Humanitarian Assistance

An introduction to humanitarian assistance and the policy for Sweden’s humanitarian aid

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Preface

The Center for African Studies (CAS) at the School of Global Studies at Gothenburg University has in recent years added international development cooperation to its sphere of teaching as well as research. A masters programme (“bredd-magister”) on African Studies with special emphasis on international development cooperation was launched in 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. As part of the Bologna Process the programme has now been integrated in the joint two-year master programme of global studies from September 2007.

During the period up to date it has been established that teaching materials with special relevance to Swedish and European development policies are not readily available to the extent that is required. At the same time the students have produced a number of good essays and reports within different fields. To fill the gap we at CAS have decided to produce a series of smaller publications called “Perspectives on….”. Some of them will after an introduction to the subject by some of the teachers of CAS, include relevant articles on the subject and comments made by masters students at the School of Global Studies at Gothenburg University. Others will include more in depth original material. We plan to publish most of the material in English but might also publish some material which we have readily accessible in Swedish. The idea is to publish these Perspectives on our Website and if necessary to update them from time to time. If there is a demand we might also publish a small number of hard copies.

Here you will find an up-dated and further developed version of Perspective no 3 from 2006 on Humanitarian Assistance written by Annika Billing a master student from our School of global Studies.

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1 Introduction

Humanitarian aid is one of the most effective and practical means of mitigating situations of armed conflict, natural disasters and other disaster situations. Humanitarian crisis crises are in many cases unexpected and require immediate action to minimize suffering. It is a very complex area and assistance is given in many different forms, from efforts in conflict prevention to support to the difficult transitions phase towards peaceful development. It includes support in areas related to health, sanitation, food security, shelter, migration and refugee issues, as well as efforts to clear mines, and peace-keeping efforts including police and military. Drawing borderlines between humanitarian policy, international security policy and migration policy is not an easy task (Wohlgemuth, 2006).

An increased number of natural disasters and drawn out situations of conflict have resulted in an increased need for humanitarian aid and international humanitarian operations have expanded substantially in reach and scale (MFA, 2010a). Disaster risks such as extreme depletion of water resources, rapid and unplanned urbanization, global climate change, and environmental degradation, among other reasons, are expected to create more frequent and severe disasters in the near future (McGoldrick, 2003).

The number of international humanitarian actors has grown considerably including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), humanitarian donor countries and regional organisations. In addition, the UN agencies, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, have developed and expanded. There has also been an increased engagement and support from military entities and in recent years also private companies and foundations. The increased humanitarian needs and growth of humanitarian assistance, in combination with a larger and more diversified group of actors, makes an increased international coordination and a strong, efficient and effective international humanitarian system even more important (MFA, 2010a).

Humanitarian assistance is frequently given in areas that at the same time are in need of other types of interventions, not least in complex humanitarian crises. Development activities are vital for sustainable development and combating chronic poverty, which can lead to a humanitarian crisis, and it is important that the gap that sometimes occurs between short-term humanitarian support and long-term development operations is bridged over. A focus on prevention and strengthening local societies’ resilience and ability to handle disasters is therefore vital (MFA, 2010a).

War and armed conflict are some of the biggest obstacles to development and poverty reduction and there is a recognised inverse relationship between security and development. Fighting poverty and promoting equitable and sustainable development, including democracy, human rights, political pluralism and respect for the rule of law, provides the best foundation for peace, security and long-term stability (MFA, 2010a,b).
2 Definition

The Swedish government defines humanitarian aid\(^1\) as efforts to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need who are, or are at risk of becoming, affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other disaster situations, which are severe impediments to populations’ or entire communities’ supply and survival mechanisms. In the case of an armed conflict the main beneficiary group is the civilian population, but it may also include members of armed forces who are no longer engaged in hostilities, such as wounded and sick soldiers. The beneficiary group in the case of natural disasters and other disaster situations is the affected population (MFA, 2010a).

Humanitarian aid is provided as material aid and protection.

- Material aid can be food, nutritional supplements, shelter, water, sanitary facilities, healthcare and other health services, and in some cases education, agricultural support and other not immediately lifesaving measures.

- Protection includes measures designed to ensure respect for the rights of people in need, in particular the right to physical safety and dignity, including the right not to be subjected to violence, including sexual violence. Related measures include calling attention to the obligations of armed groups, registration of the status of refugees or internally displaced persons and education about rights and obligations under international law.

In many cases, individual humanitarian actions are comprised of both material aid and protection, since material aid protects the rights of vulnerable persons and protective measures improve the individual’s chances of receiving material aid (MFA, 2010a).

