



International Council of Voluntary Agencies
Conseil International des Agences Bénévoles
Consejo Internacional de Organizaciones Voluntarias

Talk Back

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3/4 OF NGO OPERATIONS IN OLS SHUT DOWN IN PART OF SOUTH SUDAN

Eleven major international NGOs decided to pull out from South Sudan at the end of February. UN officials managing "Operation Lifeline Sudan", the UN aid operation for South Sudan in which NGOs participate, estimate that the NGO departure would amount to a loss of 75% of the NGO contributed resources to OLS. In some areas, this figure would be as high as between 80% to 90%.

On 29 February, an ultimatum expired by which NGOs operating in South Sudan had to either sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), the humanitarian wing of the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement, or to evacuate SPLM control-

led territory. Eleven NGOs decided not to sign.

The MOU, dating back to 19 August, raises several points of contention for NGOs, including the SRRA authority to approve or deny local staff hiring, the SRRA being allowed to use NGO logistical equipment, and the imposition of restrictions on public gatherings.

As the most obvious consequence of the pull out will be the impact on the recipient population, one representative strongly emphasised that "this has not been an easy decision." The NGOs, not unused to signing texts with authorities being either government

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UNHCR EXPECTS GENERAL PUBLIC TO BECOME ITS THIRD LARGEST DONOR

UNHCR has moved forward with its plans to significantly increase funding from the private sector. A study presented to the UNHCR senior management in January concludes that it "will soon have built an individual donor's base of half a million donors who will donate approximately \$100 million within five years."

Last year, UNHCR calculated that it would receive approximately \$30 million from private contributions, making the public its 8th donor. If UNHCR receives \$100 million from the general public, private donations will be in third place on UNHCR's donor list, after the US and Japan, but just ahead of the European Union. According to UNHCR's Chief

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EDITORIAL

THE DEADLOCKED IASC

NGOs should avoid being held hostage to the slow, bureaucratic, and inefficient UN coordination mechanisms for responding to humanitarian crises. This popular NGO view seems to be even more relevant now that the main UN body responsible for inter-agency coordination at the headquarters level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), finds itself increasingly in deadlock situations.

All heads of the UN humanitarian, development, and human rights agencies form the IASC. The Red Cross Movement and three NGO consortia are standing invitees. Such a configuration should give it more than sufficient clout to act as an authoritative, leading body for the humanitarian community. Surprisingly, it does not.

In fact, the relevance of the IASC in coordinating the humanitarian response has always been the subject of debate. The independent evaluation of the UNHCR response to the Kosovo crisis — commented on in *Talk Back* Vol. 2-1 — which examined extensively the coordination arrangements in the Kosovo emergency, as these were a crucial element in the crisis, only cites the IASC three times in its 140-page report. It is indicative of the IASC's credibility and significance in times of real crisis.

The latest deadlock in the IASC became particularly apparent during the December meeting of the heads of agencies. At that meeting, the head of one of the UN's specialised agencies warned that the proposal to create an executive committee that would be composed of the emergency-oriented, operational IASC members (UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, joined by one representative from the Red Cross movement and one from the NGOs), was unacceptable.

Some operational agencies had pushed forward this proposal as an expression of their increased frustration over the process. One of the reasons that reduces the IASC's potential role as an effective mechanism

for inter-agency cooperation in humanitarian emergencies is the equal role given to agencies whose relevance in emergency operations is not immediately self-evident. As a result, during the first days of an emergency, the 'operational' agencies organise informal processes, such as conference calls, outside the IASC context.

However, the trend in the IASC points in the other direction. It continues to be expanded as more of the non-operational agencies joined or requested membership in 1999. It makes the body, renowned for its internal turf battles, even larger and more diverse.

Some have pointed out that the IASC should be more proactive in making itself more known outside the UN and to the public at large. A recent internal paper read that the IASC should fully exploit its extraordinary power "as a moral authority," as it has "a capacity of mobilising consciences that are potentially superior to the ones of its members alone," and could become an advocate of humanitarian values and principles.

This perception is one that can be best qualified as misguided grandeur and out of touch with present reality. For example, the designation of an agency responsible for leading the response to situations of internal displacement has proven far too difficult. As a result of this coordination failure, in situations where UNHCR does not wish to deal with IDPs, there is a serious risk that they fall through the cracks, as is discussed elsewhere in this issue.

