



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

# talk back

The Newsletter of ICVA

Volume 4-1, 21 March 2002

## POWER AND PRIVILEGE

**T**he UNHCR/Save the Children-UK study that uncovered the widespread sexual exploitation of refugee children in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia highlights a serious failure in the international refugee protection system. Peacekeepers, humanitarian workers, refugee and community leaders, teachers, and others are alleged to have been trading money and goods (as meagre as biscuits, shoes, and plastic sheeting) for sex with refugee children. The dependency on these staff and their services has led to a situation in which they were able to abuse their positions of power and privilege, thus further victimising the most vulnerable.

The first priority must be to address the needs of the victims and to ensure that such exploitation is put to an end. At the same time, the study raises the serious issue of how humanitarian agencies regulate and

monitor the conduct of their staff. Agencies must ensure that positions of power and privilege vis-à-vis beneficiaries are not abused.

Following the BBC story on the exploitation, quite a few senior staff of humanitarian agencies reported that they were not surprised by the reports, although they were shocked at the scale of exploitation. "You know this kind of thing happens in the field," has been an often-heard statement in many internal debates following the study's release. It is too easily accepted, and not adequately questioned, within several larger humanitarian agencies that at least once a month, an expatriate field staff member is fired because

*see page 16*

### Table of Contents

#### Editorial

- Band-Aids for Humanitarian Workers 2

#### In the News

- Power and Privilege 1
- Protection for Civilians in Liberia Needed Now 1
- Aid, NGOs, and Somalia's Security 3

#### Issue of the Month: Protection Training

- Don't Just Train 5
- Reach Out — Improving Refugee Protection: How Far Have We Come? 7
- Enhancing the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Situations: Ecogia Protection Seminars 9

#### Focus on Burundi and Tanzania

- When Going Home is Not an Option 11

#### ICVA Turns 40

- New Section on Website Launched 18

## PROTECTION FOR CIVILIANS IN LIBERIA NEEDED NOW

**A**n impartial and independent international presence focussed on protection concerns is urgently needed in Liberia to actively monitor and report on human rights abuses of the population as a means of playing an immediate protective role for civilians affected by the conflict. This presence would monitor the activities of the governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Information and the recently set up national disaster relief commission, intended to look into the situation of the internally displaced. It should also monitor and liaise with civil society groups including human rights organisations, independent journalists, and women's and student groups.

*see page 4*

## EDITORIAL

### BAND-AIDS FOR HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

**T**he quality and accountability of humanitarian response is once again being seriously tested following the West Africa sex scandal. Impunity for aid workers who trade their services for sex and the lack of a response prioritising the protection needs of children and women, in camps where the large majority of the population is women and children, are extremely basic failures.

Since the Great Lakes crisis in the mid-nineties, when humanitarian aid lost its sacrosanct character in the Goma camps, there have been quite a number of inter-agency initiatives aimed at developing instruments and mechanisms in order to "organise" the sector.

The Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Project, the Reach Out Training Project, ALNAP\*, Local Capacities for Peace Project/Do No Harm, to name a few of these initiatives, all aim to improve the quality of humanitarian response. But are these well-intended projects not making up for something very basic: an across-the-board lack of skills and expertise in the humanitarian sector?

But, what is more, there is also a pervasive lack of understanding concerning the skills and expertise that an aid worker needs to have. There is no standard curriculum or agreement on what every aid worker should know. Humanitarian work is not a profession; rather, the sector is made up of medical doctors, logisticians, and engineers, each of them operational from his or her own perspective. Just having these technical skills, however, is not enough.

Humanitarian action is more than providing food aid, shelter, and medical care. Human rights, humanitarian principles, and protection are equally, or perhaps even more, important. Strangely, these priorities are often overlooked. Today's emergency response is still about hardware: full charter flights, 4-wheel drives, plastic sheeting, and water-bladder tanks. Only after the dust settles, or so it seems, does one start to think about

what else people need in terms of rights and protection, instead of incorporating these from the beginning of a humanitarian operation.

As a result, the sector develops band-aids instead of addressing the problem. Why are aid workers still unaware of the organisational mandates of their colleagues? Why do we not first address protection needs and assess the human rights situation before mounting a massive logistics response? Why is it that we need to create a system for accountability when every humanitarian organisation has a (at least self-imposed) mandate from which obligations and responsibilities derive?

While part of the problem may be addressed now through training (SPHERE and Reach Out), as a long-term strategy for organisational change, training is not sufficient. And whereas each of the projects mentioned above would make sense if seen as one part of the aid worker's toolkit, there is no coherence between them.

This incoherence, in turn, points to a weakness that lies with a significant number of CEOs of humanitarian agencies. Part of the weakness may be a lack of understanding of humanitarian action combined with a lack of skills and expertise in the field as an increasing number of chiefs are being recruited from outside the sector. But the greater weakness is their inability or unwillingness to make changes within organisations that will really make a difference in the way in which humanitarian work is carried out. Only strong leadership from the top will ensure that humanitarian workers are provided with all the elements that should comprise the aid worker's toolkit. The deterrents of seemingly insurmountable organisational bureaucracies or potential resistance from some staff should not be used as excuses: the time has come to take the decisions that will really allow humanitarian work to protect and assist those in need. ♦

#### **Talk Back Editorial Team**

Manisha Thomas, Editor-in-Chief, ICVA Humanitarian Affairs Officer  
Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop, ICVA Coordinator

*\*ALNAP is the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance.*

*Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop*

## AID, NGOS, AND SOMALIA'S SECURITY

**O**f late, much discussion has taken place regarding NGOs and issues of security in Somalia. At the heart of the matter is the desire for NGOs to increase their influence over decision-making processes to do with security concerns. They want greater autonomy, independent of other security organs, as and when necessary. NGOs also are mindful of the effects of humanitarian organisations' actions taken in response to perceived unstable environments for on-going programme activities.

The debate surrounding "security" in a country without government has assumed even greater importance since the start of the "war on terrorism," and the threat apparently posed by Somalia to world stability. The implications for a continuing international presence, and the financing and implementation of humanitarian and development projects, are far reaching. Somalia's security, in terms of conflict resolution and long-term aid is, clearly, multi-faceted, involving an array of unlikely partners. And with such disparity, the question remains "which voice is dominant in deciding the future of a nation?"

A core issue is that the only recipe for safety and stability is to build a relationship of trust between an NGO and the local community, often a painstaking process in Somalia (a myriad of clan interests, possibly hostile, may need to be balanced); from this principle, all other components of sustainable development emerge. The truism "good projects bring good security" still holds, and establishing a workable and enduring relationship between external aid officials and the host community is paramount.