3 History

3.1 Historical context

There is a long history of international efforts to help the victims of disasters. Over the years, the principles underlying these efforts have largely been enshrined in international law, especially humanitarian law. The view that civilian populations and non-combatant members of armed forces should be protected during armed conflict is not new, but has by no means always been generally accepted. Examples exist of prohibitions of humiliating treatment in ancient times, for example in Egypt and Persia. The first European rules on warfare were the Articles of War decreed in Sweden by king Gustavus II Adolphus in 1621. These articles contained provisions about the status of non-combatants under which looting and the burning of property were prohibited without express permission. The first comprehensive rules, defined in the document “Lieber Code”, were adopted by the Union side in the American Civil War in 1863 and laid down the obligation to protect civilians. The Swiss citizen Henry Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 after having witnessed devastation and lack of medical services at the battle of Solferino in modern-day

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\(^1\) In the past and present terminology in this area the terms "disaster", "emergency" and "humanitarian" are often combined with the words "assistance", "aid", "relief" and "activities/operations". The terms based on these combinations of words are interchangeable.

\(^2\) The government’s definition is based on the “Objectives and definition on humanitarian action” agreed on by representatives of government and multilateral donors, United Nations institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other organisations involved in humanitarian action, at the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, Stockholm, 2003.
Italy in 1859. Based on Henry Dunant’s ideas, the first universal rules of law in this area were defined in the first Geneva Convention of 1864. The Convention has subsequently been revised several times, and the relevant documents in force today are the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the two Additional Protocols of 1977 and the one Additional Protocol of 2005 (MFA, 2004), (ICRC, 2010).

The assistance given to the victims of war focused initially on protection and aid to members of combatant groups who had been injured or captured or were otherwise hors de combat. The great majority of those who were killed, injured and made destitute by war were members of combatant groups even as late as the early 20th century. It is estimated, for example, that only 5-15% of those who were killed in World War I were civilians. The situation changed drastically later in the 20th century as a result of mass arms production and the development of increasingly destructive weapons. World War II was a turning point and it is estimated that about 50% of those who were killed were civilians. The experiences of World War II led a number of states and the ICRC to agree on the need to strengthen the protection of civilians and others and as result the fourth Geneva Convention was adopted in 1949. The Convention contained the first explicit mention in a universal document of international law of the possibility of access for impartial humanitarian organizations for the purpose of protecting and assisting civilians. The two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions that were adopted in 1977 elaborated on the right for external humanitarian organizations to offer help to the victims of armed conflict (MFA, 2004).

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols contain rules about the parties’ obligations in armed conflicts with regard to humanitarian aid. According to the generally accepted interpretation of these rules, a party to an international or intrastate conflict that cannot meet the needs of the civilian population itself cannot arbitrarily reject an offer of humanitarian assistance. Such an offer does not constitute violation of a country’s sovereignty and is not illegal in any other way, as long as it is provided impartially for the humanitarian purpose of saving life and alleviating suffering (MFA, 2004).

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols also establish the obligation of states and other parties to armed conflicts to ensure that impartial humanitarian organizations operating in areas under their control are given access to civilians or non-combatant members of armed groups in order to assist them. They also lay down the obligation for states and other parties to guarantee humanitarian organizations access in connection with humanitarian disasters in general, and not only in connection with armed conflicts. The instruments of international law that apply to responses to natural disasters and other disaster situations are, to some extent, different from those that apply to armed conflicts. They are also less uniform and consist largely of bilateral intergovernmental agreements rather than universal treaties and other multilateral agreements. All in all, however, the principles expressed in the instruments relating to disasters are the same as in those that apply to armed conflicts (MFA, 2004).

### 3.2 UNHCR

The creation of the UN was in large a response to the enormous human suffering created by two world wars, but from the early beginning the UN also responded to human suffering caused by natural disasters. The first time the UN explicitly laid down an obligation to assist persons compelled to flee their home countries was in Resolution 429 (V) of 1950, which mandated the drafting of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. The Convention and its Additional Protocol of 1967 constitute the basic instruments of international law for the protection of refugees. The UN human rights conventions provide additional protection. The Refugee Convention also gives the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a universal, unique mandate to protect people defined as refugees within the meaning of the Convention. Like the other UN agencies that are involved in emergency aid, the UNHCR concentrated initially on helping people in need in the aftermath of World War II. Other international humanitarian aid at the time was provided
mainly by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. As a result of a series of humanitarian crises, especially in Africa, in the mid-1960s – notably during the civil war in Nigeria in the latter half of that decade – several member states proposed that the UN should broaden and expand its emergency aid (MFA, 2004).