However, even simple inter-agency coordination jobs turn out not to be in good hands. Since December 1999, the IASC, under the auspices of OCHA, has persisted in its inability to appoint a new humanitarian coordinator for the UN system in Burundi, at a time when the humanitarian community in Burundi is in dire need of visibility and leadership.

In view of this ineffectiveness, it is a bit much to expect that the body could ascertain its role for the appalling situation in Chechnya and speak out against the human rights violations being committed. ♦

Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop, ICVA Coordinator

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NEW MOMENTUM FOR A SINGLE AGENCY MANDATED TO PROTECT AND ASSIST IDPs

As it has taken on new momentum, the NGOs must move the debate forward for a single UN-agency to assume the mandate to protect and assist internally displaced persons (IDPs). The momentum has been built by the remarks of the US Ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, who stated that UNHCR's mandate should be expanded to include IDPs, during the UN Security Council session on 13 January.

Holbrooke made his comments following a visit to Angola, one of the most prominent examples of a country with a huge number of internally displaced persons living in extreme conditions, struggling to survive. The number of displaced Angolans varies from one to two million IDPs, while recent reports, including one from the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Humanitarian Aid, say the numbers are as high as more than 3.7 million, or one-third of the total population. Reportedly, Holbrooke earlier expressed shock over the Angolan situation, which he found impossible for UN coordination.

Because of the so far insurmountable barrier of sovereignty and internal UN turf battles, no one UN agency has been assigned the mandate for IDPs. The official UN view, reiterated in a recent policy document on IDPs, is that the protection and assistance of IDPs requires a collaborative approach and a significant coordination role for the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

However, others, including the UN Special Representative for IDPs, Francis Deng, have always maintained that a real institutional solution is needed, which in practice means that one single institution is assigned to take the lead responsibility for IDPs.

In responding to Holbrooke's remarkable comments, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, said that she was unsure the refugee agency could take on the task. UNHCR has announced a retreat of the senior management to examine the proposal and to present a formal position. Reportedly, UNHCR protection staff have serious questions as to what the role of UNHCR should be in

relation to in-country protection. In-country protection may jeopardise the right to seek asylum as neighbouring states may close their doors and tell UNHCR to keep them on the other side of the border. And, as reported in *Talk Back* Vol. 2-1, the independent evaluation of the Kosovo refugee crisis implied that UNHCR's ability to provide assistance and protection to the refugees had been hampered by its earlier operations inside Kosovo.

UNHCR's evaluation and policy analysis unit has announced that it will complete an inventory of the agency's current involvement in IDP situations and plans to prepare case-study reviews, the first of which will be looking at Sri Lanka.

An OCHA official in turn has stated that the official position of IASC members including the NGO consortia should be the policy line of the IDP paper, emphasising the need for collaboration and shared responsibility. If the UN were to be able to demonstrate its ability to correct problems and produce visible improvements in the system for strategic coordination, not only would Holbrooke's position on UN coordination no longer be valid, but also the need for a single responsible agency would not exist. The IASC, however, has so far not been effective in assigning lead-agency responsibility and discussing effective coordination arrangements for situations of internal displacement. Another OCHA official has wondered whether access to IDPs will improve with one UN agency having the mandate.

It has also been reported that US government officials described Holbrooke's remarks as both personal and unexpected. The officials have, however, promised to continue the debate and to set up an inter-agency working group involving Deng's office and, for example, the OSCE.

Until now, NGOs seemed to be divided on the issue. Many point out that of all the operational UN agencies, UNHCR has been the most involved with IDPs and view the agency's extensive experience with displacement as an advantage.

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DOUBLE STANDARD APPARENT IN NORTHERN CAUCASUS

The double standards existing in the international system that were so often pointed to during the Kosovo crisis become more apparent by the day. While assistance to the refugees from Kosovo was readily forthcoming from many members of the international community, assistance to the displaced from Chechnya is hardly taking on the same scale and there is little hope that the international community will take similar steps to stop the human rights abuses taking place in the republic.

The ICRC has requested access to internment camps where, according to press reports, 100,000 Chechens may be detained. However, Russian officials have yet to grant access to the camps saying that the request will be considered when security conditions allow.

