

Developmental Relief: The European Perspective



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It is our hope that the study will prove useful to all who have taken part in its creation and that it serves to further dialogue and action concerning developmental relief activities.

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FOREWORD

In June 2001, the Transition Working Group of InterAction — a coalition of U.S.-based relief and development agencies — commissioned a report entitled *Developmental Relief: NGO Efforts to Promote Sustainable Peace and Development in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*. That report examined American NGOs' values, principles, and activities in developmental relief.

Because the topic of developmental relief continues to gain popularity among NGOs and donors alike, InterAction's Transition Working Group¹ decided to expand its base of knowledge on developmental relief activities to include the efforts of its European colleagues. In pursuit of this, a second report was commissioned.

Like the first report, this second report, entitled *Developmental Relief: The European Perspective*, examines the values, principles, and activities of European NGOs. The report is based on the views of both European NGOs and donor agencies and highlights several shared emphases among the organizations interviewed.

¹ In a July 2002 meeting of InterAction's Transition working group (TWG), it was decided that the name of the working group would be changed to the Transition, Conflict, and Peace working group (TCPWG). The change of name reflects the working group's desire to bring conflict and peacebuilding issues into the discussion. This report, because it was completed prior to the July meeting, will refer to the TWG rather than the TCPWG.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Measures to close the gap between relief and development are slowly moving from discourse toward implementation among many humanitarian and development organizations. Relief activities are being restructured to not only address immediate needs that arise as a result of conflict and/or natural disasters, but also to contribute to sustainable development and peace-building activities. Over the past decade or so, such practices have been referred to in a variety of ways, from “humanitarian plus” activities, to “linking relief, rehabilitation, and development.” For the purposes of this report, the term “developmental relief” will be used to address the issue of incorporating relief and development activities within the context of complex humanitarian emergencies.

Two different approaches to development relief exist. The *contiguum* approach is an emerging concept in present humanitarian aid discourse. Currently, many NGOs are adopting this approach, which is more holistically focused in its view of relief, rehabilitation, and development as overlapping initiatives that need not follow a linear progression. Previously, the process of linking relief and development was viewed along a linear *continuum*, where relief precedes rehabilitation, and is followed by development.

Information on European NGO approaches, practices, and funding issues was gathered primarily through interviews with 28 European organizations from 12 countries, including 19 NGOs and 5 donor agencies. Interviews were conducted between March and May 2002 and were supplemented with additional materials provided by these organizations and their respective websites. Every effort was made to bring forward the issues and practices that were important to the informants, rather than using a predetermined list of questions to guide the interview. Additional reports, communications, documents, and interviews with networks and a think tank were also utilized to add depth to the issues raised.

Theoretical Framework

With the existence of numerous complex humanitarian emergencies around the world today — defined by the European Commission as chronic crises involving armed conflict² — the separation of the relief and development spheres has become less tenable due to the circumstances under which these activities are taking place. Relief activities must take into account the long-term aims of development and avoid creating dependency or fueling conflict. In light of these considerations, the focus of aiding developing countries has increasingly included the strengthening of institutions and processes, as

² European Commission. *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*. Communication from the Commission of 30 April 1996.

well as supporting individuals and communities.³ In practical terms, this shift in thinking has meant that, in many developing countries, NGOs and donors have found themselves engaging simultaneously in relief and development activities. According to the European Union, the justification for implementing a more holistic aid strategy is obvious, although not without its challenges.

NGO Approaches and Practices

There was a discernible variety of approaches and practices among the NGOs interviewed concerning the structures created to address the relationship between relief and development. Different mechanisms implemented by organizations include alteration of existing relief programs to incorporate development activities; establishment of a new department within the organization to address the needs of developmental relief programming; integration of previously separate relief and development sections into a single department; or the creation of an entirely separate organization to implement developmental relief activities.

These varied structures are intended to facilitate the implementation of practices designed to address the relationship between relief and development activities. Some common techniques NGOs have adopted in this context include:

- ❑ Incorporating rights-based approaches
- ❑ Linking with local partners
- ❑ Implementing capacity-plus activities
- ❑ Stressing preparedness and mitigation programs
- ❑ Developing exit strategies

People-centered, rights-based approaches are employed in order to promote long-term stability in regions affected by conflict or natural disaster. The organizations utilizing such approaches emphasize the importance of respecting the rights of individuals and/or groups to govern themselves using their own methods. Employment of local resources, both human and material, has also been stressed to ensure greater self-reliance and self-governance among the local population. However, many of the NGOs interviewed realize the complexity of integrating a rights-based approach into humanitarian assistance strategies. The promotion of a global human rights agenda faces criticism from different angles. Issues surrounding the universality of human rights, including clashes of human rights issues with cultural sensitivities and political and socio-economic dimensions, make the implementation of a rights-based approach complex. Nonetheless, some NGOs are incorporating rights-based approaches in the discourse concerning the link between relief and development. Moreover, in their discussion of rights-based approaches, the NGOs interviewed did not distinguish between social and cultural rights on the one hand and political rights on the other. They couched the discourse within an undifferentiated human rights context.

³ Mark Duffield. "Aid Policy and Post Modern Conflict: A Critical Review." *Relief and Rehabilitation Network Newsletter*. (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham School of Public Policy, International Development department, May 1998.)

All of the NGOs interviewed mentioned local involvement as an aspect of their programs, although the degree and type varied. The degree ranged from simple informational input, to more equal partnership with the NGOs, to a leading role by local entities, with the NGOs serving in a supporting function. Types of local involvement also varied, and included individuals, communities, and formally established civil society organizations, as well as the public sector. The NGOs consider local involvement to be extremely important because it is imperative to the sustainability of programs and their impacts. At the same time, NGOs acknowledge that achieving local involvement is a difficult task to undertake. Some obstacles to developing genuinely effective partnerships include NGOs' limited notions of which organizations make appropriate partners, local political entanglements, and individuals and/or groups who seek to co-opt aid resources for their own purposes.

NGOs' focus on sustaining and building local capacities — that is, capacity-plus activities — stems from their desire to avoid being simply service providers. Instead, they seek to utilize locally available resources rather than using expatriate staff or imported inputs. This methodology both facilitates the recovery process and fosters the sustainability of project impacts. Many capacity-plus activities focus on the rehabilitation, support, and enhancement of local systems. In addition, programs center on community development and mobilization, fostering of civil society, and institution building. The NGOs stressed the importance of activities in these areas because, without such local structures and capacities, there can be little hope that programs and their impacts will be sustained.

Preparedness and mitigation activities are closely linked to and often overlap with the capacity-plus programs. Thus, although only a few NGOs explicitly stated mitigation and preparedness as their main objective, many more are engaged in activities that directly or indirectly positively influence this aim. The activities of the NGOs working in this category involved advocacy and lobbying of local authorities to assess the potential risks faced in an area and developing measures to deal with them if they are to occur; raising general awareness of mitigation and preparedness approaches; and implementing other projects that are directly linked to capacity-building programs.