Some NGOs have argued that, especially in times of crisis, they lean towards "sticking it out with the local community," taking as a major indicator local partners' opinions and assurances which, in turn, is a show of empathy with beneficiary populations. Official security apparatuses, invariably trained in a military perspective, may see the situation differently. Cognisant of world politics and security, and likely erring on the side of caution, they call for a different approach, such as relocating staff or even withdrawing

aid. It is arguably a case of differing perspectives. Neither approach is necessarily right or wrong; the issue is that of compatibility.

These matters have been discussed through the NGO Consortium, Nairobi as well as on an individual basis — often directly between an NGO and donor. While falling short of meeting heartfelt objectives, it is fair to say that the overall situation in Somalia is much improved, not least through a willingness to seek more effective solutions from UN and donor missions. Sceptics say that this improvement in security arrangements and relations surrounding coordination is no more than NGOs being "fitted-in" into existing and alien structures; a clever case of co-optation. Most are more optimistic about the improvement.

It has been pointed out that when it comes to matters relating to security there is an "institutional dependency" of NGOs on third parties. Donor opinion (holding the purse strings of NGOs) has proved to be a critical factor. Seen in this light, it is a matter of lack of effective control over programming and activities. NGOs have been keen to point out that the relationship should not be seen as that of a sub-contracted party, but more one of equal partnership.

NGO opinion, being the "front-line actors," has, at times, proven ineffective. NGOs for their part have not affected a clear voice, partly a result of varying opinion within their own ranks and the familiar tale of limited resources. Much of the debate between NGOs centres on dissemination of information rather than on key policy formulation.

For Somalia, nearly all transportation is through special air charter, particularly ECHO Flights. If the air charter is advised that an area, even an entire region is unsafe, then, putting it simply, there is no flight, and therefore no aid personnel presence is possible. The equation demands balancing many factors; convincing donors and security apparatus normally marks the start of engagement. For most NGOs, hiring air charters is not an option because of budgetary restrictions.

*see page 17*

## IN THE NEWS

### Protection for Civilians in Liberia Needed Now

*continued from page 1*

Since the 8 February imposition of a state of emergency, the situation for the civilian population has significantly worsened. While the rationale for the state of emergency is to provide greater security for civilians, it has done quite the opposite. The public commitments by the government that civil liberties would not be curtailed, is a farce, and events imply that the state of emergency was imposed precisely to silence all government critics. The government has warned civil society not to comment publicly on the state of emergency without government authorisation. Raids by Liberian security forces in crowded communities have created terror among the general population. They have resulted in the forcible recruitment of young men and boys who have been sent to fight on the front line. Others have been picked up under the guise of dissident activity and, in many cases, tortured and held until a family member pays amounts between USD500-1000 for their release. Staff members of the most independent newspaper, the "Analyst," were arrested and held without charge overnight after writing an article on the pros and cons of the state of emergency.

The armed conflict between Liberian Security forces and armed opposition groups has been on-going since 1998. In 2001, the armed conflict escalated to such a degree that thousands fled Lofa county and became displaced, both internally and as refugees. Camps were set up in Bong, Cape Mount, and Gbopulu counties. In 2002, as the armed opposition group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development (LURD) moved closer to Monrovia, the thousands that had already been displaced internally became victims once again, and were re-displaced to villages and former IDP camps in and around Monrovia and areas in Bomi county. Thousands more have sought refuge over the border in Sierra Leone. Throughout the conflict, civilians have been victims of killings, torture, rape, large-scale looting, and massive displacement, but many of these cases have received little attention by the international community.

The declaration of the state of emergency has given Liberia a greater spotlight, as has the report of widespread sexual exploitation of refugee children in camps. Public statements made by the UN Security Council, the UN Resident Coordinator, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and other members of the international community have highlighted the need for greater attention for the civilians caught in the conflict. Numerous efforts are underway to tackle the gaps in refugee protection throughout West Africa. There has also been a recent OAU appointment of Momodou Lamin Sedat Jobe as its new Special Envoy to Liberia, as well as a proposal by ECOWAS to act as a mediator.

The current spotlight on Liberia now needs to move from public concern to concrete action. The lack of a constant international presence in Liberia raises serious and urgent concerns for the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The protection concerns that have been largely known and ignored, as well as those that have been unknown, cannot continue to go unaddressed by the international community.

First and foremost, the UN and NGOs' leadership capacity within Liberia needs to be a priority in order to be in a position to monitor, publicly report, and jointly advocate in a well-coordinated manner on behalf of the protection of civilians. Given the need for a coordinated humanitarian response, strong leadership from the UN is required in the form of a Humanitarian Coordinator, especially when it comes to the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. The recruitment and deployment of human rights monitors attached to the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) is also urgently needed. The international community needs to make the protection of civilians a priority and take action now. ♦

*\* Tania Bernath is a Researcher at Amnesty International's International Secretariat. The article is not a full representation of the position of the organisation, but represents the concerns raised in potential action to be taken by the UN Security Council (cf. News Release on the Norwegian Presidency from March 2002, AI index: EUR 36/001/2002).*

## ISSUE OF THE MONTH: PROTECTION TRAINING

### DON'T JUST TRAIN

*Recently, there have been several training initiatives focusing on protection in the context of humanitarian action. This "Issue of the Month" looks at three such initiatives: a workshop on human rights training for humanitarian workers, which brought together various organisations that have been working on such training within their own organisations; the Reach Out refugee protection training project; and the Ecogia Protection Seminars of the International Committee of the Red Cross.*

Whether or not humanitarian actors should play a role in protecting and furthering human rights is no longer a question. The only real question remaining is how, given their varying mandates and methods of working, humanitarian organisations ensure that the protection of human rights is translated into their work. The challenges posed by this goal of incorporating human rights into humanitarian action are not to be underestimated. Altering the organisational culture of humanitarian organisations is rarely a smooth process and definitely does not happen overnight. Some tough decisions must be taken, at the highest levels of organisations, on how human rights can really be incorporated in their humanitarian action.

By training their staff in human rights, several organisations are going about changing their organisational culture from the bottom up. While such training is needed, and working from the bottom up is the only immediate option in many cases, the effect on the organisation, as a whole, is limited. Such training is often done in an organisational vacuum, leaving those who are trained without a framework in which they can apply what they have learned. Humanitarian agencies must start making some real changes in how they approach the whole issue of human rights and how they incorporate protection into their work. Otherwise, what will be the difference in the lives of those they assist? The widespread sexual exploitation of refugee children in West Africa shows how,

collectively, humanitarian agencies have failed in what should be the basics of protection. The international community did not (and probably still does not) protect some of the most vulnerable among the refugee population in West Africa. And, sadly, this failure in protection is most likely not limited to the refugee camps in West Africa.