Almost daily there are reports from human rights organisations documenting human rights violations in the republic. A request by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, to the Russians to allow foreign monitors into the republic was greeted with the Russians calling her comments about the likelihood of human rights abuses as being one-sided and anti-Russian.

Why is it that the international community has been so lax about standing up to Russia as it continues to bomb parts of the republic and after it has closed Chechnya's borders on several occasions? While there are threats from the international community to isolate Russia if it continues its use of excessive force, all Russia has had to do is argue that it is an internal matter and those making the threats seem to back off. The lack of willingness of the international community to stand up in the same way that NATO chose to flex its muscle against Serbia is striking.

The security situation in the Northern Caucasus continues to hinder assistance operations. There are only a limited number of UN agencies present in the northern Caucasus and those that are there have their operations further limited as a result of the restrictions imposed on them by the UN Security Coordinator.

Increasingly, NGOs are stepping in, at the risk of becoming unwitting substitutes for the UN, to provide much-needed assistance to the displaced from

Chechnya who have made their way to Ingushetia. The Danish Refugee Council is strengthening and facilitating UNHCR's food and non-food relief items. Some international NGOs have started operations within Chechnya, but security concerns regarding international staff persist, limiting operations. A Médecins du Monde report, released 23 February, and reports from human rights organisations have provided numerous accounts of war crimes being committed by Russian soldiers and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Yet without international action, little is being done to stop the human rights abuses and violations of international law.

A UN inter-agency mission into Ingushetia from 31 January to 5 February identified several gaps that need to be filled in terms of humanitarian assistance — the greatest needs being in the health sector. The final UN inter-agency consolidated appeal is to be launched officially in Geneva on 15 March. ♦

With reports from ICVA member, Danish Refugee Council in Stavropol, e-mail: drcstavropol@z-com.ru; www.drc.dk.

Single Agency for IDPs?

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UNHCR's criteria for involvement with IDPs are clear — a request from a competent principal UN organ, the consent of the host authorities, and relevant to UNHCR's experience and expertise — evidence suggests that the refugee agency has not been consistent in following these criteria. In a number of major IDP situations, including Angola, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, UNHCR has not assumed the mandate. It is felt that the agency always maintains an escape clause with which to opt out when the situation is less politically attractive.

It has been announced that on 24 March 2000, a meeting will be held in Geneva to discuss, in a more concerted way, the protection of internally displaced persons, including the mandates of agencies that are members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UNHCR, UNICEF, and others). ICVA will keep readers abreast of the developments. ♦

ECRE/ICVA REFERENCE GROUP ON THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA KOSOVO MEETING

The ECRE/ICVA Reference Group on the former Yugoslavia held a one-day conference in London, UK on 28 January on "Kosovo: Return, Reconstruction, Respect". The conference, which focused on the return of refugees and displaced, reconstruction of the economy and civil society, and respect for minorities, brought together over 100 representatives of NGOs and international organisations. Below are some of the highlights from the conference. Many of the issues raised at the conference are addressed in the special Talk Back issue (Vol. 2-1) on the independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response to the Kosovo crisis.

Humanitarian Agencies are not Enough in an Emergency

The international community has not learned the lessons from previous humanitarian emergencies, according to Dennis MacNamara, UNHCR's Special Envoy, who also serves as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs within UNMIK.

While humanitarian relief is necessary, it is not enough. There is a need to bring in police, judges, and administrators in humanitarian emergencies to ensure that the environment of impunity, which is prevailing in Kosovo, is not replicated.

More Policemen Needed

Soldiers are not trained to be policemen and should not act as policemen, noted MacNamara. Currently in Kosovo there are less than 200 local policemen, which is not enough to put an end to the environment of impunity and lawlessness.

Unclear Political Future

One of the main constraints facing UNMIK in Kosovo is the ambiguity in the Security Council resolution as to the political future of Kosovo. The resolution recognises the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), but at the same time there is a refusal on the part of Kosovars to have any sort of provincial status in FRY.

Lack of NGO Involvement in Three Pillars of UNMIK

The interim civil administration, reconstruction, and institution building pillars of UNMIK are not sufficiently involving NGOs or civil society as they try

to move from relief to rehabilitation. While NGOs are making plans of how to move to the reconstruction phase, there are concerns that the UN pillars are not moving as quickly as they should.

