflict are the same, and the pressures on aid actors are the same. We must not let the smoke of conflict blur our judgement in these crises. Our manoeuvring in the labyrinth of making principled humanitarian action work on the ground will continue to be difficult in a sector which is by necessity diverse. But I hope, as a member of this community, that we can all strive to better agree on and follow the core principles in our delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Holding armed forces responsible for the radical change in perception of the aid community was not only intellectually dishonest but also prevented most aid organizations and agencies from looking at the true causes of their increasing difficulties to operate

Laurent SAILLARD

Former Director of ACBAR and Chairman of the Civil Military Coordination Forum for Afghanistan

Crises and vulnerabilities

Humanitarian work in prisons: the experience of Médecins Sans Frontières

Jean-Marc BIQUET

Humanitarian action by NGOs in detention centres is quite rare and poorly documented. Despite the fact that prisoners are among those who have the least access to quality health care services, MSF has never chosen to make detention centres one of its strategic priorities. The inherent difficulties linked to this operational context explain the limited number of projects the organisation has developed and managed in prisons.

Prisons are particularly secretive places. Living conditions are often deplorable, as is noted in the preface to a manual on the proper use of international penitential rules published by the NGO Penal Reform International: “[The UN] has a number of international rights techniques to protect and guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms in prisons. It should be noted that these principles are improperly applied in many (or even most) countries in the world¹”. However, humanitarian projects for inmates are rare and largely undocumented.

Although MSF does not intend to give special priority to prisons in any given context, there is also no reason to exclude prisons as a place of intervention. The status of inmates changes nothing. As with any other case, MSF will analyze the situation from medical and human perspectives.

Though it has never been cited as one of the organization’s operational priorities, historically MSF has had many projects within prison systems. In each case, the decision to implement these projects has been based on a number of criteria.

The trigger: an emergency or a public health approach

Experience shows us that projects in prisons are often the result of emergencies like cholera or typhus epidemics that affect people living in the immediate vicinity of prisons. In contexts like these, medical teams provide assistance in prisons, which are often a focal point for epidemics. This can either be the team’s own initiative or can be requested by the prison authorities.

Severe malnutrition among inmates can also be a reason for intervention.

In both of these situations, interventions are usually short-term. MSF teams respond to immediate needs to stem mortality rates and, sometimes after a basic rehabilitation of sanitation facilities, leave soon after the last patients have recovered.

Guéckédou, Guinea

A visit by an MSF staff member to the city’s prison brought to light the terrible situation of the site’s 70 residents: one out of three adult male inmates suffered from malnutrition, and one out of five of these suffered from severe acute malnutrition. Dreadful hygiene conditions led to dehydration and numerous respiratory and skin infections among inmates. Overcrowded cells housed both minors and adults, and inmates with tuberculosis (TB) lived with those without it. Healthcare was available only very rarely. MSF responded to the situation by distributing emergency therapeutic food for almost three months. MSF also performed medical visits, distributed medication and provided equipment for water supply, sanitation facilities and personal hygiene. At the same time, MSF lobbied intensely to search for a sustainable and systemic solution to the problem².

In addition to these emergency interventions, MSF has also developed programs to focus on chronic illnesses inside prisons. In contexts where there is a high prevalence of tuberculosis, prisons are known to be primary sources of infection³; MSF teams have approached prison authorities proactively to propose a partnership to develop a proper response to the disease.

These projects typically last for several years and lead to their share of debates about the organization’s actual role and the limits and merits of such a commitment.

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

In a recent report, the WHO⁴ described prisons in the former Soviet bloc as a breeding ground for TB, especially multi-resistant TB, with 50 times the incidence rate and 28 times the mortality rate for inmates than for civilians. In 2006, MSF developed a project to care for inmates in colony 31, which houses inmates afflicted with drug-sensitive or drug-resistant TB (ICRC works with a colony that houses patients whose base illness is resistant to all traditional medications). With the help of prison authorities and the prison’s medical staff, MSF has treated hundreds of inmates. The project will end in 2014 with the gradual handover of activities from MSF to prison authorities or the ICRC.

More rarely, a third type of situation (in addition to emergencies or major public health crises) can justify starting up a project inside a prison: a strategic operational opportunity. This requires several factors:

- An invitation from authorities influential in the situation (no proactive steps by MSF, rather a response to an invitation)
- A medical problem that is clearly being inadequately addressed (an evaluation of needs remains one of the essential prerequisites for taking action)
- Expected extra gain in access to populations in need of assistance.

For example, in Yemen, MSF has accepted a request for a prison assessment from local authorities in Al-Dhale governorate, exploring the potential needs of detainees affiliated to southern opposition/secessionist groups. Working in prisons in a disputed area of the country will allow MSF to help people mostly from one of the parties to the conflict. This will balance out some of its activities targeting other parties to the conflict in other parts of the country. It will be a concrete way for MSF to demonstrate its operational principles of neutrality and impartiality. In Myanmar, the project at Insein in one of the country's largest prisons was a truly exceptional case. Ever since the ICRC was forced to leave in 2005⁵, no international organization had been granted access to Burmese prisons and its many inmates. The project also helped develop relationships with the Burmese authorities in ways that no other project ever had before.

In the cases of both Myanmar and Yemen, a solid dose of opportunism buoyed the desire to take action. The reality of unaddressed medical needs alone does not explain why these projects were put in place.

Insein, Myanmar

In 2008, MSF teams working in Myanmar, notably implementing AIDS treatment projects, were approached by the Yangon prison medical director. His main concern was that the authorities were not responding to the needs of inmates affected by AIDS⁶. AIDS is the primary cause of death in prison. (Twenty-seven percent of deaths at Insein are caused by HIV. These numbers were provided in 2008 to the MSF team by the prison's medical director.) Having observed MSF's work in other projects, the director personally took the step of trying to persuade his superiors to accept an MSF project. It took two years of negotiation for MSF's conditions to be acceptable to both parties. Since the beginning of the project in late 2010, negotiations have been ongoing to extend healthcare activities while making sure the prison authorities are involved in their implementation.