The failures of the humanitarian community in terms of protection are being acknowledged to a certain extent: training programmes, such as the ICRC Ecogia Protection Seminars and the Reach Out Training Project, and human rights training within individual agencies, are testimony to the fact that humanitarians need to do a better job of protecting those whom they serve (see related articles in this issue of *Talk Back*). But who is being trained within organisations and

how is that training impacting upon the programmes of the organisations?

Many of the training initiatives taking place within organisations have been quite disconnected: it is not even known which

agencies are actually developing such training materials. What are the basics required for training humanitarian workers? What are the challenges involved in developing such training and in implementing it? How can others access what has already been done in order to avoid re-inventing the proverbial wheel?

***Some tough decisions must be taken, at the highest levels of organisations, on how human rights can really be incorporated in their humanitarian action.***

*see over*



## ISSUE OF THE MONTH: PROTECTION TRAINING

### Don't Just Train

*continued from previous page*

In order to address these questions, a "Workshop on Human Rights Training for Humanitarian Workers: A Partnership Project" in November 2001 brought together individuals working on such training in NGOs and UN agencies. Many had been working on human rights training for humanitarian workers on their own and, prior to the workshop, had had nowhere to turn for support, especially since in many organisations, "selling" human rights is not an easy task.

At the workshop, there was general consensus on the need to make as much of the training material publicly available as possible so that others can benefit from what already exists. The idea of developing a core training manual was seen as being less beneficial than providing access to others' training. As one participant noted, only one-third of their training would be relevant to anyone outside of his organisation; the rest was all organisation-specific. It was agreed that a website should be created that would point individuals to existing material, thus allowing people to approach this "salad bar" of training materials and decide for themselves what could be of use to them.

While there was agreement on the need to share training materials and to continue the dialogue started at the workshop, many challenges remain. Who within an organisation should be trained? Is it better to train mid- to senior-level staff or newer recruits? In what should they be trained and which topics are the most relevant to cover? What goals do organisations set for themselves when conducting human rights training? If staff are taught to do human rights monitoring or interviews, is there a mechanism in place that will put to use what

is learned? There is also currently a limited pool of available trainers. How can that pool of trainers be expanded and by whom?

Support for organisations in overcoming these challenges and in developing further training efforts should be more forthcoming from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). One workshop participant noted the need for leadership from OHCHR in the development of systems and the provision of support for agencies working on human rights training. The human rights expertise that exists within OHCHR should

*Until real decisions are made by the upper management of humanitarian organisations on how they will incorporate human rights into their work, the effects of any training, sadly, will be minimal.*

be made available to help others further their ability to protect human rights. While the workshop was jointly hosted by ICVA and OHCHR, within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, there is currently no person or unit made available within OHCHR

to provide such support to humanitarian organisations.

Efforts are moving ahead to share available human rights training materials and more and more organisations are embarking on human rights training. At the same time, all this training has to be supported by broader changes within humanitarian organisations. Until real decisions are made by the upper management of humanitarian organisations on how they will incorporate human rights into their work, the effects of any training, sadly, will be minimal. ♦

*\* The discussion paper and other documents related to the workshop are available on the Information Resources page of the ICVA website: [www.icva.ch](http://www.icva.ch). Documents related to the Reference Group on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action are also available on the same page of the website. A summary of proceedings is in the process of being developed and will be made available on the ICVA website.*

## REACH OUT — IMPROVING REFUGEE PROTECTION: HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

**A**s a UNHCR officer noted at a recent Reach Out workshop, many factors speak in favour of a more robust role for NGOs in the protection of refugees, not least their far-reaching presence and daily interaction with these populations. It is time that NGOs reach a better understanding of their existing and potential capacity in this area, and the role that they can play in protecting refugees.

### *Difficult Questions*

Reach Out, a refugee protection training project, is now one year into its 3-year lifespan. With eight workshops and one training of trainers behind it, now seems a suitable time to take stock and reflect on the work of Reach Out to date.

Since Reach Out is an interagency initiative steered by a diverse range of international NGOs, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and coordinating bodies, it started off with some difficult dilemmas about its own identity and mission. Two key questions presented themselves: what exactly is refugee protection? and why hold workshops on it?

Definitions of protection, such as the one in the "NGO Field Guide for Protecting Refugees," state that protection involves securing peoples' rights. But what does this mean for NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent workers on the ground? Looking at the relationship between programming and rights led to some very practical tools. For example, CARE, a member of the working group, has developed a comprehensive methodology for assessing the "rights impact" of humanitarian and assistance and development programmes. Another useful reference is the Better Programming Initiative (BPI) of the IFRC, which has developed a framework for analysing the impact of programmes on the

dynamics of conflict. Building on BPI's input, Reach Out has developed a Protection Framework specific to refugees: a tool that guides workshop participants to an understanding of what the protection of refugees could look like in their sectoral and/or geographical area of operations, and how to work towards it.

Old-schoolers interpret refugee protection as an exclusive UNHCR activity, reducing it to refugee status determination and persuading states to uphold Refugee Law. To a certain extent this is reinforced by the division of protection and assistance departments in many organisations, including UNHCR. In workshops, Reach Out seeks to dissolve this

***...if workshops are the solution, what was the problem?***

artificial divide and highlight the protection aspects of all agencies' work — whether they see themselves as protection agencies, humanitarian assistance providers, or human rights defenders. This view of protection brings us some way towards answering our second question: why hold workshops in refugee protection? Or, to put it as one of our participants did recently, if workshops are the solution, what was the problem?

Part of the problem is that, as agencies, we need to better understand our own and each other's potential role in refugee protection. Despite the fact that we are all working towards the same goal of ensuring refugees' rights, harmonising our protection potential is not easy. In a workshop in Kenya, participants identified a lack of awareness, a lack of coordination, and unclear institutional relationships as three of the main constraints to providing effective refugee protection (others included restrictive mandates, organisational culture, time, skills and resource limitations, fear of consequences,

*see over*

ISSUE OF THE MONTH: PROTECTION TRAINING

## Reach Out — Improving Refugee Protection: How Far Have We Come?

*continued from previous page*

and lack of accountability). Reach Out workshops help to raise awareness about how agencies' programmes affect refugee protection and give participants the chance to identify and learn more about others in the context of who can, or do, work with refugees. The aim is to map how combined efforts can be most complementary. One key message is that each one of the actors identified, including the government, host communities, and the different groups among the refugees themselves, can pose threats or provide solutions to protection problems.