Continuing Ethnic Intolerance

The question of Kosovars missing or detained in Serbia is one that continues to fuel ethnic hatred and intolerance. UNMIK is considering the establishment of a national war crimes tribunal.

Efforts at reconciliation and the return of Serbs will be premature until the violence and wide-spread harassment of Serbs and Roma stops.

The Role of the Military in Humanitarian Operations

The involvement of the military is one that needs to be examined. The involvement of NATO in the Kosovo crisis meant that humanitarian agencies had to redraw lines in order to ensure that the humanitarian response remains civilian.

The emphasis on bilateral efforts undermined multilateral coordination efforts.

The Role of NGOs

One of the lessons from the involvement of international NGOs in Kosovo is the need to respect local NGOs as partners. It was also suggested that NGOs should take a regional approach in their work. The possibility of having an independent evaluation of NGO work was mentioned.

Protection and Security

During the initial outflow of refugees, many Kosovars were turned back by the Macedonians when they tried to cross the mountains. Not many NGOs were there at first because of security considerations. The lack of international presence at the border raises the question of when protection should override individual security concerns. Later, UN agencies and NGOs worked together to pressure the Macedonian government to open up its borders. ♦

The ECRE/ICVA Reference Group on the former Yugoslavia will be producing full notes on the conference, including presentations and key points from the information and workshop sessions. E-mail: refgroup@charity.vfree.com

IN THE NEWS

"DIRE" SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR AS RECONSTRUCTION PROCEEDS TOO SLOWLY

"Calamitous" and "dire" is how Sergio Vieira de Mello described the present situation in East Timor to members of the donor community at a recent meeting in Geneva. The destruction seen in East Timor, according to de Mello, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNTAET (the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor), is much worse than anything he has seen in the Balkans.

While donors pledged US\$523 million to East Timor in December at the donors' conference in Tokyo, the funds in the World Bank Trust Fund for East Timor are not yet available. The administrative steps being taken by the National Consultative Council are having little immediate effect on the lives of ordinary East Timorese. Unemployment is high and markets are not yet functioning. Returns are proceeding very slowly and many of those who served under the Indonesian military or administration are fearful of returning to independent East Timor.

The National Consultative Council, which is acting as the government in East Timor, has been focussing on areas that are essential to provide donors and the World Bank with the necessary assurances before funds are disbursed. The Council has created what de Mello called "the embryo" of a sound fiscal budget. A Central Fiscal Authority and Cen-

tral Payment Authority (a bank) have been created and it has been decided to use the US dollar as the currency during the transition period. A six-month plan was presented to the donor community in Washington and approved at the end of January. Yet these plans and efforts to please donors are not satisfying the present needs of the East Timorese who are anxious to have their homes rebuilt and to have life return to a state of normalcy.

While he said that the World Bank was working much faster than he had seen before, de Mello noted that it was still too slow for the needs and expectations of the East Timorese community. If the funds to rebuild East Timor cannot be taken from the UNTAET assessed budget (which requires approval from the UN General Assembly), then they will have to come from the East Timor Trust Fund established by the UN Secretary-General. However, there are insufficient funds in the Trust Fund for the amount of reconstruction necessary.

The UN Transitional Administration in East Timor, admitted de Mello, is quite unprepared for the broad mandate it has been given. It has been assigned a comprehensive mandate under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter and provides UNTAET with full administrative, executive, judicial, and legislative authority. ♦

EAST TIMOR'S BURGEONING NGO COMMUNITY

Pat Walsh, ACFOA

The number of NGOs in East Timor is multiplying rapidly, but the interesting development is that now there are more East Timorese than international NGOs. At last count, there are now some 50 East Timorese organisations, up from around 30 in early December. This development will assist to restore the balance between local and outside NGOs and give the East Timorese confidence that they are no longer observers at someone else's function.

This mini-explosion in NGO activity is largely to be explained as a local response to the ongoing emer-

gency, the availability of substantial funding, and positive public statements by the UN and others encouraging the growth of civil society in East Timor. It is also a response to the unprecedented opening up of free space in East Timor following the ending of Indonesian repression and the dawning realisation that community initiative is no longer punishable, but an exciting new option.

Several international organisations, led by UNDP, are providing funding, training, and other support to assist with capacity strengthening to ensure the development of a dynamic NGO sector. A workshop of national NGOs, held in Dili in December,

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN SIERRA LEONE: AN UNREALISTIC PLAN?