3.3 OCHA

The UN set up its first emergency relief coordination office in 1971. The UN Secretariat, the UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF in particular, have subsequently assumed a leading coordinating and implementing role in international humanitarian aid. The first coordinated expression of the international community’s duty to assist disaster victims was formulated in General Assembly Resolutions 2717 (XXV) of 1970 and especially 2816 (XXVI) of 1971, which recognized “the necessity to ensure prompt, effective and efficient response to a Government’s need for assistance, at the time of a disaster or disaster situation, that will bring to bear the resources of the United Nations system, prospective donor countries and voluntary agencies” (MFA, 2004). As the number of disasters continued to grow in complexity and numbers during the 1970s and 80s, with a high number of new actors in the field, it became more and more evident that there was a need for a stronger mechanism for coordination of humanitarian assistance. In 1991, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/182, designed to strengthen the United Nations response to both complex emergencies and natural disasters while improving the overall effectiveness of humanitarian operations in the field. Resolution 46/182 led to the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), which in 1998 was transformed into OCHA with a reformed mandate. OCHA’s mission is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors, advocate for the rights of people in need, promote preparedness and prevention, and to facilitate sustainable solutions (OCHA, 2010). In 2005, a UN humanitarian reform was launched aimed to streamline the international humanitarian aid and to enhance humanitarian response capacity, predictability, accountability and partnership.

3.4 Women and children

In recent years, sexual violence as part of warfare has come to characterise many humanitarian crises in conflict zones. In the past few years there has been an increased focus on women’s and children’s situation in humanitarian crisis resulting in new UN Security Council Resolutions such as 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 and 1889 (2009) on Women, Peace and Security, and Resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009) on Children and Armed Conflict. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 stresses women’s key roles in efforts to achieve peace and security and also points to the vulnerability of women. The latter has been further elaborated in Resolution 1820 and its follow-up resolutions in which the focus is on sexual violence.

4 International legal framework

International humanitarian assistance is based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols and other instruments of international humanitarian law, refugee law, human rights, legal instruments relating to natural disasters, and accepted international practice in this area. Every state has primary responsibility for meeting humanitarian needs that arise within its borders. In the event that the central government or other institutions of a country are unwilling or unable to meet this responsibility external organizations and states that have the necessary capacity have a duty, in accordance with international law and established practice in international humanitarian aid operations, to provide support for action to meet these needs, if possible with the consent
of the state in which the needs exist. This duty is often called the ”humanitarian imperative” (MFA, 2010a).

Humanitarian assistance is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

- **Humanity** refers to alleviating suffering wherever it is found.
- **Impartiality** refers to the implementation of humanitarian action solely on the basis of need, without discrimination on the grounds of other factors such as sex, ethnic affiliation, religion or political views.
- **Neutrality** means that humanitarian action and those who implement and support it must not favour any side in an armed conflict or political dispute where such action is carried out.
- **Independence** means autonomy in relation to the non-humanitarian objectives that donors, recipients or other parties may have with regard to crises where humanitarian action is being implemented (MFA, 2010a).

Development cooperation in conflict and post conflict countries is also guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation/the Development Assistance Committee’s (OECD / DAC) “principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations”. The principles are intended to help international actors foster constructive engagement between national and international stakeholders in countries with problems of weak governance and conflict, and during episodes of temporary fragility in the stronger performing countries (OECD, 2007).
Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations

1. Take context as the starting point
2. Ensure all activities do no harm
3. Focus on state-building as the central objective
4. Prioritise prevention
5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives
6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies
7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts
8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors
9. Act fast … but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance
10. Avoid pockets of exclusion

Additionally, humanitarian assistance is guided by the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD). This means that donors shall support needs-based, flexible and predictable funding and, as far as possible, involve the affected population in the formulation, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of activities.

5 The international humanitarian aid architecture

Humanitarian needs and the response to it is complex and varied and not without its confusion. It involves a plethora of actors, international and national, large and small, organisations with complex global mandates and organisations that serve a community or a neighbourhood. There are actions undertaken by militaries and governments and those by families and individuals. There is preparedness for events, immediate response to them, the provision of basic needs and the first elements of recovery. There is also a continual blurring of lines between humanitarian aid, investments in disaster preparedness, recovery programming, and long-term development spending (GHA, 2010).

The international system consists in particular of the UN, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and international NGOs. The UN has a central and unique role in directing and coordinating international humanitarian aid. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement has a special status. This applies especially to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its task assigned to the organisation by the Geneva Conventions with regard to humanitarian aid and protection and to the monitoring of compliance with international humanitarian law (MFA, 2010). The ICRC initially focused on wounded soldiers but over time extended its activities to cover all victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The ICRC’s works along two lines. The first of these is operational, i.e. helping victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The second involves developing and promoting international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles (ICRC, 2009).