Roles change in different contexts: while host governments hold the primary responsibility for protecting refugees, the political will and capacity to meet this obligation varies dramatically. Similarly, while UNHCR is mandated to ensure that refugees receive protection and to find durable solutions to their problems, it often has its hands tied by reluctant or frustrated host governments, in-house problems, and resource constraints. In the field, this means that NGOs and Red Cross players need to position their own programmes around these weaknesses in the international protection system — by either filling gaps or responsabilising others to do so. Equally, in each workshop location, UNHCR participants are invited to be frank about its limitations, and to make constructive suggestions as to how others can best support its efforts.

### *How Far Have We Come?*

Part of our progress can be measured in how much better we understand the obstacles to protecting refugees. These include macro-level problems, such as the lack of access, donor fatigue, the dearth of durable solutions in sight, and the proliferation of conflicts that cause displacement in the first

***For this to be meaningful, the protection debate needs to be grounded in tangible, measurable realities, and our focus must be kept on the practical steps that agencies can take to improve how they work with refugees on the ground.***

place. However, closer to home, and eminently in need of fixing, are unhelpful institutional cultures. In a recent UNHCR paper on partnership with NGOs, the agency found itself accused of "institutional arrogance." In a workshop where everyone is asked to put their cards on the table, we risk sparking defensive attitudes. But it seems that this is one area where Reach Out workshops can and do make a first step. In general, participants' enthusiasm for the subject generates open self-analysis and learning. When a protection gap comes to light — for example, in a Thailand workshop recently, agencies realised there was nobody monitoring or responding to child recruitment — there is an "a-ha!" moment where participants respond with constructive suggestions, instead of laying blame.

### *The Road Ahead*

Each Reach Out workshop generates a list of such areas for action on the part of participants. One of our own resolutions for 2002 is to track how far these are followed up, and what it means for the refugees themselves — in other words, what impact is Reach Out having? Another intention is to keep feeding back examples and questions we gather from the field into the debate on protection taking place within the humanitarian community at large. Protecting refugees is a shared responsibility. For this to be meaningful, the protection debate needs to be grounded in tangible, measurable realities, and our focus must be kept on the practical steps that agencies can take to improve how they work with refugees on the ground. ♦

*\* Reach Out, A Refugee Protection Training Project*

*\* For more information on Reach Out and a schedule of upcoming workshops, see [www.reachout.ch](http://www.reachout.ch) or e-mail [reachout@ifrc.org](mailto:reachout@ifrc.org).*



## ENHANCING THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS: ECOGIA PROTECTION SEMINARS

**I**n today's conflicts, civilians are exposed to all kinds of violence, including harassment, expulsion and massacres. They are denied access to food, water, and health care. They are often the targets, and the primary victims, of such violations of international law. Humanitarian organisations do their best to relieve the suffering of civilians. Traditionally, they deliver relief supplies in order to meet the basic material needs of the people affected by conflicts.

But increasingly, humanitarian organisations are realising that providing practical assistance is not a sufficient response to violence and arbitrary acts committed against the civilian population. The reasons behind why they are in need in the first place, or the impact that assistance will have on their safety, represent the "protection" aspects of humanitarian action and cannot be ignored.

What exactly is "protection" when carried out by human rights and humanitarian organisations? How can the difficulties and hard choices constantly faced by such organisations be overcome? What concepts and terms of reference are shared by humanitarian organisations?

In 1996, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) initiated a series of workshops to discuss how best to protect civilian victims of conflict given the different aspects and approaches to modern-day humanitarian endeavours. For four years, representatives of a large number of humanitarian and human rights organisations met to discuss the meaning of the term "protection," the principles on which their work is based, the consequences of their operational choices, and how best to optimise coexistence between different organisations. The aim is not to standardise practices, but to sharpen perceptions of what protection is all about: operations can then be chosen accordingly and their implementation best

determined. The ultimate objective is to work towards the better protection of human life and dignity when conflict breaks out<sup>1</sup>

The first series of discussions led to an agreement on a definition of protection and protection activities. It also proposed a protection framework: a tool for operational strategies highlighting the complementarity between organisations. But, the debate is not over: the next "protection workshop" is due to take place in 2002.

One of the most commonly expressed views during the workshops was the need for better staff training in protection work in order to enhance the quality and relevance of the work, as well as the accountability, of the organisations carrying it out. Yet training in protection issues is a challenge. In the area of emergency relief, ethical guidelines have been drawn up with a view to maintaining standards of conduct. No similar principles have been laid down for protection activities. Responses to violations of the law are manifold. They depend on many factors, such as the context in which organisations operate, their working methods, the means at their disposal, the compliance of authorities, etc.

To this end, the ICRC undertook the organisation of operation-oriented and thematic seminars, which provide an overview of the debate on protection and the conceptual tools proposed during the protection workshops process: the *Ecogia Protection Seminars*. Divided into four sessions, each seminar has a theme selected from the specific issues identified during the protection workshops and the content is drawn from the conclusions of those workshops. The first two covered responses to "violations of the law" and "information gathering, processing, and methodology." The next will look at "influencing State and non-

*see page 11*

## FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA

### WHEN GOING HOME IS NOT AN OPTION

**T**he pressure on Burundian refugees to return home is mounting unacceptably from both Burundian and Tanzanian government officials. Recent statements by Tanzanian president, Benjamin Mkapa, referring to the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Tanzania as "an unbearable burden" are not only cause for concern, but are also echoed by many others in the government. With Burundian government officials adding their voice and encouraging refugees to return home where the situation is safe, there is a risk that refugees are being put in a position where return to Burundi may not be entirely voluntary.

The reality on the ground in Burundi should point strongly in the direction of not promoting refugee return at this time. Insecurity and violence continue in Burundi, with no cease-fire as yet in place. Recent statements by one of the rebel groups (which continues to fight the army) indicating that it is ready to negotiate is a positive sign, but it is still an early one. Hundreds of thousands of Burundians remain displaced within the country and little progress has been made on their return since the interim government took control on 1 November 2001. Any premature and less-than-voluntary return of refugees to a volatile situation, as is the case in Burundi, will not only be unsustainable, but could also serve to worsen a situation that one seasoned humanitarian worker has described as "terminally hopeless."

The transitional government and the Arusha peace accords, signed in August 2000 by 19 Burundian parties, are steps in the right direction towards peace, but there is still a long way to go. Power-sharing between Tutsis and Hutus in the government began on 1 November 2001 with the first half of a three-year transitional government under a Tutsi president. The second half will see the government continue under a Hutu president. Yet vital issues, such as the mono-ethnic composition of the upper echelons of the army (which has been responsible for many of the killings in the past), impunity for past killings, and land rights, remain to be settled. Two rebel factions have continued to fight the army since 1 November 2001 with only one, the Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu-Forces national de libération

(PALIPEHUTU-FNL), recently stating that it is willing to negotiate. In the meantime, fighting continues, as does insecurity in many parts.