Detention center for migrants in Sana'a, Yemen's capital. 2013



©Anna Surinych/MSF

The main objective is to lower mortality rates

No matter the context or the circumstances that led to its development, the top priority for a project in prison is to reduce mortality rates, which is the key indicator when evaluating a project's progression. The trigger for the project is the absence of an adequate response to the cause or causes of mortality. In accordance with its practices in other circumstances, MSF focuses its actions on direct patient care, standing in for the prison's medical staff as long as necessary.

A guarantee of the program's continuation is not a prerequisite for taking action; even if teams quickly start to look for possible ways to hand over activities and responsibilities for the longer term.

If the program is a response to an emergency such as a cholera epidemic or famine, MSF works to stabilize the problem by caring for patients, and the project comes to a close when the last patients have recovered.

In interventions for chronic illnesses like HIV or TB, exit criteria are mostly political and organizational (e.g., prison authorities' willingness to accept appropriate training for officers in charge of prison healthcare, adoption of protocols and procedures for adequate care and mobilization of the necessary means).

In reality, investments need to be planned for a quite long period to meet the goals of a satisfactory handover. When handing over, MSF seeks to ensure that the healthcare provided will be at least as good as what is available to the country's population⁷.

Relationships with authorities: a determining factor for potential success

The prison environment's characteristics make agreements between MSF and authorities particularly important, especially since authorities have a de facto monopoly on detention conditions. In doing so, they are also the only ones responsible for the situation that has led to needing outside help in the first place. Authorities overseeing detention also necessarily hold the keys to MSF's future actions and thus to the consequences of improvements to medical services provided by MSF's projects.

Therefore, nothing can be done without a formal, explicit agreement.

It is essential to understand the mysteries and procedures of local power in order to understand with whom to negotiate. Often, multiple ministries and administrations each have their own say, and some of them may not have any experience of working with foreign NGOs (e.g., ministry of justice, ministry of defense or ministry of the interior) and/or are not used to working together (e.g., ministry of health and ministry of justice).

Unlike most other medical projects for which MSF's main contact is the Ministry of Health, the authorities overseeing prisons are focused on security rather than health. This fact hinders dialogue between parties and reinforces the need for constant negotiations to align both parties' constraints and objectives: security, a lack of means/motivation on the part of prison authorities, quality of care, respect for patient rights and dignity and MSF's need to limit the project's duration.

Negotiations are made even more difficult for MSF because fewer means of action are available than in other situations: use of public opinion or lobbying of local elites are less effective because inmates are badly perceived, and aid provided to them may be considered to come at a cost to the rest of the population.

One of the greatest difficulties that MSF teams face when a project focuses on treating chronic illnesses is that, ironically, a prison is not a closed system. There is a lot of coming and going (visitors, inmates' families, civil servant staff, etc.), and the inmate also has a life before and after incarceration.

This means that actions to lower mortality rates have another set of constraints, challenges and stakeholders: not only must the program care for patients during their time of detention, it must also facilitate patient integration into the civilian healthcare system.

Experience with these difficulties, among others, has led MSF to take the time to define all the realistic actions that the project intends to take and the responsibilities that the organization intends to assume. If the project is not a response to an acute epidemic, negotiations for a framework agreement often take a long time before the project begins, but they are essential for avoiding later obstacles.

Conclusions

MSF has three types of prison interventions (emergencies, chronic illness and strategic opportunities); all represent specific challenges to the organization.

MSF almost always approaches prisons prudently and with caution. In addition to the initial struggle to obtain information on the real situation behind prison walls, the

inherent characteristics of prisons and the patients residing there make work conditions difficult.

Prisoners are often marginalized from society and may consume drugs, alcohol, etc. For them, the challenges of reintegration after serving their time are colossal, and complying with tiresome treatments is rarely a priority before and after leaving prison.

Working within the repressive system of a government that has complete control over inmate living conditions (including health conditions) is a source of many ethical questions for MSF staff not experienced with these situations.

In many cases, MSF may be faced with its own limits. It must reflect constantly on its practices to adapt its actions to prison-specific challenges. The purpose of this is to

achieve the healthcare objectives it has set for itself and maintain the role it has chosen without being used for some other ends.

In addition to the initial struggle to obtain information on the real situation behind prison walls, the inherent characteristics of prisons and the patients residing there make work conditions difficult

This explains to a great extent why there have

been so few MSF projects in prisons to date. Whether or not it will assess the medical situation in detention centres in contexts where it is active more systematically depends on the strategic choices the organisation will make in the future. It has not decided to do so for the moment.

Jean-Marc BIQUET

Researcher, Unité de Recherche sur les Enjeux et les Pratiques Humanitaires (UREPH), Doctors Without Borders

¹ "Making Standards Work: an international handbook on good prison practice" Penal Reform International, 2001. Available in French at: <http://www.penalreform.org/publications/making-standards-work-international-handbook-good-prison-practice>

² See the report "Pas de Nourriture, pas de médicaments jusqu'à la mort" ["No Food, No Medicine, Until Death"], February 2009. MSF Belgium. http://www.msf.org/source/countries/afrika/guinea/2009/reports/MSF_Prisons_Guinee.pdf

³ WALCHER G. "Prisons as regional drivers of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in some Central Asian countries: A matter of 'least eligibility'" International Journal of Prisoner Health, June-December 2005; 1(2-4): 103-115

⁴ World Health Organization. The Global Plan to STOP TB 2006-2015. Part II: Global and regional scenarios for TB control 2006-2015. Geneva: WHO Stop TB Partnership, 2010: p 91. <http://www.stoptb.org/global/plan/main/part2.asp>

⁵ Very recently, ICRC was allowed to restart activities in Myanmar prisons.