From the recipient perspective, humanitarian aid is what is supplied by organisations on the ground. First among delivering agencies are often local organisations like churches, local NGOs and governments, and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, followed later by UN agencies and international NGOs – all of them the visible part of the global humanitarian assistance that has originated with contributions from governments and donations from the public. Many agencies may act as recipient, donor and implementer of aid, often at the same time and during the same crisis and there is not necessarily a clear path to follow from donor through delivery agency to beneficiary (GHA, 2010).

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3 More detailed information on www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org.
Until 2005 there were only five main groups of organisations spending humanitarian assistance funds: international NGOs, domestic governments and organisations, UN funds agencies and programmes, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and government donors. Each element within these groups has a different mandate, capacity and priority. While in long-running complex emergencies and large natural disasters the appeals process brought together a collective statement of needs, there was no collective pot of finance to ensure that gaps could be filled, and no holistic and coherent support to post-conflict and transition countries (GHA, 2010).

The UN humanitarian reform process started in 2005 and built on existing thinking on the use of pooled funding as a mechanism for channelling humanitarian assistance. Country level pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) were thus established to improve both humanitarian effectiveness at country level and equity at a global level. The CERF, which replaced the previously existing Central Emergency Revolving Fund, allows donor governments and the private sector to pool their financing on a global level to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance. Pooled mechanisms are now a significant part of the humanitarian system, used by many donors as a way of ensuring their own aid spending is coordinated and able to respond to shifting priorities in a flexible and coherent way (GHA, 2010).

The European Union, is, through the European Commission and its member states, the largest official donor of humanitarian aid. The Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO) was established in 1992 and has the mandate to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union (EC, 2010). Since 2010, civil protection has been included in ECHO’s mandate which means that in addition to financial support, the member states participate with both material support and personnel in certain humanitarian crisis (MFA, 2010a).

6 Humanitarian assistance, transition, early recovery and long-term development

Humanitarian aid differs from long-term development cooperation mainly in two ways. Firstly, its principles and approach are to a large extent enshrined in international law. Secondly, the object of humanitarian aid is to alleviate acute suffering, while alleviating poverty is the overall aim of development assistance. In principle, humanitarian assistance should be discontinued when the immediate needs of an affected population have been met and conditions have been restored to a situation similar to that before the outbreak of the disaster (MFA, 2010a). Humanitarian aid is designed to be programmed and reprogrammed in relatively short cycles and to meet immediately identified needs. To build a bridge between humanitarian assistance and longer term development is important to reduce vulnerability and building resilience (GHA, 2010).

Swift, well-executed humanitarian activities can reduce the damage to development that may be caused by a disaster. In order to minimize the damage, countries must also have the capacity for domestic and local relief operations which should be, and often are, much quicker and more effective than international aid following a disaster. Supporting domestic preparedness is therefore key. Economic and social development can reduce the likelihood of damage being caused, in particular, by natural disasters, since such development can generate more resources to strengthen domestic efforts to improve prevention and preparedness structures (MFA, 2010a).

It is important that humanitarian assistance is given in an early stage, in connection with the recovery after a crisis, to help create a situation where long-term sustainable development can eventually take place. In an international donor context, this period, from one crisis to a relatively stable situation, is known as a transition phase. This refers not only to the transition
challenges that the country is going through, but also the challenges that donors face regarding the choice of financing mechanisms to meet the challenges associated with the so-called early recovery. Even in post-conflict situations the humanitarian needs may continue, at the same time as there is a need for state-and peace-building processes (MFA, 2010a,b).

There is a policy gap for the transition phase, which specific needs include the existence of a viable peace agreement, legitimacy and capacity of the local government, and the contribution of local actors. Local transitional contexts require different approaches and strategies to ensure accountable and effective implementation for the benefit of the affected population. In the early recovery and transition phase development organisations are often slow in establishing themselves on the ground. Another issue is that there is often no consensus among donors whether recovery should be funded from the humanitarian or development budgets, with corresponding implications for conditionality and procedures for disbursement (Tsui, 2009). Lately, there has been some progress in this area especially regarding issues regarding financing. For example, the International Network on Fragility and Conflict (INCAF) was founded in 2009 in order to help improve international responses to the most challenging development settings and to chart results. It brings together experts from governments and international organisations on issues of peace, security, governance and development effectiveness. INCAF is a subsidiary body of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The Network works in close partnership with the UN, NATO, the World Bank and other bilateral and multilateral agencies dealing with conflict and fragility; it facilitates co-ordination between them and provides a platform for sharing experiences (OECD, 2010).

There is not only a gap between relief and development, but also between security and development. The critical issue of managing a stable transition entails ensuring and maintaining a minimum level of security. The typical country reaching the end of a civil war faces a great risk of returning to conflict within five years. This means that assistance providers must consider risk factors and conflict prevention when they devise their programmes and policies. There is a fair degree of consensus on the main factors that increase the likelihood of conflict and possible state failure. These include low per capita income, high mortality, high vertical and horizontal inequality, the presence of easily exportable natural resources and regional conflict (Wheeler, Graves & Wesley, 2006).