There is an urgent need for increased commitment and political engagement on the part of the international community to support both Burundi and Tanzania at this crucial juncture, in order to ensure that the conditions are put in place before any mass refugee return takes place. While there have been millions of dollars pledged in the past for Burundi, much less has actually materialised. The commitments of the international community to supporting Burundi in working towards peace, as well as for reconstruction and in combating HIV/AIDS, must be followed through. On the other side of the border, there is also a need to support Tanzania, which hosts some 360,000 Burundian refugees. Governments have heard, on numerous occasions, Tanzania's calls for more support. Donor fatigue is often heard of, but the consequences of host community fatigue can be much more serious.

#### *The Situation in Burundi*

Many politicians have returned to Burundi to partake in the transitional government, some of whom have been in exile since the conflict in 1972. A South African protection force of 700 soldiers has been charged with ensuring their protection. While the returning politicians have been granted protection, much of the civilian population in Burundi remains without protection. Hundreds of thousands of Burundians have been displaced for several years and many of those have been displaced more than once.

#### *Displacement Continues*

One of the outstanding problems is that no one is really sure how many Burundians are actually displaced and where they are, with the result that protection and assistance efforts can only reach those that are known to be displaced. Some estimates put the figure of internally displaced persons (IDPs) at some

*see next page*

**ISSUE OF THE MONTH:  
PROTECTION TRAINING  
Enhancing the Protection of  
Civilians in Conflict Situations:  
Ecogia Protection Seminars**

*continued from page 9*

State actors" (9-11 April 2002) and the final will address "operations on behalf of specific groups" (14-16 May 2002). The *Ecogia Protection Seminars* target the middle- and upper- management of humanitarian and human rights organisations with experience working in the context of armed conflicts.

The objective of the seminars is to improve humanitarian and human rights workers' understanding of the protection dimension of their activities. They aim: to help participants better understand the conceptual framework of protection activities in conflict situations; to analyse the different ways in which the various humanitarian and human rights organisations get involved in conflict situations; to identify the responsibilities of humanitarian and human rights organisations with regard to protecting civilians; to review possible strategies for dealing with protection issues; and to consider how the various organisations involved can implement these strategies in a complementary manner. ♦

1. Highlights of the deliberations of the protection workshops are summarised in the publication "Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards," Geneva: ICRC, 2001.)

\* *Nadya Kebir Raoloson, Philippe Doney, ICRC*

\* *For more information and registration forms, visit: [www.icrc.org/ecogiaprotsem](http://www.icrc.org/ecogiaprotsem) or write to [ecogiaprotsem.gva@icrc.org](mailto:ecogiaprotsem.gva@icrc.org) or contact: Nadya Kebir Raoloson, Head of Project, Ecogia Protection Seminars, c/o ICRC, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2604.*

**FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA  
When Going Home is  
Not an Option**

*continued from previous page*

800,000. The official figures of those living in IDP camps is 432,000, with another 200,000 displaced living in, as the UN Consolidated Appeal puts it, "ad hoc arrangements." Of those that used to be in the government's regroupment camps, which were dismantled in 2000, some returned to the sites because they had nowhere else to go. Others remain displaced in other parts of the country. Many are "dispersed" because of fighting and then return to their homes (if they still remain). Others fall victim to "mobile regroupment" under which people are temporarily displaced by the government.

*A Lack of Protection*

The challenges of protecting IDPs in such a complicated situation are great. A mission of the UN Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement in December 2000 has produced minimal concrete results in improving the lives of IDPs in Burundi.

A community of displaced Batwa (1% of the population) was visited by the Senior Network mission. While their living conditions at the time were deplorable, they were moved to another site where they receive a bit more material assistance, but the shelter in which they live continues to be minimal: some of the homes are constructed of straw and cardboard that are barely one metre by two metres. With little or no access to land and no employment opportunities, little has changed as a result of the mission. Yet, the mission did not even get to visit the IDP camps "where the real suffering is," according to one UN worker.

There is, however, more discussion about the protection of IDPs. A Framework for Consultation on the Protection of IDPs, which was established in February 2001, has a High Level Committee and a Technical Follow-Up Group. Bringing together

*see over*

## FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA

### When Going Home is Not an Option

*continued from previous page*

government officials, UN agencies, and NGOs, the Framework provides a basis for discussing ways in which to address protection issues. The Technical Group has conducted several missions to displaced sites and produced recommendations to the government administration, the humanitarian community, and the military. However, the commitment within the government to discussing those recommendations and their implementation in the High Level Committee is limited. Providing resources for those in camps, who have little or no access to land and many of whom are living in "insecurity and deplorable living conditions," is not a priority for the government as it battles the rebels.

The reality on the ground requires that greater efforts be taken if the IDPs are to be provided with better protection and assistance. Those in the camps are mostly Tutsis, many of whom have been in the camps since the 1993 conflict following the murder of the democratically elected Hutu president. One UN official described the situation in the IDP camps as being worse than in the refugee camps in Tanzania. The level of assistance in the camps is nothing compared to that seen in refugee camps. At the same time, the level of need within the local population is also quite high in some areas.

#### *Sexual Violence*

Many of the IDP camps are guarded by the military and the majority of those in the camps are women and children. The lack of protection provided to these displaced is cause for definite concern. In some cases, women outnumber men by 10 to 1. In one camp in Gitega province, visited by the Technical Follow-Up Group, there are 1,200 women and only 70 men. To leave the camps often requires the payment of money to those military guarding the camps. With few opportunities for employment or access to land for farming, combined with the need to pay for health care and even primary education, many women turn to prostitution. The military that guard the camps are generally their clients. Rapes within the camps are not uncommon and concubinage is almost institutionalised in some camps, according to one humanitarian worker. Those women who become

single mothers are then considered to be unfit for marriage. While the rate of HIV/AIDS is high in the Burundian population, the rate in the camps can be even higher. There are also cases of children being recruited from within the camps by the military or rebels, though they are also recruited from villages.

#### *No Access to Land*

Many of the displaced have lost their homes and their land. Others are fortunate enough to still have land that they continue to farm during the day, but they live in IDP camps or with families. The issue of land is a major one that needs to be resolved before any mass repatriation takes place. Efforts must be made to ensure that returning IDPs and refugees have access to land. The majority of the Burundian population is traditionally farmers and without access to land or alternative sources of livelihood, return will be unsustainable. And land alone will not be enough: considerable resources will have to be put into reconstruction efforts to ensure adequate housing and infrastructure are available.