⁶ According to the WHO, the country's incidence of AIDS is 6 out of every 1,000 adults between the ages of 15 and 49 (2010). See <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/mmr.pdf>. According to numbers provided by the prison, 4.5% of pregnant women in prison are HIV-positive, compared to 1.4% of civilians. Thirty-six percent of sex workers incarcerated at Insein are afflicted by AIDS versus 11% of those not in prison.

⁷ In accordance with the "Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," United Nations General Assembly (December 18, 1982).

For a holistic approach to problems and opportunities in North Mali

François GRÜNEWALD

This article aims to analyse the challenges and difficulties involved in developing a multi-scenario approach in relation to the peace-building process in Mali, identifying the opportunities that exist in order to find solutions to certain problems currently facing North Mali. It looks at the characteristics of the human context and the agro-ecosystems in this area, the major challenges faced in 2013 and at the beginning of 2014 to consolidate the peace process and a certain number of lessons from rehabilitation programmes implemented during previous crises. It explains a number of key points to understand the current situation in North Mali and underlines the importance of an approach which includes both global understanding and well articulated propositions.

A complex human context and hostile natural conditions

It is difficult to understand the many issues involved in North Mali if you have never immersed yourself in its arid and seemingly empty landscape. In the Sahelo-Sahelian desert, time and distance are not measured in the same way as elsewhere. Though the arrival of 4-wheel drives has partly changed the situation, it is still sometimes necessary to travel on camel back for hours or days before reaching the first neighbours. Until recently the unit of measurement was not the kilometre but the distance that had to be covered without watering livestock in pastoral areas, or between water points along the Saharan roads. Today the unit of measurement is the distance between two fuel stations even though tarmac is replaced by sand and any vehicle that is driven in an inappropriate manner gets stuck. In the desert, everything takes on different proportions.

A very restrictive agro-ecological context

The climatology in these Sahelo-Saharan and Saharan areas is characterized, on the one hand, by very low rainfall, and on the other hand, by great variations in where and when rain falls and how much falls from one year to another. These are extremely arid regions in which the random character of rainfall makes rain-fed agriculture very uncertain. The Niger river and its many branches (backwaters which flow into it or branches which fill at the annual spate) reduce the harshness of the conditions in this vast desert region and create major opportunities for agriculture: irrigated areas, the cultivation of rice during the spate, the system of Lakes in the region of Goundam (Faguibine), etc. During the dry season, this

hydraulic network creates water and pastureland resources which determine the movements of herds and replenishes the region's water table by infiltration.

Even flood-recession agricultural complexes around the temporary pools (west and south of the region of Gao), which usually fill up during the rainy season and can be cultivated when the water level drops back down, are currently in danger. The rate at which the pools fill varies significantly from year to year and is affected by the gradual filling of these clay dips by sand and the silt from wind erosion. The only agricultural systems which are more or less secure are those that can be irrigated, but in such cases the price of pumping water is very high. These irrigated systems, which have been developed in river-bank areas or close to water reserves, have had a profound effect on the relations between farmers and pastoralists, and have led to new social contracts for access to water points, to dry season pastureland and to common pastureland rights with the goal of re-using straw and harvest residues. The relations between farmers and pastoralists have been modified by this, and all the more so since métayage and agricultural wage systems have begun to appear. These have allowed the nomads, who are beginning to sedentarise due to the droughts, to be integrated into agricultural production processes, but have reversed some of the power relations between communities. The herds follow routes which run perpendicular to the river, going from the river banks towards the Haoussa (higher grounds on the left bank of the river) or the Gourma (higher grounds on the right bank) during the rainy season and coming back to the river fringe and its plains where bourgou grows during the dry season. The distribution of herds beyond the river fringe is dictated by the dispersal of wells and drilling sites, as well as that of temporary pools and other traditional water points which are scattered around the region, where there are complex property and forage land management systems.

A diverse human context made up of groups who are often antagonistic, often complementary and always involved in complex and changing internal and external relations.

The Tuareg, Arab, Bellah, Songhay, Peulh and Bozo communities are complex and internally split by power systems and relations of exploitation. They have always had ambiguous relations, with cultural antagonisms that have often been exacerbated over time, and competition over land ownership, but they are also mutually dependent. Such is the case, for example, regarding the exchanges between animal products and farm products, the management of local regions, the collective and appro-

appropriate use of water points in the Haoussa and the Gourma and access to water and the plains where *bourgou* grows in the valley of the river Niger. By significantly modifying the agro-ecological and human data of the Sahelo-Saharan and Saharan contexts that are to be found, for example, further to the east in Niger or to the west in Mali, or even towards Mauritania, the river plays a fundamental role in the human geography of the region. It shapes the relations between groups in different places and at different times: scattered across the desert and the pasturelands of the Sahel during the rainy season and gathered together around the temporary pools and riverbanks during the dry season

Trade in salt throughout the Sahara, with the caravans of the Azalaï who transport the salt from Taoudéni towards the south and come back up from Dogon and Burkina Faso with cereals, creates an economic spine which directs how exchanges in this region function. This tradition of trans-Saharan and trans-African trade obviously made supplying North Mali from Algeria and Libya easier. Thus, trucks arrive at the big livestock markets of the Haoussa full of Algerian products (food, drinks, fuels, etc.) and leave again full of livestock. This has obviously facilitated the emergence of illicit economic networks and a lot of trafficking which has taken advantage of the uncontrolled situation in these vast expanses and the complicity at various levels in countries in the area.