It is increasingly common for countries emerging from civil war or authoritarian rule to create a truth commission to operate during the immediate post-transition period. These commissions—officially sanctioned, temporary, non-judicial investigative bodies—are granted a relatively short period for statement-taking, investigations, research and public hearings. Unlike courts, for which there are clear international norms regarding their appropriate structure, components, powers and minimal standards for proceedings, truth commissions differ between countries in many aspects (OHCHR, 2006).

The purpose of a truth commission is to support the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic political system by bringing some form of resolution to a country’s legacy of human rights violations. The post-conflict dilemma of transitional justice usually has to answer two questions: To what extent should the truth about war crimes and human rights abuses be forgotten or established, and to what extent should the perpetrators be pardoned or punished? (Ntsebeza, 2008). From a human rights perspective, a truth commission have a very difficult mission as the needs of victims may be incompatible with the needs of society (Brahm, 2000).

7 Swedish humanitarian assistance

Swedish humanitarian assistance is based on the Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid from 2010, and is reinforced by the Policy on Security and Development in Swedish Development Cooperation from 2010. The government policies take their point of departure in the above mentioned conventions and principles.
The Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid defines the government’s overall goal for Swedish humanitarian assistance and specifies the point of departure, basic principles and focus, which guides the design and implementation of humanitarian relief. The policy applies to bilateral and multilateral humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and other relevant authorities.

The Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid is based on Sweden’s Policy for Global Development and its overall objective to contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. The Global Development policy contributes, even if it does not explicitly target humanitarian aid, indirectly to the overall objective of development cooperation i.e. to help create conditions for poor people to improve their lives.

7.1 Goals, priorities and focus

The overarching goal with Sweden’s humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need who are, or are at risk of becoming, affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other disaster situations. In order to reach this goal the assistance is focused on three main areas: effective and efficient humanitarian assistance, the international humanitarian system, and the interaction with development assistance actors.

7.1.1 Effective and efficient humanitarian assistance

To meet the humanitarian needs of suffering women, men and children in every specific situation and context, the Swedish government works to promote Swedish as well as international humanitarian assistance that is flexible, prompt, effective, efficient, and designed, to the greatest extent possible, with especially vulnerable groups in mind. The outline and implementation of humanitarian aid is designed with the following groups and challenges particularly in mind.

Civilians
Civilians have increasingly become direct targets in armed conflicts. It is therefore important that humanitarian operations protecting civilians are implemented before, during and after a conflict.

Refugees and internally displaced people
The number of refugees worldwide has fallen in recent years while the number of internally displaced people (IDP) is increasing, largely as a consequence of fewer inter-governmental and more internal conflicts. The global trend of increased urbanisation also leads to an increased number of refugees and IDPs. This means new and great challenges for humanitarian organisations, not least in terms of working methods.

Women and children
Women and children are often particularly vulnerable in humanitarian situations. Women also have an important role as actors and organisers of local services and in families. In armed conflicts, it is often necessary to specifically protect women, girls and boys against violence and other abuse, particularly sexual abuse, increased vulnerability to trafficking, the risk of recruitment into armed forces and to economic and social vulnerability. It is important to ensure that a gender equality perspective is used consistently and that women’s specific health needs are taken into account, particularly in relation to pregnancy and childbirth, as well as sexual and reproductive health, such as access to contraception. It is also important to consider children’s need for safe places and a rapid return to everyday life as soon as possible.

Humanitarian food aid
Humanitarian food aid is aimed at protecting livelihoods and enhance people’s resilience after
having been affected by, or recovering from, an emergency or major food crisis. However, large quantities of imported food can seriously undermine the local market, agriculture and food production and it is therefore important that food in the first instance is purchased at or near the places where it should be used, and that donors do not tie its humanitarian assistance to its own production. Humanitarian food aid does not only include food in kind, but other types of support can be used such as cash assistance and vouchers.

**Clearance of mines and other explosive devices**
Support for the clearing of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war can be an important part of humanitarian assistance. Efforts are aimed at facilitating the repatriation of refugees and IDPs and contributing to early reconstruction. Landmines and cluster munitions kill and injure not only the people, but can also hinder countries’ post-conflict reconstruction and economic and social development. Mine clearing operations are normally performed by civilian actors.

**Environmental impact and climate change**
The negative effects of environmental and climate changes have the greatest impact on people living in poverty. Humanitarian assistance should be designed to help reduce vulnerability to natural disasters including environmental and climate-related disasters of both individuals and communities, taking into account environmental and climate aspects both in the short- and long-term perspective.