An ambitious plan has been laid out for Sierra Leone by a joint UNHCR, UNDP, and World Bank Group mission that visited the sub-region from 1-6 February. The nine-month timeframe sees disarmament occurring within 60 days; access to the whole country being possible within 90 days; reintegration of ex-combatants to be completed within 120 days; and refugees to return within 180 days.

The plan seemingly predicts that the problems that will likely result when ex-combatants, who were responsible for widespread human rights violations, try to return to their homes, will be fairly easily overcome. Under the July 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement signed by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), all combatants and collaborators were granted "absolute and free pardon... in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives" up until the signing of the peace agreement.

The joint mission acknowledged that ensuring the reintegration of ex-combatants into society is a challenge that will need to be addressed, especially if civilians are not ready to accept them. The return of refugees and displaced remains a "question mark" identified by the team as it is not yet clear if they will be able to return to areas taken over by rebels. Following the joint mission, the World Bank announced that it would provide \$130 million to increase disarmament and to help in the return of 400,000 refugees from Guinea.

Other "question marks" that the mission identified included ensuring total disarmament and having enough troops deployed under the UN Mission in

Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This latter question was answered by the Security Council's decision to increase the number of troops from 6,000 to 11,000. UNAMSIL troops, in recent days, have been blocked by forces of the RUF making it unclear as to the strength of the peace agreement. There is concern that the most difficult group of combatants to persuade to disarm will be those in the diamond and mining areas.

There are some encouraging developments taking place with regards to reintegrating ex-combatants into civil society. This month the statute for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was drafted with the assistance of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Commission is to create an "impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law" that occurred from 1991 up until the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement. It is also to promote reconciliation in order to prevent further abuses.

The joint mission felt that the international community should take advantage of the positive developments in Sierra Leone and the sub-region in order to move the peace process forward. They found that the political will to push forward with peace and disarmament is there, but there is also a need to work on advancing that political will, not only among the leaders in Sierra Leone, but in Liberia and Guinea as well.

The mission to Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia was undertaken as part of the Brookings process, launched over a year ago, which aims to ensure that post-conflict situations are approached comprehensively from humanitarian and developmental perspectives. ♦

East Timorese NGOs

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strongly endorsed a motion to re-form the East Timor NGO Forum which, like its East Timorese member agencies, had been forced to shut down during the September crisis. Since then the 'Forum' (a formal title is still under discussion) has decided on a new mission statement, Board of Management and office, and appointed a CEO. The Forum will greatly assist communication within East Timor's NGO community and between local and international NGOs. East Timorese human rights NGOs

will also benefit from the establishment by the UN of a human rights centre in Dili, which includes an advocacy and training facility for NGOs and others.

On January 31, the Indonesian Human Rights Commission and the UN released separate landmark reports, which concluded that the Indonesian military and their proxy militias were guilty of crimes against humanity in East Timor. Taken together, the two reports constitute the most damning indictment

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NGOs Pull out of South Sudan

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or rebel groups, made it clear that there had been a clear lack of process. "Since August 1999, the MOU has been imposed on us, instead of offering an opportunity for a dialogue necessary for a genuine negotiation process," one NGO representative said. "We refuse to sign under duress," he added.

The SRRA has said that while NGO personnel refusing to sign the MOU must be evacuated by 29 February, departing NGOs will have until the end of March to remove their assets or transfer them to the UN. Until that time, the SRRA has said that the assets will be safely guarded.

However, several NGOs that decided to sign have remarked that they are concerned about the security conditions that will prevail in SPLM territory after the deadline passes. There is a risk that the SRRA or the SPLM may not be able to differentiate between those NGOs that have signed the MOU and those that have refused to sign.

But there are more crucial questions. How will the donors react? Some have already pointed out that they will continue funding to NGOs that decided to sign. Another donor made it clear that it will not shift funds destined for those that have not signed, to those continuing in South Sudan. But the biggest question remains the position of the EU. ECHO has warned that it will suspend all funding for South Sudan.