#### *Creating Safe Conditions*

At the same time, there needs to be continued efforts to further reform the structure of the army. The military has been responsible for many of the killings throughout the years, as well as for much of the displacement. Yet, the positions of power in the army continue to be dominated by Tutsis. For refugees to return without fear, there is a need to move more quickly towards a more equitable army — in all ranks.

The judiciary is another area where there needs to be a better balance between Tutsis and Hutus in order to ensure justice. For the period of the transitional government, a temporary amnesty has been put in place for returning politicians, but the question of what will happen after the transitional period is one that remains. Moves to put an equitable justice system in place need to be made.

And the need to improve the balance between Tutsis and Hutus does not stop there: it also applies

*see next page*

## FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA

### When Going Home is Not an Option

*continued from previous page*

to international organisations working in Burundi. Organisations must ensure that they are part of the process of building a better balance between Tutsis and Hutus. Welcoming returning refugees with only Tutsi staff, as UNHCR did in one area in 1997, is hardly a means of providing international protection for returnees. NGO efforts to implement peacebuilding programmes on both sides of the border are underway.

#### *Insecurity Continues*

While such peacebuilding efforts must move forward, there is also a need for the rebels and government to move forward on a cease-fire to ensure security within the country. Security incidents have only continued since the transitional government came into power. The UN continues to travel around the country using armed escorts. Whether such escorts provide increased security is, of course, a debatable point. A hand grenade was thrown at a UN truck carrying returning refugees a few weeks back. At the same time, NGOs are also targets of violent acts with attacks taking place on vehicles and facilities.

#### *On the Tanzanian Side*

Any forcible return of the 345,000 Burundian refugees in camps in Tanzania into the current situation in Burundi is potentially disastrous. In addition to those in refugee camps, there are an estimated 200,000 Burundian refugees living outside of camps. Tanzania has had a long and generous history of hosting refugees, which must not be allowed to come to a sudden end when the conditions are not in place for a sustainable repatriation. The international community must provide the necessary political backing for the right of the refugees to make a choice, which is free from intimidation, about their repatriation. Recent statements and visits to the camps by both the Tanzanian and Burundian governments' officials are putting a tremendous amount of pressure on the refugees to return. As a result of this pressure, it is not clear if those that are registering to return are doing so because they feel the conditions in Burundi are right or if they

feel that a decision on return will soon be made for them by the governments. UNHCR reported that some 30,000 refugees have registered to return to Burundi of late.

#### *Changing Attitudes*

The attitude in Tanzania towards refugees has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. In 1972 when hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled the ethnic conflict, they were taken into communities away from the borders, given land, and later offered Tanzanian citizenship. When the Tanzanian president at the time, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, accepted the Nansen Medal in 1983 he noted that "only when a person is earning his or her own living or contributing in some way to the society in which he finds himself in, can he or she regain the self-respect which is an essential part of human dignity." Nyerere's attitude and leadership very much shaped the way in which early refugees were treated upon their arrival in Tanzania.

Those Burundian refugees who arrived in 1993 and afterwards, have been greeted with a different reception. Refugee camps, of limited size and in close proximity to the border, have been constructed to house them. Refugees are not allowed to work in Tanzania and there is a four-kilometre radius around the camps to which their movement is restricted. That limit has been enforced more strictly at some times than others. In some camps, firewood is now only available 13 kilometres from the camp. When the limit on movement outside the camps is enforced, those refugees caught outside of it are often jailed in what tend to be over-crowded prisons. In a prison with 92 places in the Ngara region, for example, there were 424 prisoners in October, with 86 of those being refugees that had strayed beyond the four kilometre limit.

#### *Poor Camp Location*

Efforts to move the camps further away from the border or to larger locations have not been overly successful. Many of the camps are located between the border and a game reserve, which means that the government will not allow them to be expanded. Some new camps have been constructed since the first waves of refugees came into Tanzania. However, refugees are not given land on which to farm, other

*see over*



## FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA

### When Going Home is Not an Option

*continued from previous page*

than the minimal plots attached to their homes. Yet the size of those plots depends on the camp. Some camps have tiny plots while others have slightly larger plots, which allow the refugees to supplement their food rations. Calls for refugees to be given access to land for farming have been rejected by the government. Nyerere, in an interview in 1999 to UNHCR's *Refugees* magazine countered the government's argument of a lack of land by saying, "I know you will get some people who will say, we don't have enough land in Tanzania, but that idea is absurd. The country is empty."

#### *A Lack of Basic Protection*

The protection of refugees is an area where there is still much work to be done. The camps are without any international presence after 5 pm. Many NGOs have noted that UNHCR needs to learn to stick to its protection mandate and learn how to do it properly. UNHCR protection posts are often vacant for extensive periods of time. There are refugees in the camps who say they have never seen a UNHCR protection officer. In the Kibondo region, for example, there is one expatriate protection officer covering 5 camps, totalling some 145,000 refugees. Yet, at the same time, UNHCR is one of the few organisations that has expanded its international presence in Tanzania over the last years.

There have been sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programmes with education campaigns and counsellors in camps. Despite these efforts, at least one case of rape a day was being reported to the SGBV counsellor in the Ngara region. The real number of rape cases is undoubtedly higher. Mobile courts that move between the camps have been created in order to speed up the legal prosecution of cases. Many of the cases that the mobile courts deal with are SGBV cases, but there are also cases involving the possession of weapons in the camps, robberies, and other criminal cases. Yet this focus on individual cases does not work to address the broader issue of weak protection in the camps.

As observed by Jean-Francois Durieux, "Refugee camps may be regarded as convenient settings for the channelling of aid to large numbers of needy

displaced people. At the same time, the closed environment they provide is particularly conducive to exploitation and manipulation." ("Preserving the Civilian Character of Refugee Camps: Lessons from the Kigoma Refugee Programme in Tanzania," *TRACK TWO*, Vol. 9, No. 3, November 2000).

#### *Security Efforts*

In order to address the security situation, mostly in terms of ensuring the humanitarian and civilian character of the camps, but also to address law and order issues, a "security package" was created in 1999 by UNHCR. Tanzanian police from around the country are brought to the camps, trained, provided with an allowance, and equipped to police the camps, for a six-month basis. Each camp-based unit is to include at least two policewomen. Their work is supported by teams of "sungu sungu," which are teams of refugees, nominated by the refugees themselves, that patrol the camps, assisting the police. Based on a traditional system in Tanzania, the sungu sungu system is generally appreciated, although there are incidents of people being stopped by them and asked for money or being turned over to the police. All in all though, the security situation has apparently improved since the introduction of the security package. UNHCR has also been supporting the operation of a separation facility at Mwisu with the objective of providing the "Government with the capacity to separate and manage individuals whose activities may jeopardise the civilian and humanitarian character of the refugee camps." This support was to be reviewed for its effectiveness and in terms of UNHCR's policy last year.