The importance of developing exit strategies from the beginning of a project was stressed, with emphasis placed on the flexibility of such approaches. In the case of NGOs that focus more on the acute emergency phase, the aim is to exit a situation as swiftly as possible, primarily as an attempt to avoid creating aid dependency in the crisis area. In the case of NGOs working within the developmental relief framework, the attempt is made to address the challenge of establishing an exit strategy in a long-term context. The issues of particular importance include appropriate timing, avoidance of dependency, and sustainability of program impacts.

Funding Issues

Most European NGOs interviewed receive funding from a variety of sources. This includes a combination of funding from the European Commission, through either or both ECHO and the EuropAid Co-Operation Office. Other sources include the United Nations agencies, their own governments, the governments of other European countries, the U.S. government, foundations, and private donors.

There is much variation among NGO-donor relationships. Most NGOs cite difficulties when working with donors to fund developmental relief activities. Many organizations have concluded that donors have developed strategies and produced policy papers concerning the link between relief and development, yet have done little in terms of changing their funding practices to accommodate these types of activities. Some NGOs perceive that there is a clear divide between funding for relief versus development activities, whereas others feel that certain donors recognize the importance of a holistic, long-term perspective. For example, some donors combine both relief and development activities within one department. This is intended to facilitate the process of linking relief and development activities as compared to having to work across departmental boundaries.

Because donors inherently operate in highly political contexts dependent on the will of their governing bodies, many NGOs tailor their proposals to align them with donor objectives, which may be more political than developmental. Some donors have a broad definition of humanitarian assistance that allows them to fund developmental projects under the umbrella of humanitarian assistance, while others are clearly constrained from doing so and are able to fund only short-term humanitarian interventions. Many times the various departments within donor agencies have different perceptions of the same issue. This is common when donors have separate and distinct departments within their organizations dealing with relief and development. At the same time, some donors are making concerted efforts to lower the barriers between compartmentalized humanitarian and development departments within their organizations.

Evaluation Strategies

Monitoring and evaluation of projects by NGOs are important components of implementation and can have implications in terms of future funding by donors. Program reviews are also essential in providing organizations with lessons learned, both with regard to successful interventions and failed ventures. Through consistent and continuous assessment of programs, resources can be maximized and the quality of programs improved in addressing needs and vulnerabilities of individuals and communities affected by crises.

In examining the practices of European NGOs, most organizations admitted that evaluations are not done as regularly or consistently as they would like, because conducting assessments is not as urgent a task as ensuring the immediate assistance and survival of individuals and communities. Many NGOs have had little experience with

carrying out substantive evaluations, and this component seems to be the weakest area of program implementation. Moreover, in the context of developmental relief projects that are more long-term in nature, indicators and assessment tools are not as readily available as with traditional short-term assistance activities, whose outcomes are usually tangible and more readily quantifiable. It should be noted that considerable challenges concerning the evaluation of qualitative aspects of operations still exist, while evaluating quantitative aspects of programs is relatively less complicated.

Although the importance of evaluation activities was consistently acknowledged by many NGOs and donor agencies, little progress has been made in the development and implementation of both existing and new evaluation measures.

Conclusion

Much of the discourse surrounding the establishment of the link between relief and development remains theoretical. At the same time, many relief agencies in the field have been taking the initiative to institute more programs that establish linkages between the two. However, while an NGO can implement developmental relief activities, this does not necessarily mean that donors will fund them.

Through research gathered, the authors of this report have found that, although donors are beginning to see the value in developmental relief programs, many institutional barriers exist. Because challenges and obstacles to developmental relief still present significant hurdles, many European NGOs — having reached general consensus that efforts to incorporate relief and development activities are necessary to effectively address humanitarian emergencies — are using different approaches and implementing tools to achieve such linkages. By employing these creative approaches, such as alteration of their institutional structures and/or utilization of private funding sources, some NGOs have succeeded in operationalizing developmental relief programs.

Despite this modest progress, many challenges still remain. These include the need to avoid dependency on long-term relief aid; to link better with local partners in order to foster effective ownership of projects, which can lead to sustainability; raise donor awareness to facilitate funding mechanisms for developmental relief activities; and to develop more effective evaluation tools and strategies. Progress in implementing effective developmental relief activities can only take place once these obstacles have been acknowledged and addressed.

While this study presents a broad overview of NGO practices and donor policy, further research is necessary to develop a detailed analysis of current activities. Only through such research can the present discourse move from ad hoc approaches to more holistic practices. As the *2001 Developmental Relief Report* concentrated on U.S.-based approaches, practices, and values, and this study centers on European practices, a useful next step would be a detailed comparative analysis of the two. Then, candid and ongoing sharing of information could shed light on both successful practices and lessons learned.

Finally, the information gathered through such research would have to be applied to practice in the field.

Though there is no single solution to this challenge, it is clear that constant self-examination and flexibility is needed on the part of NGOs. It is also clear that effective and sustainable change can occur only when those directly affected by crises are put at the forefront of this issue and invited to contribute.

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to address the gap between relief and development within the humanitarian and development communities are slowly moving from discourse to action. Relief activities are being restructured to address not only immediate needs that arise as a result of conflict and/or natural disasters, but also to contribute to sustainable development and peace-building activities. In 2001, the Transition Working Group of InterAction — a coalition of U.S.-based relief and development agencies — commissioned a report entitled *Developmental Relief: NGO Efforts to Promote Sustainable Peace and Development in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*. That report examined values, principles, and activities in developmental relief from the perspective of American non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Broadly speaking, the general purpose of last year's research was to call attention to relatively new approaches to emergency response, to prompt discussion in the humanitarian community about how developmental relief activities might be effectively evaluated, to identify good practices, and to seek remedies to funding problems. Through interviews and case studies, the researchers found that what made the relief activities discussed in their study “developmental” is that they seek to strengthen local participation, capacity, and civil society; revitalize economies and agriculture; and foster peace and reconciliation, with the goal of promoting sustainable development.⁴

This study examines developmental relief practices and issues from a European perspective. It is based on the views of both European NGOs and donor agencies and highlights several shared emphases among organizations interviewed. The purpose of this analysis is to identify shared good practices, in particular those that may be unique to the European context. These practices could then be utilized by the international aid community, with the hope of maximizing the benefit to both practitioners and beneficiaries in the wake of a conflict situation.

BACKGROUND

Historical Summary: European Perspective

In Europe, the idea of linking relief to development evolved out of natural disaster discourse among NGOs during the mid-1980s. A consensus began to emerge that greater coordination was needed between relief programs and development strategies in order to avoid the exacerbation of crises often linked to mismanaged relief programs. To that end, a number of international organizations, such as the Institute of Development Studies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United

⁴ Kimberly Mancino, Anita Malley, and Santiago Cornejo. *Developmental Relief: NGO Efforts to Promote Sustainable Peace and Development in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*. (Washington, DC: InterAction, June 2001), 16.