The present situation will also put high pressure and expectations on the UN. Some NGOs have men-

tioned that UNICEF, the lead agency in the southern sector of OLS, has been remarkably silent in its position on the MOU. If OLS is to continue, there will be no other option for the UN than to become more outspoken and to push for the reopening of the negotiations. While the UN Special Envoy, Tom Vraalsen, has been recently active on the issue, there may be a need to step up the level of UN involvement. However, the risk involved with this is that the political status of the SPLM will be raised.

NGOs and UN agencies have been providing humanitarian assistance in Sudan through Operation Lifeline Sudan since the late 1980s. Under the OLS, both the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) agreed to the principle that OLS should have access to "war-affected people irrespective of who controls the territory in which they are located."

During a meeting of the OLS Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance (TCHA) in Geneva in December, an Agreement on Beneficiary Protection and Rights was signed by the Government of Sudan, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), and the UN. Under the agreement, the main warring parties agreed to the principle of free and unimpeded access to war-affected civilian populations by humanitarian agencies and that relief items should not be diverted from the beneficiaries. They also agreed to a number of principles for the protection of beneficiary IDPs. The UN has admitted that there is no reason why this agreement and the MOU should be different in their terms. ♦

East Timorese NGOs

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ever of the Indonesian military and are a major contribution to ending military impunity in Indonesia. The Indonesian report goes further than the UN and names senior Indonesian officers, including General Wiranto, and East Timorese militia leaders it believes were responsible for either crimes of commission or omission. It recommends legal proceedings against them and, *inter alia*, the establishment of a retrospective human rights court in Indonesia, a complete overhaul of the military and its dual function doctrine, and compensation to all East Timorese victims and their families. As such the Indonesian Commission report strikes a major blow for Indo-

nesia's version of democracy and deserves strong international support.

At the same time, there are grave doubts that the Indonesian judicial system has the resources, integrity, or authority to deliver justice on such a super-sensitive issue. The UN must, therefore, keep open the option of instituting an ad hoc Yugoslavia-style tribunal and not abrogate its responsibilities as it did in the run up to the self-determination ballot when, in a fatal move, it entrusted Indonesia with responsibility for security in East Timor. ♦

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REBUILDING AFTER ORISSA'S SUPER CYCLONE: TURNING TRAGEDY INTO OPPORTUNITY

The damage from the super cyclone that ripped through the Indian state of Orissa in October 1999 is only beginning to be repaired. The road ahead for the state, in which an estimated 100,000 people were killed, is one that will require enormous resources in order to ensure that life can return to normal as quickly as possible.

The destruction wrought by the cyclone rendered almost 2 million households without homes and has affected 10 million people. Large tracts of paddy fields were destroyed and much agricultural land has been badly eroded and waterlogged. Homes, drinking water facilities, schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and other facilities and infrastructure were completely devastated by the scale of the cyclone. The situation was so grim that the navy, army, and airforce had to be called in for rescue and relief operations in the area.

While the relief efforts were fairly widely publicised in the international media, the attention on the state has faded considerably now that it is turning to the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase.

While the relief efforts were fairly widely publicised in the international media, the attention on the state has faded considerably now that it is turning to the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. While funds are being made available by donors and hundreds of NGOs are working in the area, the needs are far greater than the resources available.

Government agencies, UN agencies, and hundreds of local NGOs are all working to return the state to a level of normalcy. While there is some coordination among the NGOs and other agencies working on reconstruction, it is inadequate. There is a need for improved cooperation and networking to avoid the duplication of efforts and the unnecessary fragmentation of aid.

While local NGOs receive very little support from the government for their work, they are

receiving support from both indigenous and international donors and their work is being commended, not only by the government, but also by the media. At the same time that NGOs are carrying out their work, the Orissa government has been widely criticised for its weak and sluggish disaster management.

The need to reconstruct provides a unique opportunity to improve the situation in the state, especially for the poorest of the poor. In the rush to reconstruct, however, inadequate attention is being paid to measures that could minimise the possibility of such damage in the future. The initiation of a process of participatory development that takes into account vulnerability reduction at this stage through the Panchayati Raj institutions (local level government structures) is one way of turning this tragedy into an opportunity. Such processes could help to ensure transparency and accountability, at least at the local level.