An area and people who have been severely affected by the succession of crises

The events of 2011-2014 have further deteriorated a situation which had already been significantly degraded by the droughts of 1973-74, 1984-85, 2010 and 2011 as well as the political crises of the 90s, 2000 and 2006. These different events brought about and continue to bring about profound changes to natural and human environments. With the sedentarisation of nomadic communities and the access to education that this allows there also comes profound changes in social relations, with a redistribution of roles between high casts and former servants as well as the transformation of the role of women. Finally, the succession of crises has exposed the inhabitants of North Mali to the practices of humanitarian agencies, with the positive and negative aspects that this implies.

These crises have had several major consequences for these communities who had been cut off from the world for a long time. They accelerated the exodus towards the

cities, migration abroad and exile to refugee camps. Uprooted from their pastoral areas, the nomads have learned other ways of living, getting used to the harsh realities of urban employment, becoming soldiers in other people's wars (Lybia, etc.), becoming familiar with the functioning of humanitarian aid, or becoming part of the Diasporas of Paris, Dubai, Nouakchott or Doha. These factors of social change should imperatively be taken into account by anyone who wants to carry out programmes in the region. The impact of the recent conflict is obviously still being felt, with very intense psychological wounds, deep misunderstanding, justice not yet re-established and

peace-building efforts which continue to falter. In order to understand the current situation it is important to look at the history of the conflict in North Mali. Often simply described as a clash between "white" nomads and "black" farmers, it is actually much more complex. During the previous conflict in the 90ies, the demands of the Front de l'Azawouad, which included all the ethnic groups of the North, did not concern ethnic issues, but rather for a genuine development policy in North Mali. Only when it became necessary to divide to rule

were the different groups played against each other. After that crisis, significant efforts were made including decentralization, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the integration of Tuareg leaders into high levels of the administration and the army, and the development of infrastructure. However, the deterioration of governance at the highest level of the state, which allowed a culture of impunity and illegal trade to develop, combined with the movement south of radical Islamic movements normally based in the Maghreb, created the conditions which would then explode. The war in Lybia followed by the return of groups of heavily armed Tuareg soldiers led to the defeat of the widely demoralized Malian army. A number of horrible acts, such as the Aguelhok massacre, echoed past situations where the Malian army had attacked defenceless Tuareg camps. The North thus fell very suddenly, leading to a coup d'état in Bamako and putting an end to Mali's "donor darling" image. The takeover of the North by the radical Islamic movements was complex as some of them were internationalist (AQMI) whereas others were essentially interested in the Sahel (MUJAO) and others just in the national situation (Ansar Edine).

The military interventions by France (Serval), the African nations (MISMA), and then the United Nations (MINUSMA) allowed almost the whole territory to be recovered, with numerous areas of uncertainty and tension such as in Kidal. In this context, the redistribution of strategic and tactical cards amongst political movements seeking to begin negotiations has met with a lot of diffi-



Dunes on the banks of the Niger River in Timbuktu

© Groupe URD

culties. The negotiations between Bamako and Malian armed opposition movements (MNLA, MUA), themselves very divided, are not making any headway.

Despite exercises like the *Etats généraux de la décentralisation* (the 2013 version only reiterated what had been said at the 2011 and 2012 sessions) or the *Assises du Nord*, which were unfortunately not very well prepared in the field, political dialogue is far from being properly engaged. It took the United Nations Security Council mission in February 2014 to begin to make some progress. A number of factors are beginning to highlight the loss of confidence between civil society and the state: a crisis of confidence in the political system which, despite efforts, has not completely managed to rid itself of the corruption and nepotism of the past; the fragile economic situation, particularly in rural areas which have only just got over the serious food shortages of 2011-2013 and are now about to face the same again; the loss of confidence between exiles in the camps and the administration of their own country; and the difficulty of preventing acts of violence against communities. Everyone is waiting for peace dividends that have not yet materialized. The jihadist movements who lost part of their chain of command and their weapons still have the capacity to cause substantial harm, and are no doubt in the process of reorganizing.

One of the major impacts of these crises is the weakening of economic mechanisms: trans-Saharan trade blocked at the borders, tourism and crafts, which have a very high level of added value and are essential to the economy of the North, have been abandoned as there are no clients due to insecurity, etc. This both increases pauperization and the risk of radicalization.

In this context, which remains explosive, inter-community conflicts over land and water, access to pastureland and to protect farming areas can quickly become exacerbated. The international community, and notably the United Nations mission (MINUSMA), is having difficulty influencing the course of events and the Malian population is beginning to show signs of disenchantment, and even resentment.

A holistic approach with multiple entry points

Based on the experience of previous crises and the difficulties encountered since January 2013, a number of areas could be explored:

Confidence needs to be re-established between the population, local development actors and state authorities.

In many areas, the influence of the state, which was already weak before the present crisis, is even weaker due

to the numerous difficulties encountered in reintegrating state institutions in the North. Looted, damaged and even completely destroyed offices mean that even the delivery of basic services is very uncertain. In this context of technical administrations without sufficient means and absent authorities, it is difficult to have a positive effect on communities and to restore legitimacy. Outside the few segments of the river fringe where NGOs and technical services are present, the only vehicles are those of the SERVAL and FAMA military patrols, the rarer MINUSMA patrols, those of the ICRC, the small number of traders who venture into these areas and those involved in illegal trading. At the same time, fear of the army and of self-defence militias (Ganda Koy and Ganda...) and the fear of reprisals or even acts of violence with the aim of dispossessing people, create a very sensitive, even explosive, law and order context, and it is not simply the return of the state which is needed, but of a state which protects and upholds equality and justice...