**Prevention and early reconstruction**
In order to reduce vulnerability it is important to increase preparedness, primarily for natural disasters, as well as early recovery efforts after a humanitarian crisis. Reduction of risk and vulnerability should be seen as an integral part of humanitarian aid, in addition to the long-term development assistance. Reconstruction initiatives should be in accordance with humanitarian principles, and designed in a way so that local capacity is strengthened.

### 7.1.2 A strong and coordinated international humanitarian system

A strong and well coordinated international humanitarian system is a prerequisite for efficient and effective humanitarian assistance. During the past few years the ability to reach women, men and children in need has been limited mainly due to a worsened state of security obstructing humanitarian operations. In several cases personnel from humanitarian organisations have been subjected to direct attacks and kidnappings. The international humanitarian assistance is facing a number of challenges and the Swedish humanitarian policy emphasises the need for the international communities’ to build capacity to meet the increasing, and lately more complex, humanitarian needs in a flexible and needs based manner.

Furthermore, the Swedish humanitarian policy emphasises the importance of strengthening the UN’s central role in humanitarian assistance and to uphold the multilateral mechanisms, particularly the support to OCHA, and the financing of humanitarian aid though the UN CERF. The Swedish humanitarian policy also supports the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

In addition, Sweden supports, as a member state of the EU, the European Commission and the humanitarian aid department, ECHO. Sweden’s humanitarian assistance is to be guided by the EU’s consensus document on humanitarian aid from 2007 and associated action plan from 2008. The document represents a joint effort of the EU’s humanitarian aid.

### 7.1.3 Improved interaction and cooperation between development assistance and other types of actors

In order to achieve a long-term and sustainable improvement of a humanitarian situation, development activities should be implemented in parallel and in close collaboration with
humanitarian aid. The Swedish humanitarian policy stresses the importance of humanitarian aid increasingly contributing to local capacity building in countries at risk. It is important that humanitarian assistance in an early stage after a crisis supports development efforts in the affected area. The aim is to help create a situation where long-term sustainable development can eventually take place.

Humanitarian and international military entities more and more operate in the same areas. This means a greater contact area and, where possible, more opportunity for synergy. In areas affected by serious security problems, military actors have an important role in the management of an acute humanitarian crisis to support and enable humanitarian actors to reach vulnerable people. Even in the context of natural disasters, military actors can play an important supporting role. However, effective and safe humanitarian operations presupposes that the authorities, the public and, in armed conflict, armed groups, have confidence in the humanitarian organisations’ impartiality and neutrality.

Traditionally, humanitarian activities in armed conflict areas are primarily carried out by civilian organisations. Humanitarian organisations should always maintain a clear division of roles and a distinction between themselves as civilians, armed groups and others involved in the conflict. This is particularly important in areas where there are military forces as a clear distinction lowers the threshold of armed groups’ propensity to attack humanitarian personnel. A starting point for a clear division of roles between humanitarian and military actors is that military actors do not carry out humanitarian assistance efforts. Exceptions may be justified in the particular case where there are not equally good civilian alternatives, and then primarily with indirect assistance with an overall civilian leadership.

### 7.1 Security and development policy

War and armed conflict is one of the biggest obstacles to development and poverty reduction. The Policy on Security and Development in Swedish Development Cooperation states that the overall goal of activities related to security and development is to contribute to lasting peace that allows for development. A large part of Swedish development cooperation takes place in conflict and post-conflict countries. This means that the implementation of aid is carried out in complex, risky and changing environments. Development efforts and humanitarian efforts often occur in parallel with a peacekeeping presence including military components.

Human security is at the forefront of the Swedish security and development policy. This means putting women’s and men’s, girls’ and boys’ safety before the state’s. For the individual it means the right to live without fear of insecurity and violence - political, criminal, economic, social or gender based - and to have access to a functioning system of protection that puts the individual needs at the centre.

The Policy on Security and Development in Swedish Development Cooperation centres around peace promotion, security promotion and peace gains, and include focus areas such as women, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and small arms and light weapons (SALW).

**Women, peace and security**

Women are affected by, and may affect, armed conflict. They are important actors but also particularly vulnerable. Women from the conflict-affected country must be present in all parts of a peace process, in negotiations, confidence-building dialogue and to implement and monitor peace agreements. Women must also be included in international peace and security efforts and humanitarian assistance, which should be based on a gender perspective. Women must participate in efforts to protect women and girls from sexual violence, not least to

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4 Civil-military guiding principles are the Oslo Guidelines, MCDA Guidelines and IASC Guiding Principles.
contribute to the analysis and understanding of it. The Swedish security and development policy emphasises prevention and management of gender-based violence and trafficking, taking into special consideration the seriousness of the HIV and Aids situation in many conflict-affected countries.

**Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration**

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants is often one of the first processes in the implementation of a peace agreement. The objective of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin. The DDR of ex-combatants is a complex process, with political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions. It aims to deal with the post-conflict security problem that arises when ex-combatants are left without livelihoods or support networks, other than their former comrades, during the vital transition period from conflict to peace and development. The Swedish security and development policy underlines the importance of integrating ex-combatants, both male and female, and striving for a balance between the processes that support victims and perpetrators.

**Small arms and light weapons**

Most of the victims of armed conflict are killed with handguns. The wide availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) can severely hamper security and undermine the prospects of longer-term recovery and development. The use of SALW often helps to prolong armed conflict and can undermine peace efforts, and can also contribute to a culture of violence that thrives long after a conflict has ended, impeding the social and economic development. The Swedish security and development policy emphasises the necessity to control the supply, demand and availability of SALW.

8 Implementation of the Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid

The Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid comprises both bilateral and multilateral development cooperation and is a point of departure for the Swedish authorities’ humanitarian activities and strategies. The policy also guides Swedish positions in multilateral organisations, negotiations of relevant conventions and processes, and international policy development and dialogue, within the EU, the UN and other international fora. The policy is implemented using three tools: advocacy, financial support, and personnel and materiel.

8.1 Roles and responsibility

Interaction and dialogue between actors in Sweden, in recipient countries, and on regional and global levels are prerequisites for the implementation of the policy. Actors include international and intergovernmental organisations, civil society, governments, and private companies and foundations.

**Government Offices**

The Swedish Government Offices are responsible for financial core contributions and Sweden’s overall policy towards multilateral organisations with humanitarian, or partly humanitarian, activities. This includes above all the UN agencies, ICRC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Government Offices also have the overall responsibility for cooperation under the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) and the dialogue and cooperation with the EU’s humanitarian activities.

**The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)**

Sida works according to the directives of the Swedish parliament and government. In order to implement strategies and carry out its work, Sida cooperates with a large number of organisations, associations, agencies, companies and cooperatives. Sida is also responsible for country- and region-based humanitarian assistance, and grants awarded to national and
international organisations in civil society for humanitarian activities and for capacity building.

**Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency**
The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency’s (Myndigheten för samhällskydd och beredskap, MSB) role and responsibility is to maintain readiness to carry out or support rescue and relief efforts, and to support efforts in humanitarian mine clearance, the strengthening of disaster preparedness and early reconstruction. MSB is an operational actor and the contributions can be composed of staff and/or material. Within the area of humanitarian activities, MSB contributes with different types of support, for example health care solutions for humanitarian workers, water purification, latrines and waste disposal as well as housing and basic necessities such as tented camps, food and supplies. MSB can also recruit specialists from other organisations and arrange for transportation, such as large truck convoys, mechanics, and driver training etc. The international operative activities are financed by Sida.

**Civil Society Organisations and Non Government Organisations**
International and national CSOs play a vital role in implementing humanitarian operations. Their connection to local societies gives them a unique role in reaching people in need promptly and efficiently. The NGOs play an important role as ‘development agents’ supporting development through sister organisations and local networks in partner countries. NGOs in Sweden also have a role in policy development. The Swedish NGOs are funded by Sida as well as through their own fundraising.

The Swedish Red Cross and the ICRC have frame agreements with Sida in the area of humanitarian efforts. Examples of other organisations that have frame agreements for so called minor humanitarian efforts are the Church of Sweden, Save the Children, and Doctors Without Borders (Onsander, 2007).

9 **Challenges and moral dilemmas**

It would seem as if humanitarian assistance based on the humanitarian imperative and major international conventions would be rather simple to deliver. However, at times it appears that problems in relation to humanitarian actions are rather more complicated than those related to development assistance. The problems in implementation relates to a number of complex issues such as ownership and capacities on the receiving end, the challenge of going from a humanitarian situation towards development (the problem of transition) and some major problems of ethical and moral nature (Wohlgemuth, 2006).

A basic principle when implementing humanitarian assistance is that it should be based on the principle of “do no harm” (Andersson, 1999). Not doing more harm than good calls for moral considerations but also that the humanitarian activities are locally embedded and the use of local capacity. Many actors today are talking about “mainstreaming” conflict prevention in all their cooperation programs. Others have developed “codes of conducts” to mitigate possible problems (Wohlgemuth, 2006).

The underlying humanitarian principles in all humanitarian aid means that organisations must base their operations on the needs and wishes of the local community and use local capacity. However, it can often be difficult to find the local capacity needed. In some cases, the local capacity that originally was there has been undermined and disappeared in the shadow of an intensive international relief operation (Juma & Suhrke, 2002). Capacity building activities that do not take advantage of local structures and values are destined to fail. Too often the actors involved in a humanitarian operation are too occupied with focusing on quick and results based aid resulting in short term perspectives (Wohlgemuth, 2006).

The principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence are not always easy to implement in the field. Although humanitarian aid operations in conflict areas are supposed to be carried out by CSOs, there are political decisions that affect their capacity to perform their work. In other disaster situations, governments can be the ones leading humanitarian operations,
adding another political aspect to the situation. Donor governments are moved by public opinion and humanitarian assistance tends to be greater in disaster situations that the national public feels more empathy with – the so-called CNN effect. One example of this is the enormous amount of assistance that was allocated to Thailand after the Tsunami in comparison to the assistance that is given to conflict and other disaster situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parts of Africa. While it is easy to criticise politicians for having political agendas behind their policies, it is important to remember that the people working in the field also experience moral dilemmas that prevent them from always following the principles of humanitarian aid. An important problem is that humanitarian assistance, despite good intentions and meticulous operational planning, risks exacerbating conflicts between individuals or population groups. States and organisations providing relief assistance must make choices regarding where immediate assistance is needed most, but also take into consideration that the positive impact of aid on socio-economic conditions in one community can lead to frustration in other communities. In conflict areas, armed groups may attempt to take advantage of the situation in order to strengthen their positions thus turning humanitarian assistance into yet another resource to be fought over or into a political bargaining chip (Odén & Wohlgemuth, 2007).

The notion that “being humanitarian” and “doing good” are somehow inevitably the same is hard to shake off. For many people, it is almost counter-intuitive to have to consider that humanitarian action may also have a dark side which compromises as well as helps the people whose suffering it seeks to alleviate. The increasing involvement of relief agencies in the very heat of war and political violence has given rise to a growing sense of moral unease among agency policy makers and field workers who more and more feel confronted by “moral dilemmas” in their work (Slim, 1997).

The existence of a large body of international humanitarian law and human rights law is another important part of the moral landscape in which relief agencies make their moral decisions. These international legal instruments often spell out what is right and wrong under law. Nevertheless, despite its ratification by a majority of states, humanitarian and human rights law is distinguished by failure of application both locally and internationally. More often than not, relief agencies will therefore find themselves making decisions in a legal vacuum (Slim, 1997).

In broad terms, relief agencies face four main competing areas of moral value which can compete with each other in any given situation. The first is the basic humanitarian value, that of preserving human life itself. The second is that vast spectrum of values across the economic, social, civil and political spheres known collectively as human rights. The third is the principle of justice which is the moral measure of fair and equal relationships between individuals and groups in any society. Finally, there is the value of staff safety which, almost in contradiction to the other three, appears to value the particular lives of some people over all other lives. Almost every difficult moral decision in relief work seems to involve the collision of competing demands from these four values (Slim, 1997).

The challenge for relief agencies is to determine the proper limits of their moral responsibility for the negative impact of emergency aid and then make all efforts to mitigate against it in their programmes. In general, relief workers are faced with two levels of moral decision-making. The first level is strategic and programme-wide, and concerns whether or not an agency should be involved in a given situation. The second level is more tactical and concerns how agencies and their staff operate once they are involved (Slim, 1997).
Example of strategic, programme-wide ethics: Aid without justice

In the relief operations to mainly Hutu refugees in Eastern Zaire in 1994, many relief workers had serious reservations about the morality of their work as providers of relief support to a population which still contained a large number of people who had perpetrated genocide and had not yet been brought to justice. By providing humanitarian assistance, many relief agencies felt that they were inevitably contributing to a genocide regime now operating in exile. It could be argued that this genocide regime, which still dominated the refugee camps, had orchestrated the flight of more than a million people in order to maintain a large and captive support base and were content to use asylum as a means of recovery and renewed violence. In addition, because of the widespread popular participation in the genocide, relief agencies knew they were likely to be employing, sustaining and allying themselves with perpetrators of genocide. In short, relief agencies were concerned with one main strategic moral question: how far would relief agencies be to blame if the genocidal Hutu regime did use the asylum and humanitarian assistance to regroup and commit further violence?

Possible reasoning: It is important to distinguish between correlation and causation when assessing the outcomes of moral actions. There was certainly a correlation between the availability of humanitarian assistance and the regime's policies but this relationship is not necessarily causative. Humanitarian assistance perhaps enabled the regime to pursue their policy, but it did not cause the regime to choose it. The United Nations and its member states are mandated by international law to respond to genocide by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, but failed to do so and provided an "aid only" response without the requisite judicial response. Their failure left a moral vacuum on the ground in the refugee camps where alleged perpetrators should have sought out, denied refugee status and brought to justice. The failure of international politicians should not mean that the relief agencies, as the closest to the situation, somehow inherit moral responsibility for administering international justice, and in not doing so become tainted with the failure of other parts of the international system (Slim, 1997).
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