However, in other natural disasters elsewhere in the world, similar opportunities have not been translated into results. Promises have been made by politicians to turn the reconstruction process into one that improves the situation of the population, especially the most vulnerable, but in the end, they have generally turned out to be empty promises. Hopefully the case of Orissa will turn out to be the exception rather than another example of missed opportunity in this sense. ♦

Based on information provided by ICVA member AVARD's (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development) President, P.M. Tripathi . 5 (FF), Institutional Area, Deen Dayal Marg, New Delhi 110 002, India, e-mail: avar@del2.vsnl.net.in

UNHCR Turning to General Public for More Funds

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of the Division of Communication and Information, John Horekens, this source of private income is essential if UNHCR as an organisation is to survive.

The plans to systematically seek increased funding from the general public are well-down the road, after UNHCR undertook an appraisal of its experiences and potential to raise funds from the private sector in the second half of 1999. UNHCR shared the recent study as a follow-up to the discussions that took place at the time of the October 1999 pre-EXCOM consultations with NGOs, reported on in *Talk Back* Vol. 1-7 and Vol. 1-8.

According to the study, raising funds from the private sector is not new to UNHCR, but the refugee agency always took a half-hearted approach. In view of the declining financial support from governments in recent years, it needs to invest seriously in private sector fund-raising so as to ensure that it has "sufficient and diversified funding." Concerning the need for diversification, the fact that the United States gave its highest contribution ever in 1999, responsible for covering 30% of UNHCR's income, is seen as an unwelcome development by many UNHCR officials as it might imply too much dependency on one donor.

UNHCR's fund-raising plans raise a number of serious issues. For example, the claimed need for increased funding can be questioned on the basis of actual data. The total number of "people of concern to UNHCR," which includes refugees, returnees, and IDPs, has dropped from 27 million in 1995 to 21.5 million at the beginning of 1999. At the same time, the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has seriously increased. However, UNHCR has selectively agreed to become involved with IDPs.

Donor governments have argued their decline in funding by pointing out that UNHCR has become too big and has become too focussed on large-scale relief operations. A number of them will likely fear losing control over UNHCR if it goes ahead with its fund-raising plans.

Another issue concerns the relationship with NGOs, often characterised as "competitive" when it concerns private sector fund-raising. The UNHCR study tries to be sensitive to NGO concerns, but

states that many larger NGOs have received substantial levels of government funding, "thereby making it more difficult to suggest that UNHCR should limit its fund-raising to governments." The view that maintains that UNHCR is an inter-governmental structure and, therefore, should remain government-funded, has been qualified as "old-fashioned."

The study argues that a greater effort on the part of all humanitarian organisations to raise funds on behalf of the beneficiaries will be of benefit to both UNHCR and NGOs eventually. Private sector fund-raising will significantly contribute to creating public awareness and communicating UNHCR's work with refugees.

Interestingly, the study emphasises fund-raising from the general public. Many NGOs tend to think that UNHCR will particularly look at the corporate sector and foundations to improve its financial situation. However, it is explained that since refugees are not particularly popular in Western countries, companies generally do not find that helping UNHCR serves their market interests in the same way as more attractive causes, such as helping children.

In increasing efforts to raise funds from the general public, the study proposes to create or, where existent enhance, systematically a harmonised network of national associations that are strongly linked to UNHCR and actively supported by it. In countries like Italy, Spain, the UK, and the US, such associations have been active for a number of years. The study portrays such associations as useful since they understand the local market, have national links, and offer the advantage that contributions may be tax deductible.

Also on the level of its headquarters in Geneva, UNHCR will need to devote serious time and resources to step up private sector fund-raising. It plans to create a special unit, headed by a high-level official — a D1 in UN-ese. Horekens has promised to keep NGOs abreast of the developments and has invited them to provide comments. ♦

The study "Developing Public Awareness and Support: An Appraisal of Private Sector Fund-Raising," January 2000, is on file with Talk Back and is available for interested ICVA member organisations.

MEMBER'S PROFILE

ICS — ITALIAN CONSORTIUM OF SOLIDARITY

The Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS) was born in 1992 as a humanitarian endeavour aimed at responding to the challenges presented by war-torn former Yugoslavia. Officially founded one year later, ICS was created with the primary aim of organising and coordinating the large spectrum of solidarity activities that Italian civil society was carrying out in a quite generous and spontaneous, though sometimes inadequate, way.

Today ICS is still shaped as a network of more than one hundred organisations whose common objective is to alleviate and find durable solutions to the post-war situation in the Balkans. However, in doing so, ICS has, little by little, acquired an operational capacity and infrastructure, as well as a core permanent staff able to implement assistance and development oriented projects.