The decentralisation which was launched after the previous crisis was a good idea but the transfer of responsibility without the corresponding transfer of resources significantly reduced its impact and was even sometimes counterproductive. This can be explained by the corruption that regularly accompanied the weak budgets and contributed to de-legitimising the authorities in certain cercles and municipalities. In addition, misunderstandings about roles and legitimacy between institutions which were the product of decentralisation and traditional leaderships led to the weakening of both sides and blockages.

What programmes are needed to consolidate the difficult peace building process?

The weakness of social services and the state's regalian services (justice, police, etc.) could significantly reduce the chance of sustainable peace. This will necessarily require serious effort to reduce mistrust between the central authorities, local authorities and marginalized groups in order to avoid the resurgence of tension which will only lead to the next crisis. In any case, the methods for delivering services in areas outside the river strip will need to be substantially redefined. In nomadic areas, transaction costs due to distances, the disastrous condition of the infrastructure and low population density and mobility mean that it is necessary to find a new approach. Certain programmes which are being tested at the moment, such as the mobile mixed "animal health-human health" clinics show that when the characteristics of the context are not considered to be problems but contextual factors which need to be managed, innovative solutions can be found to adapt the service to the context and not the other way around (nomadic ways of life should not be seen as a problem which can be solved by promoting sedentary ways of life).

Working on the scarcity of economic resources (in its broadest sense) and improving access to these resources for everyone can be a catalyst for peace once again. Following the years of rebellion, the redistribution of cards between nomadic and sedentary groups, between former slaves (bellah) and aristocratic elites (tamashecs), and between “black” and “white” communities has created land ownership crises which are themselves mini time bombs.

The international community needs to be accurate in its assessments, attentive and generous, but not excessively, so that it does not saturate the absorption capacity which remains weakened

It is also necessary to invest massively to restore basic security in the face of looting and abuses, and to fight strategically against dynamics which allow impunity to continue at all levels and amongst all the actors of the crisis. This struggle for justice and equality will be one of the fundamental challenges to move out of the current situation.

In these difficult times when former guerrilla fighters are theoretically supposed to lay down their arms, and refugees and IDPs are supposed to return to their villages and camps, the disarmament and return processes can only be a success if trust is re-established and social ties are rebuilt. During previous crises, the disenchantment of ex-combatants with the PAREM (*Programme de reinsertion des ex-combattants du Mali*) was obvious. Many therefore left for Lybia to rebuild themselves socially and economically. The crisis of 2012-2013 is part of the price that has been paid because this dimension was underestimated. At

the same time, the problems that are currently stalling the implementation of the “*cantonnement*” programme are directly linked to those encountered in the political process as these programmes require reciprocal trust, but this does not yet exist in the absence of a political agreement. The *Pacte National* of 1992 played this catalytic role, but nothing of this kind yet exists to resolve the current crisis.

Restructuring aid?

The very large number of tasks that the Malian government and parliament have begun to tackle since the elections are particularly complex and sensitive. The international community needs to be accurate in its assessments, attentive and generous, but not excessively, so that it does not saturate the absorption capacity which remains weakened after the difficult recent years. It should also show a sense of urgency, but not too much, and should be demanding of its Malian partners but also itself. Due to its own mechanisms, its ill-adapted timeframes, and the rotation of its experts who do not all know about the complexity of the situations and too often apply a “cut and paste” approach from one situation to the next, is external aid not a part of the problem as much as a part of the solution?

François GRÜNEWALD
Executive Director, Groupe URD

This article was written following a series of field visits to the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu. The Malian authorities at the different levels (central, regional, cercle and commune) were met, as were inhabitants. Meetings with donors, United Nations agencies, the MINUSMA and numerous NGOs made it possible to assess the current situation. Knowledge of the area following several field missions during the crisis in the 1990s helped to put the current situation in perspective.



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Fulani pastor in the «bourgoutières»

Improving the quality of medical equipment projects for health centres in developing countries

Barbara COMTE & Cathy BLANC-GONNET

A lot of medical equipment in health centres in developing countries no longer works. A large proportion of this equipment is given, often for free, by international aid organisations. In order to try to resolve this very problematic situation, the association Humatem¹ specializes in supporting actors involved in medical equipment projects. The Equip'aid symposium, organized by Humatem in partnership with HOPE, with support from the WHO, showed the need to improve aid in this domain. Concrete solutions were discussed, such as increasing the responsibility of organizations, improving the technical quality of the equipment which is transferred and strengthening biomedical human resources.

Reducing infant mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases: three of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) aim to improve healthcare rights. This depends on the existence of operational and well-equipped health centres which are accessible to all. Also, to achieve the MDGs, it is essential to strengthen the technical facilities of health centres which are generally defective at the moment.

In such a context, medical equipment projects by international aid organizations have an important role to play. As developing countries do not have a great deal of resources to buy medical equipment, and as there is only a limited amount of equipment of this kind on local markets, donations of medical equipment, which are a characteristic of the majority of these projects, remain essential.

However, the large amount of dysfunctional medical equipment in health centres in developing countries raises questions about the responsibility of Northern countries, notably regarding the effectiveness of the aid they provide as part of medical equipment projects. Indeed, a great deal of medical equipment which is donated is incomplete, has no documentation, has not been serviced or is already out of order; other equipment is sent without really taking into account the real needs of the destination health centre, the opinion of local authorities or the local environment (human resources, infrastructure, technological level, financial resources, etc.). The data available from the World Health Organisation (WHO) shows that

only 10 - 30% of the equipment which is donated can be used in the new context. This is not surprising when one knows that only 15% of countries apply the WHO's guidelines on donations of medical equipment.