Nations, and the Overseas Development Institute⁵ have been discussing the importance of linking relief and development activities over recent years.

At the same time, the European Commission (EC) also began a dialogue around the issue of linking relief and development practices and, in May 1993, produced a communication for the European Council and European Parliament, outlining a special rehabilitation support program for countries caught in the midst of civil conflicts and/or natural disasters. The Institute of Development Studies held a conference in 1994 exploring the idea of “Linking Relief with Development,” and the IFRC, together with the Danish Red Cross and the European Union (EU), also sponsored a conference focused on “Programming Relief for Development” in 1995. In 1996, the EC issued a study entitled *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)*. The term “developmental relief” seems to have emerged in 1996 as well, having been used in documents such as the *World Disasters Report 1996* and the IFRC’s 1996 *International Review of the Red Cross*.⁶

After 1996, the discussion surrounding LRRD seems to have waned until the beginning of the new century. In 2001, several key documents once again brought this issue to the forefront of international humanitarian discourse. VOICE — Voluntary Organizations in Cooperation in Emergencies, a network of European humanitarian NGOs — published a discussion paper entitled *The Grey Zone*, which provided an overview and critique of the EC’s approach toward LRRD. The recommendations that emerged from this discussion centered around three primary concerns: global strategic planning, coordination, and timing and flexibility.⁷ In April 2001, the EC produced another communication to the Council and Parliament, reaffirming the basic rationale for LRRD as was described in its previous communication in 1996. Despite these renewed commitments, the report stated that the linkages between relief and development could be improved in practice and emphasized the need for systematic coordination and sharing of information, as well as the proposal to readjust and streamline the European Community’s instruments, methods, and internal mechanisms to increase flexibility and rapidity in mobilizing resources. In response, the European Parliament declared its support for the Communication and passed a resolution to that effect at the end of 2001. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) also confirmed its commitment to LRRD during the ECHO-Partners’ Annual Conference in November 2001, holding a workshop to discuss how the European aid community can improve linkages. Some key recommendations for the NGO community that surfaced include the importance of relief and development agencies linking in advance; the formulation of exit strategies for relief programs; the need for conflict analysis at all stages of conflict; information-sharing amongst NGOs; the involvement of local actors in relief activities; and increased transparency in identifying problems and recognizing weaknesses in programs.⁸

⁵ Claes Lindahl. *Developmental Relief? An Issues Paper and an Annotated Bibliography on Linking Relief and Development*. (Stockholm, Sweden: SIDA Studies in Evaluation, 1996), 1-2.

⁶ *Developmental Relief*. <<http://www.certi.org/about/developmentalrelief.html>>

⁷ VOICE. *The Grey Zone or the Missing Link Between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*. February 2001, 19.

⁸ “Recommendations to European Aid Agencies, the European Commission and EU Member States – Second Draft.” *ECHO-Partners’ Annual Conference*. (Brussels, Belgium: ECHO, 15-16 November 2001.)

Theoretical Framework

Since the end of the Cold War, a different type of conflict has come to the fore. Rather than being fought on a global scale, wars have been raging within borders, as has been witnessed in the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Indonesia. In the wake of these crises, some of which have lasted for decades, the international humanitarian community has been forced to rethink the practices that have driven relief and development activities for the past 50 years.

Traditionally, relief and development have been separate spheres of activity, both within NGOs and donor agencies, be they bilateral government donors or international agencies, such as the UN institutions. “The role of relief assistance is to provide urgent short-term humanitarian assistance to save and preserve [the] lives of people facing serious difficulties resulting from natural or manmade disasters,”⁹ whereas development is of a long-term nature, concerned with building sustainable capacity in strengthening economic, political, and social structures within developing countries.

However, with the existence of numerous complex humanitarian emergencies around the world today — defined by the EC as chronic crises involving armed conflict¹⁰ — the separation of the relief and development spheres has become less tenable due to the contexts in which these activities are taking place. Previous funding gaps that existed between the phases of relief and development work left individuals and communities open to increased risks and vulnerabilities. In years past, NGOs often had to wait at least a year after the end of an emergency before donors were willing to fund longer-term projects because funding institutions wanted to ensure that a country was stable before they provided financial resources. The current environment no longer seems to support such criteria. In situations where civil war is constantly raging, emergency relief is often vital to ensure people’s basic survival. At the same time, NGOs and donors are beginning to recognize that, even in the midst of conflict, short-term assistance alone is not sufficient to address the myriad of needs and vulnerabilities experienced by local communities. Rather than operating in isolation, relief activities must take into account the long-term aims of development and avoid creating dependency on aid or fueling conflict. In light of these considerations, the focus of aiding developing countries has increasingly included the strengthening of institutions and processes, as well as supporting individuals and communities.¹¹

In practical terms, this shift in thinking has meant that, in many developing countries, NGOs and donors have found themselves engaging simultaneously in relief and development activities. According to the European Union, the justification for implementing a more holistic aid strategy is obvious, although not without its challenges.

⁹ Lindahl, 3.

¹⁰ European Commission. *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*. Communication from the Commission of 30 April 1996.

¹¹ Mark Duffield. “Aid Policy and Post Modern Conflict: A Critical Review.” *Relief and Rehabilitation Network Newsletter*. (Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham School of Public Policy, International Development department, May 1998.)

By taking a more developmental approach to relief, it is thought that the occurrence of complex humanitarian disasters can be minimized. However, development policies too often dismiss the risks of crises and do not address the need to protect vulnerable households. “If relief and development can be linked, these deficiencies could be reduced. Better ‘development’ can reduce the need for emergency relief; better ‘relief’ can contribute to development.”¹²

To go one step further, the EC, in its April 2001 Communication to the European Council and the European Parliament, has stated that the effective linking of relief and development is not simply a linear process, ensuring the smooth transition from emergency assistance to development aid. “It must be seen in a broader context, as part of an integrated approach towards preventing crises and disasters, in particular through disaster preparedness, as well as preventing and resolving conflicts and assuring a return to structural stability.”¹³

Though the theoretical foundation outlined above has been in existence for nearly a decade now, NGO practices in the field have not been as thoroughly documented.

METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration the incredible diversity of organizations in Western Europe, the research team decided to cast a wide net in choosing informants. For example, southern European NGOs are very different in their aid strategies and, therefore, differ operationally from Scandinavian and other northern European organizations. Rather than treating the region as a homogeneous entity, the team recognizes that each country is unique and approaches relief and development activities in a slightly different way.

Information on European NGO approaches, practices, and funding issues was gathered primarily through interviews with 28 European organizations from 12 countries, including 19 NGOs and 5 donor agencies. Interviews were conducted between March and May 2002 and were supplemented with additional materials provided by these organizations and their respective websites. Every effort was made to bring forward the issues and practices that were important to the informants. In addition, reports, communications, documents, and interviews with networks and a think tank were utilized to add depth to the issues raised.