At the same time, as noted by Durieux, "the policemen lack time, resources and knowledge to do more than scratch the surface of 'hard' security issues such as military recruitment, subversive propaganda, power struggle between rebel faction or infiltration of combatants."

#### *Forced Dependency*

Without access to land and without the opportunity to work, refugees in the camps are forced into a situation of dependency. Food rations were cut across

*see next page*

## FOCUS ON BURUNDI AND TANZANIA

### When Going Home is Not an Option

*continued from previous page*

the board in the camps to 60% in July 2000 because of a shortage of food in the pipeline, regardless of whether refugees had more access to land than others. Supplementary feeding continued to be provided to children under 5 and to women in their second trimester. The rations were increased to 80% a few months later and are now back to normal.

However, the result was that rations did not last long enough for many. Some refugees with larger plots of land were able to supplement their rations.

The rations were later increased, but not to their previous levels. As one refugee woman noted, even the food that is provided is not food to which they are used. She had never even seen the pulses they are provided before arriving in the camps.

A nutritional assessment carried out in July 2001 found that there was an improvement in nutrition levels despite the reduction in rations for almost a year. However, the assessment looked at the malnutrition levels across the region and not at individual camps as had been done previously. It also looked at micro-nutrient levels for the first time. The comparison made with previous malnutrition levels cannot be accurate given the differences between camps in terms of access to land and even markets.

#### *Increasing Fatigue*

Despite this situation of forced dependency, the perception among much of the Tanzanian population is that refugees are living luxuriously on the handouts of the international community. Incidents of robberies and banditry in the vicinity of refugee camps, adds to the growing animosity of the Tanzanian population towards the refugees. Whether such incidents are carried out by locals or by refugees is not always clear, but refugees are automatically seen to be the guilty ones.

To add to this context, many refugees feel that donors have lost interest in their plight. Cuts in food rations and the increasing pressure from both the Tanzanian and Burundian governments are seen as (at least partial) push factors. When UNHCR,

for some reason, started asking refugees if they wanted to return last year during a routine registration exercise, many refugees became increasingly nervous that they would be forced to return before conducive conditions were in place in Burundi. Only after NGOs raised this issue with UNHCR did they stop asking the question.

#### *The Question of Repatriation*

In January, under the Technical Working Group of the Tripartite Commission (UNHCR and the governments of Tanzania and Burundi), UNHCR agreed to facilitate the voluntary return of Burundian refugees. The Working Group also agreed that a Committee of four persons should be set up, consisting of representatives of each government and of UNHCR Tanzania and UNHCR Burundi, with the task of implementing the repatriation, which would ensure information about the repatriation is made available. However, if the information that is being provided is to encourage people to return home, as happened when government officials from both countries visited refugee camps recently, then there is a question about the impartiality and even accuracy of that information. A recent visit to Burundi by a delegation of refugees to see the situation for themselves is a positive step in allowing them to make a more informed decision. One delegate noted that much had changed, but that many other issues remained to be addressed, such as security, the return of internally displaced persons, and the reconstruction of houses.

Efforts must be made by the international community to actively engage in supporting the peace process in Burundi, as well as in supporting the creation of conditions that are conducive to refugee return. In the meantime, Burundian refugees must be allowed to make the decision, free from intimidation, whether to return or to remain in Tanzania. Yet, in the current climate of increasing pressure from both governments for refugees to return, there are real questions as to the voluntary nature of the decisions being taken to return. Refugees must not be put in a position where they feel they must choose to return, even if it is premature, to ensure their protection. ♦

## IN THE NEWS

### Power and Privilege

*continued from page 1*

his/her personal conduct violates local, international, and/or agencies' rules or norms.

Acts undertaken in the course of duty by (national and international) staff that are criminal under local jurisdiction are, of course, a clear reason to fire an employee. However, in the case of Sierra Leone, for example, the age of consent is 14. In Guinea, such an age limit does not even exist in law.

Such gaps in domestic laws are one of many reasons why additional rules are required from the agencies themselves to regulate staff conduct. These rules should be based on international (human rights) law, as well as the specific ethics and values adhered to by the organisation.

#### *Re-inventing the Wheel?*

In reaction to the report, there have already been several suggestions, and much discussion, about the need to develop a "common code of conduct." If this path is pursued, there is a serious risk that the discussions could slow down actions in the field and that the well-known wheel will be reinvented. While working on a common code of conduct would make the humanitarian community look as if it is doing something to put a stop to the exploitation, the real work needs to be done immediately in the camps to improve protection. At the same time, the code of conduct discussion should not be about creating new instruments, but about implementing existing ones.

A quick survey shows that many NGOs have some kind of code for employee conduct in place, but there are large differences in terms of their content, scope, and implementation, resulting from different organisational cultures and structures. Some codes, for example, are very detailed and particularly aim to protect children, putting the age of consent at 18, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Others object, in broad terms, to the exploitation of people's personal vulnerability or degrading treatment.

#### *Working on Implementation*

Several codes are constructed around the traditional distinction between international and national staff, and, sometimes, focus exclusively on the behaviour of international staff or do not require their national staff to sign such a code.

The mechanisms for implementing codes of conduct require attention. In general, one of the most serious problems is the fact that beneficiaries, staff, and/or members of the local population who want to file a complaint against a humanitarian worker have nowhere to go. In most international NGOs, the gap between the field and headquarters in reporting on staff conduct is simply too big. Some agencies have detailed procedures for filing reports on alleged misconduct. Others largely rely on debriefings of returning field staff to headquarters, in which staff conduct is discussed as a side issue. It is not so unusual in these debriefings that a staff member suddenly brings up something about the conduct of a colleague. As a former Human Resources Manager of one large NGO notes: "probably only a few of all cases of misconduct reach headquarters, and, when they do, it is always too late."

#### *Tackling Impunity*

The impunity of staff who are fired is another fundamental weakness of the humanitarian sector. Often, the firing of the staff member is where the agency's involvement ends. Many of these individuals easily find a new job in another humanitarian organisation. Not many organisations seem to check references when it comes to conduct in previous jobs with other NGOs. Similarly, there is little screening by international agencies when they recruit local staff.