A central issue in international discussions

As the principle event of a programme of EuropeAid actions, and with the support of the WHO, Humatem, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation and the French Hospital Federation organized the first edition of the international symposium, « Equip'aid – Sharing for better healthcare » on 19 & 20 November 2013 in Chamonix Mont-Blanc. This founding symposium brought together for the first time 183 actors from 33 different countries, all concerned by medical equipment projects by international aid organisations. The participants included civil society representatives from the North, from countries in transition and developing countries, international organisations, health centres who donate and who receive medical equipment, medical technology businesses, experts, training institutes, researchers, actors and state representatives.

The symposium was an opportunity to:

- share information and experiences, by encouraging dialogue between organisations involved in medical equipment support projects,
- highlight synergies by examining different practices and policies in transferring and making available medical equipment,
- encourage cross-sector discussion about problems in the sector with a view to improving practices.

The conclusions of this symposium² point towards the need to improve the quality of medical equipment based on the following areas:

Increase the levels of quality and responsibility in projects

Hospitals and industries in the most advanced countries need to learn to give in a more civic and responsible manner, and in particular, they should improve the way they select the medical equipment they want to give (in working order, complete, not out of date and not obsolete). Those running the projects should revise their practices,

Only 10 - 30% of the equipment which is donated can be used in the new context

make partnerships central to the process and adopt a structured project methodology which is specific to medical equipment projects. For example, they should commit themselves to partnership agreements with their health centre partners, which formalize the responsibilities of each and have specific articles about project logistics, staff training, maintenance, etc. These are key points which are often forgotten.

They should give priority to the acquisition of medical technology which is appropriate for developing countries, that is to say, equipment which is easier and cheaper to operate and maintain. The WHO is raising awareness amongst industrialists, purchasing offices, NGOs, research institutes, etc. about designing, producing and supplying medical equipment which is genuinely adapted to the realities of the field. There are still too few technologies of this kind available on the market, but they already deserve to be taken into account in medical equipment projects and technological monitoring should be organized.

In addition, those in charge of projects should give priority to acquiring equipment available on the local market in order to support the economy of the country.

Optimising the technical quality of the medical equipment transferred

It is absolutely necessary to systematically check the appropriateness and the performance of medical equipment before it is sent by means of technical performance assessments and thus avoid sending waste to developing countries. European guidelines appear to be evolving in this direction. Indeed, directive 2002/96/EC, which concerns the management and reuse of waste electric and electronic equipment and therefore directly concerns a large amount of medical equipment, was updated in 2012 (2012/19/UE). In its new version, it mentions developing countries for the first time, and establishes a list of minimal demands to avoid transferring equipment which is not in working order to these countries. These demands include performance tests (proof that the equipment is in working order) and appropriate packaging, without which the equipment will be considered to be waste and its transfer illegal.

This directive should be transposed into the national rights of member countries as of February 2014. However, numerous questions remain: what body is going to control the application of the directive? What sanctions will be taken if the directive is not respected? Will an authorization system be put in place to decide which bodies can deliver certificates which prove that the demands have been met?

Including biomedical staff in medical equipment support projects

In the North, the idea would be to involve biomedical professionals to check the equipment and also to help to assess partner health centres, re-install the equipment and help local staff to learn to use it.

In countries in the South, biomedical professionals are not yet sufficiently recognised and therefore are under-represented in health structures in these countries. When technicians or biomedical engineers are in place, they generally do not have sufficient means (training, specialized equipment, workshops, access to new information and communication technology, decision-making power, budget, etc.) which considerably limits their field of action. Those funding projects should make their support conditional on the presence of local biomedical staff and their involvement in this kind of project (participation in drawing up the list of medical equipment needed, the choice of equipment, on reception, starting up and training users, etc.).

These conclusions are clearly challenges for actors involved in medical equipment projects. Humatem is planning to broaden its network soon to work in synergy with the principal European actors involved in this domain (heads of networks, support bodies, association platforms), in order to increase the reach of its work to improve the quality of aid.

This collaborative effort could also help it to position itself more effectively in relation to companies who resell second-hand medical equipment – an expanding market in the European Union. These companies offer to buy hospitals' old equipment or to resell them and share the profits. In a context where budgets are being tightened, hospitals are easily tempted by this solution. However, these companies, who claim to systematically re-check the performance of the equipment

before reselling it, do not always do so and the majority are not interested in the future context in which it will be used any more than in the constraints of "client" health structures and medical centres which are mostly located in North African and Eastern European countries...Awareness-raising activities about good practices in the field of medical equipment could therefore soon have new target audiences...

*Barbara Comte, Head of Mission for Humatem
Cathy Blanc-Gonnet, Director of Humatem*

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Operating theatre in Benin

Family farming and general issues

Les agricultures familiales du monde

Cirad, MAE, MAAF, AFD, May 2013, 306 P

The French research centre Cirad (Agricultural Research for Development), in partnership with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Agriculture, Agrifood and Forestry and the French Development Agency conducted this study on the contribution of family farming to food security. It aims to clarify the concept in relation to other categories of farming. After a section on definitions, which presents the different forms of family farming, there is an analysis of its economic, social and environmental contributions. The study also examines how family farming is taken into account in policy. The second part presents a number of case studies in different countries (South Africa, Brazil, Cuba, France, Hungary, India, Mali, Morocco and Vietnam).

Read the document in French: http://www.coordinationsud.org/wp-content/uploads/20130711_Rapport_final_MAAF_MAE_AFD_AF_CIRADBIS_31_Mai_complet_cle0197b5.pdf

Agricultures familiales

Les dossiers d'Agropolis International, N°19, February 2014, 64 P

Family farming is the most common type of farming in the world, is the biggest source of employment in rural environments and is the biggest producer of food.

This dossier presents 21 research units from the Languedoc-Roussillon region bringing together more than 1000 researchers who are mobilised, in all or part of their activities, to respond to the main challenges posed by the family farming model, in France and around the world. The dossier also includes articles by three international research institutions based in Montpellier which are very involved in developing small-scale farming in countries in the South, in partnership with the regional teams.