Interviews were arranged by sending initial emails to pre-selected Western Europe-based organizations. Criteria included a presence in the humanitarian assistance field; experience with relief and development activities; and recommendations from other sources, including the Transition Working Group of InterAction, InterAction staff, informants, European NGO networks, and Internet resources, such as ReliefWeb. Once

¹² European Commission. *Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*. Communication from the Commission of 30 April 1996.

¹³ Commission of the European Communities. *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development — An Assessment*. 23 April 2001, 3-4.

contact was made with the appropriate individual at each organization, emails were sent to establish times and dates of interviews, and finally, phone and — whenever possible — face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Because the authors of the report are based in the Washington, D.C. area, the team also spoke to U.S. representatives and affiliates of European organizations in order to facilitate the process of contacting their European colleagues, and to glean some information concerning shared approaches. The information gathered from each organization was then transcribed and analyzed, in conjunction with other documents, reports, and library resources. When necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted for clarification.

From the outset, the main research questions concerned organizational philosophy, particularly as it related to the link between relief and development; programs that put these perspectives into practice; funding practices in relation to developmental relief; and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. As the research team began to discern the emergence of certain related topics and trends among European organizations, the questions were expanded to include the development of exit strategies; implementation of rights-based approaches; linking with local partners; building capacity of local authorities and civil society organizations to ensure sustainability; and successes and failures of various projects.

NGO APPROACHES & PRACTICES

There was a marked variety of approaches among the NGOs interviewed concerning the structures created to address the relationship between relief and development. Firstly, some NGOs altered their existing relief programs to incorporate development activities. For example, Concern Worldwide was originally founded as a relief organization but has begun to incorporate a longer-term perspective in its initiatives. Conversely, other organizations, such as Trócaire Ireland, which previously focused solely on development projects, now include relief activities in their mandates.

Other NGOs have established new departments within their organizations to address developmental relief programming. For example, Caritas Belgium initially focused its activities on refugee aid within emergency contexts. In 2001, the organization created a new department focusing on development initiatives to bring this perspective into its relief programs.

One innovative approach employed by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Holland was to establish HealthNet International in 1992. This decision resulted from the realization that an effort to link emergency and development activities was needed. MSF concluded that it wanted to stay within its original mandate and focus solely on emergency relief operations; thus, it created HealthNet International to concentrate on rehabilitation and the development of institutional capacity, focusing on areas such as health education and the training of local health care providers.

Another example of a structural adjustment can be seen in DanChurchAid. DanChurchAid integrated two previously separate departments — one dealing with emergency situations and another handling development issues — into a single international affairs department. Within that directorate, there are five regional teams, each composed of people with expertise in development, emergency relief, advocacy, and research. Working as a single unit, these teams develop policies together and determine country strategies.

In addition to the above adaptations, the *contiguum* approach is an emerging concept in present humanitarian aid discourse. Currently, many NGOs are adopting this approach, which is more holistic, viewing relief, rehabilitation, and development as overlapping initiatives that need not follow a linear progression. Previously, the process of linking relief and development was viewed along a linear *continuum*, where relief precedes rehabilitation, and is followed by development.

These structures are intended to facilitate the implementation of practices that address the relationship between relief and development activities. Some common techniques NGOs have adopted in this context include rights-based approaches, linking with local partners, capacity-plus activities, preparedness and mitigation programs, and exit strategies.

Rights-Based Approaches

Certain NGOs are in the process of developing approaches that focus on the rights of individuals within regions affected by humanitarian crisis. In areas ravaged by conflict, they are incorporating people-centered practices to address the integration of relief and development strategies. Many NGOs have referred to the International Federation of Red Cross Code of Conduct as a template for establishing policy approaches that respect the rights and dignity of individuals.

A central idea within a rights-based approach is that poverty is a violation of basic human rights. This concept establishes the framework for redefining development activities within a human rights-based perspective. From an emergency context, this approach first attempts to ensure the realization of the human rights of those affected by conflict and disaster. Secondly, this approach rests, to a large extent, on a legal foundation that covers a wide range of moral and legal principles, norms, institutions, and procedures at the local, national, and international levels.

Many of the NGOs interviewed are utilizing people-centered approaches to ensure long-term stability in regions affected by conflict or natural disaster. These organizations emphasize the importance of respecting the rights of individuals and/or groups to govern themselves using their own methods. Employment of local resources, both human and material, has also been stressed to ensure greater self-reliance and self-governance among the local populace. However, many of the NGOs interviewed realize the complexity of integrating a rights-based approach into humanitarian assistance strategies. The promotion of a global human rights agenda faces criticism from different angles. Issues surrounding the universality of human rights, including clashes of human rights issues

with cultural sensitivities, and political and socio-economic dimensions make the implementation of a rights-based approach complex. Nonetheless, some NGOs interviewed are incorporating rights-based approaches in the discourse concerning the link between relief and development. Moreover, in their discussion of rights-based approaches, the NGOs interviewed did not distinguish between social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and political rights, on the other. Instead, they couched the discourse within an undifferentiated human rights context.

ActionAid has made a significant shift towards a rights-based approach in its practices. Instead of simply delivering services during emergencies, the organization is attempting to address the causes of poverty. The staff perceives this change as a shift from addressing the condition of poor people, to addressing issues of dignity and overall rights as human beings. The organization holds that the primary impact of emergency situations on individuals is less a result of the emergency itself and more a result of their vulnerability. Hence, ActionAid utilizes a rights-based approach to assist people in preparing for emergency situations. Five areas that are incorporated into this approach are: a focus on the livelihood of individuals; establishing a long-term perspective within emergencies; engaging more rights-based analysis; participation and differentiation; and strengthening people's capabilities.

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) incorporates a rights-based approach into its mission statement. A portion of the statement reads, "NPA sees peace not only as the absence of hostility, violence and war. Economic and social justice, the guarantee of human rights, freedom from violence and gender-based discrimination are necessary conditions for human survival."

The organization's goal is to support people by helping them claim their own rights, build confidence in local organizations, and draw upon resources within their own communities. NPA is consciously attempting to avoid fostering dependency on short-term relief aid within countries. For example, emergency food distribution by NGOs during a crisis situation can cause disruption in local market forces that decreases the profits of local farmers in the long term. In the 1990s, during a drought in Zimbabwe, NPA collaborated with local villages and the district administration. Working with these partners, a plan was developed to distribute food aid more effectively, ensuring that food aid surplus would not adversely affect local farmers. Thus, a cooperative approach allowed emergency aid to be more beneficial. Through communication with the local farmers, the communities were able to continue being competitive in the market by adjusting the supply of emergency food relief. This strategy showed a greater respect for individual and communal rights in the region by preparing the community for long-term sustainability in the midst of a crisis situation.

NPA acknowledges that the best programs linking relief with development are those in which local mechanisms or communities set the agenda, as they have a vested interest in their own communities. NPA sees its role as a collaborative one in which ownership belongs to the community. At the same time NPA stresses that people-centered

approaches can be a challenge, especially in those situations where the local governmental, social, and economic infrastructure has been weakened or destroyed.