In many instances, the misconduct happens in places where domestic jurisdictions are unable to prosecute, or where the quality of legal proceedings is doubtful. Yet few efforts are made to pursue prosecution either in the country or, with certain expatriates, in their home country. Many Western jurisdictions have recently started to provide for the possibility to prosecute nationals who have sex with minors abroad. One of the reasons for the

*see next page*

## IN THE NEWS Power and Privilege

*continued from previous page*

unwillingness of organisations to pursue legal proceedings may be the potential negative effect a court case could have on the agency's image.

But a lack of willingness to pursue court cases and/or a fear of negative publicity should be outweighed by issues of accountability. There is a lot that agencies can, and should, do. If, for example, national laws have the age of consent set below 18, perhaps the activity of trading goods for sex can be classified as theft by the individual from the humanitarian organisation.

### *Inter-Agency Initiatives*

Strikingly, a well-known joint agency initiative in the management of aid personnel, the 1996 British People in Aid Code, does not set any common parameters of what is, and what is not, acceptable when it comes to staff behaviour. In fact, the code ignores the issue completely.

There is the danger that a common code of conduct turns into a piece of paper that is signed at the time of recruitment, but that would not necessarily be understood by staff. Having a code in place is only one step in sensitising humanitarian staff to their responsibilities: it should not be seen as a be-all-and-end-all.

### *How Far Should a Code Go?*

Engaging staff in discussions about conduct applies especially to the hotly debated issue of expatriate behaviour outside working hours. Every field worker seems to be able to cite cases of misconduct of staff, particularly of ex-pats. The excessive use of alcohol, the use of soft drugs, and frequenting prostitutes are widespread and are "justified" because of high working pressures and excessive working hours during emergencies. It is interesting that expatriate staff seem to adopt different standards while on mission.

Fierce debates have taken place in some humanitarian agencies concerning the question if an agency can, or should, actually regulate the conduct of its staff outside working hours. But what qualifies as "outside working hours" for an expatriate who is representing his/her

organisation? The conduct of international staff is a demonstration of morals, norms, and values towards local staff and the population. It does not help the credibility of humanitarian agencies if the same staff that are seen visiting prostitutes at night are also managing and screening national staff and assisting refugees. These issues have been stumbling blocks in developing codes of conduct in many agencies.

Moreover, it will be very difficult to address different organisational cultures and views in any attempt to develop a joint code. It might be better to start a discussion about common benchmarks that as a minimum each code should incorporate. However, a code of conduct should not be required to know that trading plastic sheeting in exchange for sex is criminal practice. ♦

## IN THE NEWS Aid, NGOs, and Somalia's Security

*continued from page 3*

The NGO Consortium tried to create the position of "Security Liaison Officer" to enable the NGOs to have a greater say, but the initiative failed because donor funds were not forthcoming. The little that was offered, notably from the UN, was insufficient.

Faced with this fact, the only alternative was to find other ways to deal with the existing security structures. As a result, the Focal Point for the NGO Consortium now sits on the UN Security Management Team (SMT) and contributes to the debate by reflecting NGO points of view when it comes to matters of security. The UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) attaches an "NGO page" to their regular security up-dates. Helped along by USAID/OFDA, and while only applying to those NGOs funded by them (major financiers to UN logistics), equal priority is given to a set number of NGO personnel alongside UN counterparts and whom may enjoy the same protection under UNSECOORD. A "Reference Group" has been established with NGOs

*see over*

## IN THE NEWS

### Aid, NGOs, and Somalia's Security

*continued from previous page*

and the EU (the largest donor), which meets on a monthly basis and which allows NGOs to provide input into EU (ECHO) decisions regarding aid in Somalia.

Of note, relations between NGOs and partners, not least UNSECOORD, are in the process of being strengthened at the regional level in Somalia and through committees and regular phone and radio contact. In this way, the potential for the flow of information has been created and the risk of misunderstanding minimised. Dialogue between NGO zonal representatives and UNSECOORD officers in Somalia, to give one example, is increasingly encouraged, especially if it is thought by either party that an official statement on any given area needs to be made public.

The case of Somalia is an example of how collaborative efforts between UN agencies and NGOs can serve to move security issues forward, no matter how slowly. Many of these efforts are reflective of the recommendations for collaboration on staff security emanating from the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC WG) Task Force on Staff Security, which brought together UN and non-UN humanitarian actors. While the collaborative efforts in Somalia may not be a direct result of the Task Force's work, the recommendations do provide practical ways of improving collaboration on the ground on security matters within the humanitarian community for other situations (see *Talk Back* 2-6 and 3-3 on staff security).

Positive action is taking place and a better mood, overall, exists in Somalia. But the stakes are high: the future of aid in Somalia. However, even if security is improved at the local level, what of the bigger picture being framed far from Somalia, and what role could the NGOs play? ♦

\* Gary P. Jones, *Focal Point, NGO Consortium, Somalia*

\* The recommendations and reports of the IASC WG Task Force on Staff Security are available on the Information Resources page of the ICVA website: [www.icva.ch](http://www.icva.ch)

## ICVA TURNS 40

### NEW SECTION ON THE WEBSITE LAUNCHED

ICVA marked its 40th anniversary on 6 March 2002 with a reception in Geneva. ICVA's Chair, Anders Ladekarl, ICRC President, Jakob Kellenberger, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, each said a few words about ICVA's role in the NGO and humanitarian community over the past 40 years.

From 25-26 October 2002, ICVA will be hosting a Conference on the theme of "Strengthening NGO Partnerships in a Globalising World: From Global Rhetoric to Local Reality." The 12th ICVA General Assembly will take place immediately after the Conference on 27-28 October 2002. A special section has been posted on the ICVA website with documents on ICVA's history and the upcoming Conference and General Assembly. Documents and discussion forums will continue to be posted to the section throughout the year: [www.icva.ch](http://www.icva.ch). ♦

### Subscribe to *Talk Back*

ICVA has been producing *Talk Back* since April 1999. *Talk Back* is primarily distributed via e-mail and is also available on the ICVA website: [www.icva.ch](http://www.icva.ch). Articles are written with information gathered from various sources, including from member agencies and partners.

To be added to the *Talk Back* e-mail distribution list, please send an e-mail to [talkback@icva.ch](mailto:talkback@icva.ch) with the message:

subscribe

*Talk Back* is also available in French and Spanish. Write to [talkback@icva.ch](mailto:talkback@icva.ch) to subscribe to these editions.

Comments are welcome: [talkback@icva.ch](mailto:talkback@icva.ch).

ICVA Secretariat  
48, chemin du Grand-Montfleury  
1290 Versoix, Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 (0) 22 950 9600  
Fax: +41 (0) 22 950 9609  
[secretariat@icva.ch](mailto:secretariat@icva.ch)  
[www.icva.ch](http://www.icva.ch)