Read the document in French: <http://www.agropolis.fr/pdf/publications/dossier-agricultures-familiales-janvier-2014.pdf>

Family farming and food security

Paysans et entrepreneurs : investir dans l'agriculture des petits exploitants pour la sécurité alimentaire

Report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, June 2013, 126 P

This report contributes to the heated debate about investment in agriculture. It focuses on the crucial role of small-scale farming in relation to food security and tries to shed light on the complexity of the production systems of small farms and the obstacles that they have to face, while placing these within the broader perspective of the structural transformations that agriculture is going through in the world.

Read the document in French:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-6_FR.pdf

Sécurité alimentaire et agricultures familiales ; expériences d'AVSF en Afrique

Report from the round table organised by AVSF on 22 June 2012, 40 P

200 people gathered in Paris on 22 June 2012 to discuss the question of the food security of poor farmers, and how to approach it, illustrated by the experience of AVSF in Africa. The African continent is faced with a major food challenge due to the demographic growth that it is experiencing. Rapid urbanization is creating increased needs for access to food for poor and low income people in cities and mega-cities. Achieving food security will require small farmers in most countries to double or treble the productivity of their agricultural work and land. This is a very big step to take; it does not necessarily need large investment, which would most often be out of reach for small farmers. But this step can be taken with appropriate support and well-reasoned changes to agricultural practices. This is shown by the experience of AVSF's partners in Africa, like for example the association NINNABA in Senegal, as explained by Omar Mané, a farmer in the region of Kolda in Casamance.

Read the document in French: <http://www.avsf.org/public/posts/1256/securite-alimentaire-et-agricultures-familiales-experiences-d-avsf-en-afrique.pdf>

Family farming and the environment

Via Campesina Views, September 2010, 20 P

The 2008 world food price crisis and the price hikes in 2010 have focused attention on the ability of the world food system to feed the world. La Via Campesina, the global alliance of peasant and family farm organisations, believes that agroecological food production by small farmers is the agricultural model best suited to meeting future food needs.

Read the document in English: <http://viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/en/paper6-EN.pdf>

Family farming and food security

Smallholders, food security and environment

IFAD, UNEP, 2013, 56 P

Smallholders can transform the rural landscape and start a new sustainable agricultural revolution. That is the main message of this report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNEP (the United Nations Environment Programme).

Read the document in English: http://www.unep.org/pdf/SmallholderReport_WEB.pdf

Family farming and the city

Afrique de l'Ouest : nourrir les villes par l'agriculture familiale locale

J.B Cavalier, CFSI, July 2013, 46 P

This document presents the 2010-2012 phase of lesson learning from the programme "Promoting Family Farming in West Africa". What offensive strategies are possible to allow the products of family farming to win back urban market share? Based on the experience of field actors, challenges and innovative solutions are presented, related to stock management and conservation, processing and conditioning, quality approaches, niche markets and consultation between actors.

Read the document in French: http://www.cfsi.asso.fr/sites/www.cfsi.asso.fr/files/capitalisation_aea.pdf

Family farming and transition

Agricultures et paysanneries des Tiers mondes

M. Dufumier, Karthala, 2004, 598 P

Contrary to a widely held opinion, the crop and livestock farming systems implemented nowadays by peasant farmers in the South are neither archaic nor condemned to stay the same. This book presents and explains the variety of conditions and methods of transformation of agriculture in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It looks at how the different types of farming today are each the product of a long history, during which peasants showed great creativity and innovation in relatively hostile ecological and socio-economic environments.

Making the concept of family farming operational

Quelles politiques publiques pour les agricultures familiales du Sud ?

Report by Coordination SUD's Agriculture and Food Commission, 2010, 93 P

This document is addressed to all actors who want to support family farming, both via national public policy in the South and agricultural and trade development aid policy in countries in the North. It presents programmes in specific contexts which have removed barriers to the development of family farming. The aim of the report is not to draw up a catalogue of desired measures, but to provide concrete examples of support being given to family farming where there were positive results in several areas (increased production, more profitable prices, etc.).

Read the document in French: http://www.coordinationsud.org/wp-content/uploads/comment_soutenir_les_agricultures_familiales_vf_dec2010.pdf

Consult the full bibliography on the Groupe URD website:

<http://www.urd.org/Bibliography>

Events

Groupe URD Training Programme: April - September 2014

In France:

- Adopting a Quality Approach for International Aid Projects, Paris, 12-14 May.
- Evaluating the Quality of Humanitarian Action, Plaisians, 12-16 May.
- Integrating the Environment into Humanitarian Action, Paris, 2-day course, September (in English, dates to be confirmed).
- Evaluating the Quality of Humanitarian Action, Plaisians, 22-26 September.

In Haiti:

- Evaluating the Quality of Humanitarian Action, Port-au-Prince, 7-11 April.
- Training of Evaluation Trainers, Port-au-Prince: two 4-day sessions in May during the weeks of 19th May and 26th May (exact dates to be confirmed).

In Switzerland:

- Introduction to Sigmah, Geneva, 1 day, May/June (in English, dates to be confirmed).