CARE Nederland was involved in refugee situations in the mid-1990s in Tanzania and began to question the results of a community service program that provided only short-term assistance for refugees without any consideration given to development objectives. The organization felt this strategy encouraged a passive attitude among the refugee populations. Though refugees were out of their local context and unable to determine when they would return to their places of origin, CARE Nederland attempted to address how to establish developmental objectives within refugee populations. This approach led to a realization that the needs of refugees should be incorporated into a rights-based approach in order to respect and draw attention to their dignity, even while outside of their local context. CARE Nederland's perspective draws upon the premise that it is not a particular activity that is good or bad, but rather the approach that determines good practice. The organization maintains that a rights-based approach creates less of a dependency through involvement of the beneficiaries in activities and processes that directly affect them.

Another approach CARE Nederland employs in linking relief and development activities is engaging in a post-conflict situation as soon as possible. The reason behind this strategy is that, within a conflict area, there is usually a weakened government and, thus, very little rule of law and security. An NGO that is in a region at the beginning of a conflict can begin building peace initiatives. However, CARE Nederland acknowledges that in a situation with weakened government and little rule of law, it is difficult for NGOs to determine when the safest and most appropriate time to intervene in a conflict situation may be. The organization's philosophy is that the moment in which it enters an area ravaged by war, an NGO must begin offering alternatives to fighting through activities aimed at rebuilding, rehabilitation, and development of individual livelihoods and communities. Doing nothing could leave the door open for factions to rearm themselves and reengage in conflict. This people-centered approach attempts to utilize development activities such as rebuilding homes, restarting schools, or generating commercial enterprises to bridge the gap between relief and development and initiate a viable alternative to war.

Finally, while some organizations establish specific rights-based projects, Oxfam GB holds the rights-based approach as one of its guiding principles, meaning that all of its programming stems from this approach. Oxfam GB designs its programming according to five objectives that focus on livelihoods; basic services, such as health and education; life and security; the right to be heard; and gender and diversity.

Linking With Local Partners

All of the NGOs interviewed mentioned local involvement as an aspect of their developmental relief programs, although the degree and type varied. The degree of local participation in NGO programs ranged from simple informational input to partnerships involving decision-making and implementation of projects. In some situations, local

entities assumed a lead role while international NGOs provided advisory, technical, and financial support.

Types of participation also varied. They ranged from involvement of individuals, particularly if organized entities were not present or were too weak to engage; to involvement by communities and formally established civil society organizations, including local NGOs; to involvement by the public sector, ranging from local area authorities to the national government.

Other examples of local participation involve NGOs belonging to international networks, such as Caritas. This type of NGO often works with or through its sister organizations located in affected areas. This arrangement relies heavily on the sister organizations and often utilizes only one or two expatriate staff to link and coordinate with the funding partner. For example, Caritas Belgium works with Caritas Rwanda, Caritas Democratic Republic of Congo, and Caritas Madagascar.

Many of the NGOs stressed that local involvement is an essential part of good practices in the developmental relief context, in particular because the longer-term aspects of its programs require an advanced level of knowledge about local background, present circumstances, and prospects. Thus, at its most basic level, local involvement is used to design projects appropriate to the locality, i.e. based on the assessment of local needs, capacities, and potential. Although outside consultants are also utilized, the input of persons or organizations from the locality is invaluable for the accuracy of such an assessment and the eventual success of the project. For example, NPA uses the input of its local partners to help develop its country strategies, which it then utilizes to design country-appropriate programs.

Most NGOs interviewed stressed that local involvement is essential for program sustainability, stating that local entities should be involved from the beginning of the emergency/relief phase. Interviewees pointed out the importance of relying more on local experts and less on expatriate staff, indicating that use of foreign experts tends to push out local professionals, undermine existing local systems and their rehabilitation, and stifle the creation of new local systems. By utilizing local systems, particularly in times of crises, NGOs can bolster the recovery process and establish a good foundation from which to engage in rehabilitation and development activities. For example, in its Bosnia-Herzegovina relief operations, Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP) relied on locally available medical staff and facilities to provide medical assistance in lieu of bringing in expatriate health professionals. This effort helped sustain the existing capacities of the local healthcare system, and thus facilitated rehabilitation and development activities in the health sector.

Furthering the discussion on sustainability, interviewees stated that engaging the public sector, when possible, is necessary when designing programs that rebuild, rehabilitate, or strengthen local systems such as schools or health networks. Because, ultimately, local authorities (when they exist) will contribute to or wholly finance the continuous running of these systems, they must be fully engaged in all aspects and stages of such programs.

In Mozambique, NPA partnered up with the local government on a school rehabilitation project, with the latter providing the operating costs for the schools.

Hence, such programs, and all manner of projects in general, need to be reasonably compatible with the priorities of local authorities to make sure that they will be continued after NGOs leave. As mentioned by Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI), if a program is established that runs counter to the philosophy or the strategy of the public sector, it will more than likely be unsustainable in the long run.

Many NGOs expressed a strong desire to avoid becoming simply service providers. Although they acknowledge there are occasions, typically during the most acute stages of an emergency, when direct services are necessary, they feel their work can accomplish much more if links with local communities are established. The NGOs that were interviewed have found that working with local partners has helped involve those affected by humanitarian emergencies, emphasizing a shift from passive recipients of aid to groups of people with a measure of control over their lives.

A number of organizations have found that engaging in emergency aid in regions where relationships with local partners have already been established can utilize the skills and capacities that have been enhanced during development activities. They find that responding to emergencies in this manner often results in more effective humanitarian aid activities and mitigates the negative effects of a crisis on the overall development of a particular region. Organizations such as Trócaire Ireland incorporate emergency aid activities into their long-term development agendas, particularly through disaster mitigation programs concerned with issues such as food security. Other organizations, such as PMU InterLife, seek to include risk and local capacity analysis for potential disasters in their country development programs, in order to prepare communities to respond if crisis situations arise.

Finally, although the NGOs consider linking with local partners to be extremely important, they do acknowledge that achieving local involvement is a difficult task to undertake. Some obstacles to developing genuinely effective partnerships include NGOs' limited notions of what organizations make appropriate partners, which often leads to a lack of creative approaches in finding partnership candidates, as well as local political entanglements and other individuals and/or groups seeking to co-opt aid resources for their own purposes. Moreover, after the devastation of a conflict, appropriate local partners may sometimes simply be unavailable. However, because local involvement, particularly via a partnership or a leading role, is regarded as very important in developmental relief, the NGOs stress that every effort should be made to address local participation. For example, in some scenarios where appropriate local partners were not found, NGOs such as Action Against Hunger (AAH) established the required local organizations and fostered their growth via advisory, technical, and financial support until the latter could function on their own and continue running the projects.