- Beyond its original, and still valid, role as a network organisation, ICS has become a full-fledged autonomous, operational agency. In this capacity ICS, over a few years, has been selected by some relevant UN Agencies (UNHCR, UNOPS, UNICEF) as an implementing partner for their major operations in the former Yugoslavia.

ICS' primary goal, at this stage, is to provide assistance to the war-affected populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or social group. Over the years, and mainly at the request of the above-mentioned UN humanitarian agencies, increasing attention has been given by ICS

to vulnerable groups, such as children, women, and the elderly. ICS has thus gained knowledge and expertise in psycho-social activities and community services in the refugee camps and collective centres throughout the Balkans.

ICS works in the following main fields of operations:

- War-like emergencies, including the dispatching of humanitarian convoys, distribution of emergency kits, and the full management of refugee camps and collective centres when appropriate. At the peak of the Bosnia conflict, in 1994 and 1995, more than 300 vehicles were shipped by ICS from Ancona Harbour, carrying more than 1,100 metric tons of aid for a total value of around US\$75 million. During the recent humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, ICS ran 6 collective centres in different localities of Albania, where more than 5,000 refugees were fully cared for and hosted.
- Rehabilitation, including the reconstruction of social infrastructures (schools, hospitals) and minor rehabilitation interventions (private houses, communal roads, local rural facilities, water and electricity supply, sanitation equipment).
- Longer Term Interventions: ICS has been implementing a large range of related projects in the post-conflict environment, such as income generating activities, professional training, socio-economic projects on behalf of women and the elderly, community services, and informal education. At a more

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Of Possible Interest to Readers: FORCED MIGRATION REVIEW

Forced Migration Review (FMR) is a 44-page magazine published three times a year in English, Spanish, and Arabic by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, in collaboration with the Global IDP Project/Norwegian Refugee Council. FMR enables academics, practitioners, refugees, and IDPs to share information and experience, present recommendations and set out guidelines for best practice, providing a forum for debate on the most immediate issues facing refugees and internally displaced people and those working with them.

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Italian Consortium of Solidarity

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specific level, ICS has endeavoured to promote human rights, to support free and independent media, and to encourage democratisation and peace-keeping oriented initiatives. The care and socio-economic development of some minority groups has also become, in the recent past, a trend within the ICS' refugee programs. In a selected number of countries of the Balkans, more specifically in Montenegro and Kosovo, the agency has been instrumental in tackling the social, cultural, and economic challenges the Roma populations were facing when confronted with other majority groups.

- Refugee Reception, Assistance, and Integration in the Italian Territory: ICS is presently carrying out major activities on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy, ranging from pre-screening exercises to legal advice services and temporary local integration. In this framework, ICS provides accommodation to approximately 500 refugees and/or asylum seekers living in 17 different towns through regional decentralised relief programmes. In partnership with other national NGOs, and with the financial contribution of the European Commission, ICS is implementing integration projects as well as research on the Dublin Convention as applied within the specific Italian situation. In the same vein, the agency is actively involved in discussions with the Government over the new long-awaited asylum law.

The Consortium runs three offices in Italy: Headquarters in Genoa, the President's office in Rome, and a third Unit in Trieste to assist asylum seekers entering the country through this extremely sensitive Italian border with the eastern European countries. ICS also has a large presence in the Balkans, running offices in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania.

With the cooperation of the professional staff appointed to the field, the Consortium has been able so far to send approximately 12,000 volunteers to the field for short-term missions. They have worked in the refugee camps and have carried out a variety of solidarity activities in support of peace and rec-

onciliation. This totally spontaneous and deeply committed cooperation constitutes an essential and far-reaching policy for ICS in the years ahead. This cooperation is, furthermore, the best way to build up a roster of selected, experienced staff ready to take over the future, increasing responsibilities of the organisation. Currently, ICS' core staff in the Balkans is made up of almost 150 individuals, both expatriates and local staff.

ICS is progressively and institutionally promoting a policy of membership among the NGO networks operating in the international arena.

ICS is currently considering the expansion of its traditional geographical area of interventions to beyond the Balkans: various possibilities are being considered in close consultation with the ICS constituency. ♦

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