For information and registration, contact Anna Lear: alear@urd.org

For courses in Haiti, contact Isabelle Fortin: ifortin@urd.org

"Resilience 2014: Resilience and Development: Mobilizing for Transformation", May 4-8 2014, Montpellier

The objective of Resilience 2014 is to explore and reinforce the multiple links between resilience thinking and development issues. The concepts of Adaptation, Transformation and Development are central and common to several research communities, including Resilience in social and ecological systems, Ecological Economics, Environmental Change, Farming Systems (among others). Focusing on resilience – the capacity to deal with change and continue to develop – but firmly rooted in the belief that a diversity of approaches can inform each other, the conference will offer the opportunity to articulate and debate their specific paradigms, concepts and methodologies. Complex problems require a diversity of approaches that can inform each other, generate a constructive debate, and eventually lead to more suitable solutions. The term resilience is being used more widely in policy circles and policy debates, yet these meanings may be at odds with scientific interpretations of resilience that emphasize change and transformation. During this conference the diverse perspectives on resilience held by representatives from government, large international organizations, the business sector and other major actors from various countries will add to the academic debate on the challenges facing social development.

For more information: <http://www.resilience2014.org/>

Design for Urban Disaster, 5-7 May, Cambridge

The main activity of the Center for Development and Emergency Practice at Oxford Brookes University is providing training on the themes of international development, conflict, disaster management, urbanization, humanitarian action and Human Rights. One of its focuses is changing practices in the development and emergency relief sectors.

On 5-7 May it will be organizing the "Design for Urban Disaster" conference on the specific characteristics of the urban approach in terms of prevention and crisis response.

Faced with the increase in the number of disasters and the vulnerability of communities in urban environments, the conference invites humanitarian aid practitioners, those in government and designers from spatial/physical disciplines to explore ways to improve actions before and after disaster.

For more information: <http://www.designforurbandisaster.com/>

Humanitarian technology, 13-15 May 2014, Boston

HumTech2014 will provide a forum for scientists, engineers, field workers and policymakers to discuss current research and exchange technical ideas that advance global humanitarian action.

The conference is organised around 6 themes:

- Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
- Health and Disease Management
- Public Safety and Emergency Management
- Emerging Technologies
- International Development, Poverty Alleviation and Food Security
- Water, Energy, Agriculture, Policy, Security, Education

For more information: www.humanitariantechnology.org

Resilient Cities 2014: Fifth Global Forum on Urban Resilience and Adaptation, 29-31 May 2014, Bonn

Resilient Cities is the global platform for urban resilience and climate change adaptation, organized by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and co-hosted by the World Mayors Council on Climate Change and the City of Bonn, Germany. Each year, Resilient Cities brings together 500 urban planners, mayors, international organization representatives, and researchers from all around the world to discuss urban resilience and adaptation. The 2014 programme focuses on a variety of key topics including risk data, adaptation planning, financing the resilient city, city-region food systems, and resilient infrastructure.

Additionally, Resilient Cities 2014 hosts the 4th Mayors Adaptation Forum. The 2014 forum will focus on urban adaptation and biodiversity, climate governance, Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

For more information: <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/bonn2014/about/>

Salon des solidarités, 12-14 June 2014, Paris

The 5th edition of the Salon des Solidarités will be held in Paris on 12-14 June 2014. Over 230 French and European stands will be organised into three sections:

- Projects: NGOs and actors who conduct projects in the field;
- Resources: non-profit organisations who provide support to aid projects;
- Service providers: companies who have products or services which are specifically adapted to international aid organisations.

There will also be “themed villages” where the general public will be able to meet development actors.

Several round tables, conferences and training courses will be held in parallel to the exhibition.

For more information: www.salondessolidarites.org

Universités d'été de la solidarité internationale, 2-5 July 2014

The Universités d'été de la solidarité internationale (International Aid Summer School), organised by the CRID and CASI Bretagne, will be held on 2-5 July and will focus on the theme “Bien vivre ensemble, c'est possible ! Des alternatives pour des transitions solidaires” (Living together well is possible! Alternatives for solidarity-based transitions). Every year, this four-day event brings together participants from all over the world for training courses and debates.

For more information: www.universite-si.org

Forum de l'action internationale des collectivités, 3-4 July 2014

The annual regional cooperation event brings together regional authorities, state responses, the French Development Agency, associations, donors, research units, businesses and local representatives' associations. It is an opportunity for the different actors to exchange during 20 theme-based and geopolitical workshops dealing with current affairs and long-term issues.

For more information: www.cites-unies-france.org

Humanitarian Innovation Conference, 19-20 July 2014, Oxford, UK

This conference is an opportunity to discuss what technological innovations (notably in the private sector) can bring to the humanitarian sector, and how these can be adapted to meet daily challenges in the field.

The conference aims to provide a platform for discussion and debate, bringing together actors from UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and both the public and private sectors. The aim of the conference is to further define the agenda for humanitarian innovation.

Debates will be structured around five core themes:

- Definitions and Frameworks for Humanitarian Innovation
- Improving Organisational Responses
- “Bottom-up” Approaches to Innovation
- New Directions within Humanitarian Work
- Critical Approaches to Humanitarian Innovation

For more information: www.oxhip.org

Groupe URD

Groupe URD (Urgence – Réhabilitation – Développement) is a non-profit research, evaluation and training institute. Its main objective is to help improve humanitarian practices in favour of crisis-affected people.

Further information :

www.urd.org

Humanitarian Aid on the move

Humanitarian Aid on the Move – a bilingual biannual review – aims to share the results of work on important issues currently facing the sector.

We regularly invite external contributors and provide links to other publications. To propose an article, contact Jeanne Taisson: jtaisson@urd.org

Further reading on certain topics and full articles by the authors can be found on the Groupe URD website: www.urd.org/Humanitarian-Aid-on-the-move

Contacts

To Sign up for review e-mail:

www.urd.org/Humanitarian-Aid-on-the-move

To propose an article:
Contact Jeanne Taisson

jtaisson@urd.org

Produced with support from :



Director: François Grünewald
Editorial board: François Grünewald,
Véronique de Geoffroy, Jeanne Taisson
Editorial Secretary: Jeanne Taisson

Printed by: Transcopy
Design by: Concept image

ISSN : 2261-7132
Legal deposit: September 2012