Capacity-Plus Activities

Although much emphasis has been placed recently on building the capacity of local organizations and individuals, many of the NGOs interviewed stressed the importance of sustaining the already-existing capacity of local systems and institutions. This combination of sustaining and building capacities can be included within the rubric of capacity-plus activities.

As mentioned, the NGOs that choose to work in the developmental relief context stress that they do not want to be and that they should not be merely service providers but that they must engage local resources as much as possible, both in terms of human and physical assets, to provide what is necessary to respond to the present needs. Linked to this concept is awareness that relief activities must not undermine already present development activities and processes or the potential for these, particularly by creating dependency on outside help and resources.

Furthermore, NGOs working in developmental relief always try to be aware of the phases that need to follow or accompany acute emergency situations, and to keep in mind that the end goal is to hand over activities to appropriate local entities. This goal is illustrated in the emphasis NGOs place on the development of appropriate exit strategies, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. Local partners should be fully engaged in developmental relief programs, with efforts being directed toward fostering their ability to sustain such programs.

Many capacity-plus activities center on rehabilitating, supporting, and enhancing the existing local systems, i.e. health, educational, agricultural, governmental, and social, as well as the training of individuals to better facilitate the effective running of such systems. For example, most NGOs mentioned the importance of activities in, what they termed, the food security sector. The projects in this sector involve rebuilding, rehabilitation, enhancement, and support of the agricultural system. Specifically, they include provision of farming tools and inputs, such as seeds or livestock, the latter mostly on an emergency and start-up basis until such inputs can be derived locally, after the first harvest, for instance; and training in new techniques in order to maximize production and/or to eventually enable entrance into world markets.

A significant portion of NGO activities also centered on rehabilitation, creation, and support of health care systems. This involved the utilization of existing healthcare networks, particularly in lieu of bringing in expatriate experts, as in the above-mentioned CISP program in Bosnia-Herzegovina; provision of training, such as community health worker education or further training to established professionals offered by Medair in Sudan; and the creation of a new system or a component of one.

Moreover, many NGOs were engaged in commercial sector projects, such as various income-generating programs, including micro-credit activities; training in new techniques to make the local production compatible or more marketable on the macro-economic level (international trade); and creating possibilities for local production of goods. Having

the developmental relief context in mind and, in particular, the *contiguuum* approach, the NGOs pointed out that such activities should be utilized from the beginning of a crisis response. For instance, in its relief operations in Bosnia, CESVI engaged the local population in the production of clothes instead of simply distributing them as donations.

Other activities involved rehabilitation of existing and creation of new infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and roads, with a great significance placed by the NGOs on the involvement of the local public sector in such projects to ensure their sustainability.

Woven through all the practices mentioned by the NGOs — in this section as well as those on rights-based approaches, linking with local partners, and exit strategies — was the goal of community development and mobilization, fostering of civil society, and institution building. Additional activities that NGOs are undertaking in support of this goal include psychosocial projects with a particular emphasis on individual and inter-group confidence building; assisting local NGOs in formulating their own development agendas; when appropriate, working with local government authorities to strengthen existing capacities and build new capacities; and developing holistic approaches to recovery.

Illustrating some of the “additional” activities mentioned above, CARE Nederland is working to promote reconciliation between groups in conflict by addressing community wide issues such as road construction. NPA has supported the efforts of communities in Chile to preserve their income base through small-scale fishing. Finally, AAH is working with the Congolese government to create a national protocol for malnutrition.

Preparedness and Mitigation

Preparedness and mitigation activities are closely linked to and often overlap with the capacity-plus programs. Thus, although only a few of the interviewed NGOs explicitly stated mitigation and preparedness as their goal, many more are engaged in activities that directly or indirectly positively influence this aim.

In the language of emergency management, mitigation involves activities that assess potential risks, such as natural or man-made disasters, and aim to lessen the effects of the projected crisis in a particular area.¹⁴ Preparedness involves activities that center on anticipation of problems stemming from these foreseeable threats and devising ways to effectively deal with problems once they arise. This could include, for example, having the resources, both human and material, necessary for such a response in place before the crisis occurs.¹⁵

The activities of the NGOs working in this category involved advocacy and lobbying efforts, raising general awareness with regard to these issues, and projects that are directly linked to capacity-building programs. For example, ActionAid’s preparedness

¹⁴ Waugh, Jr., W. L. *Living with Hazards, Dealing with Hazards*. New York: M .E. Sharpe, Inc., 2000, p. 12.

¹⁵ Mileti, D. S., ed. *Disasters by Design*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press, 1999, p. 215.

and mitigation projects in Ghana involved close work with and lobbying of local authorities to assess the potential risks faced by the area and developing measures to deal with them if they were to occur. The organization also concentrated on creating ways in which development projects can address foreseeable and/or recurring risks, for example, by establishing seed and grain banks to deal with recurring famine seasons.

Exit Strategies

Some of the NGOs interviewed stressed that it is imperative to define exit strategies from the beginning of an intervention, preferably before engaging in a conflict region. For NGOs that focus primarily on emergency situations, the aim is to exit a situation as swiftly as possible, mainly to avoid creating dependency. However, within the context of linking relief and development, certain NGOs are attempting to address the challenge of establishing a pre-determined exit strategy within a longer-term context.

CARE Nederland, recognizing the complexity of working in crisis situations, employs flexible timeframes for its projects. Even with this built-in uncertainty, it still clearly defines its exit strategies. To accommodate the flexibility of project duration within its exit strategies, the organization reevaluates these strategies bi-annually. Since CARE Nederland operates primarily as a relief organization, adaptations are discussed with donors and development experts. In this way, CARE Nederland is very confident of the efficacy of redefining its exit strategies through dialogue and communication.

Medair has made it essential to develop standard formats for exit strategies so that the team involved and the project managers implementing projects are constantly thinking about how to remove themselves and hand over responsibility to the community and local staff. In the past, Medair would not remain in a location for more than a year, so it was a necessity to hand the relief work over to a local organization, preferably a few months before departing. More recently, however, in places such as Madagascar, Medair is taking a longer-term approach, looking at a three- to four-year timeframe in an attempt to maintain a longer-term presence in a stricken region. Thus, Medair is attempting to reevaluate its exit strategy timeframe to better address the smooth transition from relief to development.

Other comments regarding exit strategies that were offered by interviewees included:

- ❑ Whenever longer-term programs are implemented, the possibility of creating a state of dependency exists.
- ❑ When handing projects over to local communities or organizations, a reduction in the role of expatriate staff and foreign material inputs helps promote sustainability.
- ❑ Public information campaigns, prior to departure, are helpful. The campaigns serve to inform those affected by the project why the international NGO is leaving and seek to establish a linkage with local mechanisms that may continue to work with them.

FUNDING ISSUES

Diversity Among NGO Opinions About Donors

Most European NGOs interviewed receive funding from a variety of sources. This includes a combination of funding from the European Union, through either or both ECHO and the EuropAid Co-Operation Office. Other sources include the United Nations agencies, their own governments, the governments of other European countries, the U.S. government, foundations, and private donors.

Because of this broad range of donors, there is much variation among NGO-donor relationships. Some NGOs perceive that there is a clear divide between funding for relief versus development activities, whereas others feel that certain donors recognize the importance of a holistic, long-term perspective. For example, Medair has been unable to make a link between relief and development activities, in part because they have been unsuccessful in finding donors who will fund this type of activity.

Although there is some variety among institutional donors, for example, between the European Union and bilateral country governments, most NGOs cite difficulties when working with donors to fund developmental relief activities. Many NGOs have concluded that donors have developed strategies and produced policy papers concerning the link between relief and development, yet have done little in terms of changing their funding practices to accommodate these types of activities.

There may be a broader understanding that the need for a link exists, yet there seems to be a clear and distinct separation between relief and development departments within donor agencies. This may be attributed to the fact that staff members in development departments are not often well versed in relief issues. Conversely, emergency-focused staff is frequently unable to fund preparedness and recovery activities, as they are supposed to focus solely on a short-term timeframe.

While some NGOs pointed to the difficulties inherent in working with donors, a handful felt that certain donors were responsive to their needs concerning developmental relief activities. These NGOs distinguished themselves from other NGOs by the fact that they receive a large amount of private funding, and therefore, do not seek out as much public funding. This permits them a greater degree of flexibility in their programming. Specific institutional donors are then sought out in addition to this private funding, to raise money for particular projects.

By and large, there is a great deal of diversity in the perceptions NGOs have of their donors' funding practices. This diversity could be attributed to the variety of donors present in Europe as well as the multitude of NGOs, all unique and distinct in their own right. As a result, no clear consensus could be drawn among such a group.

Donor Objectives

This research study was able to incorporate the philosophies of donors who outlined their approaches to relief and development activities. It is clear that each donor agency has a unique institutional capacity and a distinct foreign aid strategy. Inherently, donors operate in highly political contexts and are dependent on the will of their governing bodies. As a result, many NGOs tailor their proposals to align them with donor objectives that may be more political than developmental.

Many of the NGOs interviewed receive funding from ECHO, the European Commission's humanitarian aid office. While there has been a great deal of discussion and debate within ECHO concerning the link between relief and development, the division separating ECHO's humanitarian work and developmental projects is still very clear. As a result of a 1999 evaluation, ECHO has refocused its energies on the humanitarian mandate instead of incorporating development aspects into its activities.

Some donors have a broader definition of humanitarian assistance that allows them to fund more developmental projects under the umbrella of humanitarian assistance. For example, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) places a great deal of importance on having a long-term perspective even while working in an emergency situation. Indeed, as a matter of process, donors such as SIDA and the Irish government's development arm, Ireland Aid, include a section on long-term development effects in their funding guidelines. A direct correlation is seen between what is done in the short term and how those activities affect the long-term development of the specific country or region being targeted.

Some donors do indicate that, because of certain circumstances, they are forced to fund more short-term humanitarian interventions. This is often the case in a region where there is no functioning governing body or basic infrastructure. Yet this is qualified by the fact that in even the most chaotic situation, donors are often able to build on some type of local capacity. For example, some donors are of the mindset that educational programs should only be implemented when a crisis is over and the situation has normalized; yet SIDA's perception is that an educational program can be incorporated even in the most acute crisis situation. To allow a more developmental perspective in its relief operations, SIDA is also trying to extend the duration of the projects it funds. Currently, projects are usually planned on a yearly basis with the understanding that dialogue is ongoing and extensions are allowed when necessary.

In addition, it became clear that donors often fund NGOs that have a successful track record in a particular region or type of relief or development activity. Priority is also placed on funding NGOs that already have a presence on the ground or extensive knowledge and experience in a particular region.

Institutional Barriers & Budget Lines

A lack of communication within donor agencies was a clear trend that emerged when discussing developmental relief issues with both NGOs and donors themselves. Many times, donor organizations have separate relief and development departments. This physical separation, coupled with distinct cultural differences has, in many cases, created a rift. In an interview, the Agence Française de Développement (the French Development Agency) indicated that it shares the belief that linking relief and development is necessary, and though it is looking at ways to bring the two departments together, creating the linkage certainly has its difficulties.

In addition to internal communication issues, budget line issues also present significant barriers to securing funding for developmental relief activities. Because funding for relief and development activities frequently come from two distinct budget lines, activities that incorporate both relief and development components are difficult to put into either one.

Even more difficult still, some NGOs pointed out that it is often difficult to find a budget line for preparedness. Many attributed this difficulty to the fact that it is problematic to quantify the value of prevention measures to donors, and in turn, their constituents.

Though many donors are certainly coming to appreciate the necessity of linking relief and development, and are even taking measures to implement mechanisms that fund these types of activities, significant barriers still exist for NGOs who seek funding for developmental relief programs.

Creative Approaches

To fund their diverse range of developmental relief activities, NGOs have found that understanding and selectively targeting donors and proposal presentation play a substantial role in successful appeals for developmental relief funding from the institutional donors.

Understanding the donors' position on issues in general and the specific context within which programs are proposed is crucial. This means understanding their general and location-specific objectives in addition to funding structures. With this information some NGO have found that they are able to produce creative and innovative proposals, designed to meet both donor requirements and incorporate developmental relief approaches simultaneously.

CESVI has made a concerted effort to integrate its activities and projects with those of other institutions engaged in the area. Because CESVI finds that donors prefer to fund integrated projects that enhance the collective effort, it has made significant efforts to work with local partners and other international organizations. This approach has helped satisfy donor requirements and allowed the organization to inject developmental relief components into its emergency programs.

But there are many instances when the large donors are unable or unwilling to provide funding for these types of programs. The Danish Refugee Council stated that it does more than distribute food; the organization places a great deal of importance on capacity building with local NGOs. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to convince emergency donors, from which it would normally receive funds, that a longer-term approach to an emergency program would be more beneficial.

Difficulties also arise for organizations, such as HealthNet International, that do not necessarily fit into a distinct emergency or development budget line. They find themselves in what is often termed a “gray area,” where it is often difficult to determine the appropriate funding sources to target.

Oxfam GB, like many other NGOs in Europe, has turned to private resources to fund developmental relief programs when traditional donor funding is not available.

Donor Efforts at Bridging the Gap

Even as many NGOs indicated that donor barriers presented substantial challenges to securing funding for developmental relief programs, a number of donors are making concerted efforts to remove those obstacles.

While some donors continue to administer relief and development funds from separate departments or even different government agencies, others, such as the United Kingdom’s Department For International Development (DFID), are making strides to remove administrative barriers.

DFID has recently created a conflict prevention pool that is intended to facilitate cooperation between various government departments. This pool acts as a common source of funding to which a number of different internal departments have access for conflict related programming.

Another approach being adopted by many European donors is the Sector Wide Approach. This strategy allows funding to go directly to a recipient government once the transition period is over. If a country meets a donor’s criteria for accountability, transparency, and human rights, then the donor will distribute funding directly to a particular sector. European donors are beginning to collaborate amongst themselves to decide on the basket of money that will go to a particular sector in the country at hand, with funds then being distributed to the government. This is part of a movement within Europe, particularly among Northern European donors, that provides aid for the poorest countries in an attempt to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.¹⁶

¹⁶ The Millennium Development Goals grew out of the agreements and resolutions of world conferences organized by the United Nations in the past decade. The goals have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress.

<http://www.developmentgoals.org/About_the_goals.htm>

Country Strategy Papers

Country Strategy Papers have been an important aspect of European funding policies. They serve as essential management instruments for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of aid distributed by the European Community. Currently, these important tools do not include issues of humanitarian aid and disaster preparedness. Consequently, NGOs are calling for donors to incorporate criteria, methodologies, and content for emergency actions when developing Country Strategy Papers for areas at risk.

Recently, the Development Council of the European Union called for Country Strategy Papers to “take into account humanitarian aid and the transition between relief, rehabilitation and long-term development.”¹⁷ This was incorporated into a program that seeks to apply the standard framework of developing Country Strategy Papers for all developing countries receiving assistance from the European Development Fund. While the significance of these efforts is recognized, it remains to be seen how they will ultimately be implemented.

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Monitoring and evaluation of NGO projects are important components of implementation and can impact future funding by donors. Program reviews are also essential in providing feedback on both successful interventions and failed ventures. Such information is supposed to help NGOs and donors to either make changes in current activities or to avoid certain practices in the future. Through consistent and continuous assessment of programs, resources can be maximized and the quality of programs improved to address the needs and vulnerabilities of individuals and communities affected by crises.

Concerning developmental relief activities, the sharing of good and bad practices by NGOs and donors can help to further the discussion of linkages and provide a foundation for future courses of action. For example, SIDA’s evaluation of the international response to the famine in the Horn of Africa in the mid-1990s and the drought in southern Africa in 1992 helped to inform its emphasis on having a long-term, sustainable perspective during humanitarian emergencies, rather than simply delivering services for a short amount of time. In more cases than not, however, the value-added of evaluations has largely gone by the wayside, as organizations and donors either do not apply them to projects at all or do not use them as intended once they have been carried out.

In examining the practices of European NGOs, most organizations admitted that evaluations are not done as regularly or consistently as they would like, because conducting assessments is not as urgent a task as directly implementing programs for the benefit of individuals and communities. Few NGOs have experience with carrying out substantive evaluations, and this component seems to be the weakest area of program

¹⁷ *Standard Framework for Country Strategy Papers: The Council’s Conclusions*, European Union Development Council, November 10, 2000.

implementation. Some informants stated that the recent emphasis on evaluations stemmed more from donor requirements and conditions rather than organizational initiative; for example, ECHO and the European Union are currently mandating more accountability from their implementing partners than they had in the past. In some cases, however, reporting requirements are aimed toward centralized, Northern-led organizations, a description that does not necessarily fit all European NGOs. For example, ActionAid views itself as a highly decentralized NGO and relies heavily on its field offices to undertake assessments, which means the headquarters office does not necessarily have immediate access to many materials and indicators that it is supposed to hand over to donors.

When evaluations are undertaken, NGOs employ a variety of means, ranging from small impact studies to external reviews by independent consultants. Large projects, or those involving significant funding, are usually evaluated externally, whereas small projects are generally monitored from within the organization. The logical framework approach was mentioned by several different NGOs, such as NPA, Medair, and CARE Nederland. This tool is used as a planning and implementation mechanism that sets forth immediate objectives and indicators that can serve to quantitatively measure improvements or progress through a certain timeframe. An interesting perspective undertaken by Medair relies on bottom-up feedback and involves interviews with beneficiaries or with local people who have been trained by the organization, in order to assess the value of programs being implemented.

There seemed to be a consensus among NGOs interviewed that traditional relief activities are more easily evaluated than long-term projects because outcomes are tangible and quantifiable, i.e. how much food has been distributed or how many shelters have been erected. At the same time, some organizations expressed concern that such numbers do not provide good indicators of how individuals and communities are using such resources, nor are these statistics necessarily a good foundation upon which long-term interventions can be implemented. As is often the case with short-term projects, long-term impact assessments are not usually incorporated during the planning process and thus are not carried out once an organization leaves the project area.

One concern expressed by NGOs centers around learning real lessons from evaluations. Whereas evaluations can sometimes provide lessons for a single organization in a specific context, those evaluations done for large and broad projects may be more likely to look at general issues in academic thinking, or discuss the international political response to the humanitarian crisis. The main question here seems to be the attempt to understand what evaluations are actually assessing and whether they are as useful to organizations as they are supposed to be. At the same time, whereas perhaps not falling entirely under the evaluation rubric, many organizations do undertake research and conduct broad studies in which they try to determine the appropriateness of specific approaches or the possibilities of different ways to address needs.

It should be noted that considerable challenges concerning the evaluation of qualitative aspects of operations still persist, while evaluating quantitative aspects of programs is

relatively less complicated. Although the importance of evaluation activities was consistently acknowledged by many NGOs and donor agencies, little progress has been made in the development and implementation of existing or new evaluation measures.

CONCLUSION

Much of the discourse surrounding the link between relief and development remains very theoretical. At the same time, many relief agencies in the field have taken the initiative to institute programs that establish these linkages. However, while an NGO may incorporate a developmental relief perspective into its activities, this does not necessarily mean that all donors are equally prepared to fund such programs.

Through the research gathered, the authors of this report have found that, although donors are beginning to see the value in developmental relief programs, many institutional barriers still remain. While challenges and obstacles to developmental relief still remain, many European NGOs — having reached general consensus that efforts to incorporate relief and development activities are necessary to effectively address humanitarian emergencies — are using new approaches to achieve such linkages. By employing creative approaches, such as alteration of their institutional structures and/or utilization of private funding sources, some NGOs have been able to operationalize developmental relief programs.

As the discussion concerning developmental relief continues and progresses, and as both NGOs and donors become more aware of successful practices establishing linkages between relief and development activities, the research team hopes that this study will serve to further inform and foster dialogue and action in the field. It is hoped that by illuminating the current developmental relief practices of the various actors involved in humanitarian programming and acknowledging the obstacles that still exist, the dialogue and practice surrounding developmental relief can be advanced.

In this vein, several initial steps can be taken. While this study presents a broad overview of NGO and donor practices, further research is necessary to develop a detailed analysis of current activities. Only through such research can the present discourse move from ad hoc approaches to more holistic practices. As the *2001 Developmental Relief Report* concentrated on the U.S.-based approaches, practices and values, and this study centers on the European practices, a useful next step would be a detailed comparative analysis of the two. At the same time, candid and ongoing sharing of information could shed light on both successful practices and those that simply do not work. Finally, the information gathered through such research and dialogue would have to be applied to make a difference in the lives of those most affected by conflict and crisis.

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