

BUILDING REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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By
Dirk Salomons
with
Matthias Finger, Arjuna Kannangara, Mohamed Yonis

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Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Context and Methodology
- III. National, Regional and International Staff:
Different Strengths, Different Roles
- IV. National Staff in Demand: Emerging Markets
- V. Linking Capacity and Demand: Constructing a Network
- VI. Training: Creating Common Competencies
- VII. Conditions of Service: Reconciling the Irreconcilable
- Recommendations: Building Capacity
Through National and Regional Cadres
- From Ideas to Action: Proposals for a Pilot Project
- Annex I: Terms of Reference
- Annex II: List of People Interviewed

I. INTRODUCTION

During this last decade of the century, we have witnessed an increasing amount of civil strife and ethnic conflict. The short-lived euphoria and visions of a kinder and gentler world that briefly emerged at the end of the cold war rapidly made way for a pattern of institutional disintegration in many areas of the world. As the contestants of the cold war lost interest in, and control over, their former client states, many of these dissolved into quagmires of conflict.

At the same time, donor countries began to question the traditional post-colonial model of development cooperation, delivered mainly through technical assistance programs, and started to support a new paradigm, driven by globalization and privatization. Similarly, as the demands on the international community's humanitarian solidarity increased, faith in its effectiveness was sorely tested. As a result, by now, the purchasing power of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has shrunk to nearly half of the volume it had reached at the end of the eighties. Much of what remains goes to the multi-lateral financial institutions, and a broad array of development and relief organizations, international and national, governmental and non-governmental, has to scramble for the leftovers. Additional funding for humanitarian assistance during the crises of the 1990s often had to be found by reducing the resources for development. Moreover, as donor fatigue has set in, charitable giving in many countries has suffered similar setbacks as ODA.

All this has led to intense competition for these dwindling resources among bilateral and multilateral organizations, among proponents of relief and of development, and among international and national NGOs. At the same time, this scarcity of funds has contributed to a new culture of efficiency and accountability in those agencies which have seen this competition as a challenge, and which have set out with renewed energy and commitment to achieve their mandates.

This lack of resources has also led donors and aid agencies alike to re-examine some of the basic assumptions under which they have worked. As the number of humanitarian emergencies due to armed conflict has increased, and as the scope and duration of these crises has expanded, the challenges posed to the international community have become ever more complex. Issues of peace-building, humanitarian relief and reconstruction are inexorably entwined. Thus, the efficient deployment of international humanitarian assistance in emergencies demands more than merely effecting improvements to the international aid system and better coordination of the humanitarian and political aspects of relief operations. Innovative approaches in the international response to crises are called for, in order to ensure that aid not only provides temporary relief, but becomes the tool that makes peace and development possible.

In this paper, we examine one such potential innovation: capacity building through the systematic introduction of national and regional professional staff into the leadership and management of humanitarian assistance efforts mounted in response to complex crises. As we see regional institutions in the South taking on an increasing role in the management of political crises, and as donor nations increasingly seek burden sharing as a prerequisite for their assistance, it would seem that this expanding level of involvement at the political level should lead to a corresponding operational role. At the same time, even within the existing institutional arrangements for aid, there are many compelling arguments to be made that there should be ample room for national and regional leadership.

Current practice thus far in most emergency relief operations dealing with the results of conflict has been to utilize the services of international personnel (in the main, from developed countries) to take on professional posts; nationals and people from the region are often cast in a supporting role as interpreters, drivers, cooks and cleaners. While the rationale for such arrangements has usually been cast in terms of impartiality and reliability, this rationale itself deserves a further look. In fact, over the last few years, a series of studies and evaluations undertaken by academics as well as practitioners for bilateral and multilateral agencies as well as international non-governmental organizations has pointed to growing recognition that an endogenous response to humanitarian crises is likely to produce more sustainable and, hence, satisfactory solutions.

How credible is this point of view? What is the institutional capacity of the South to support such a shift? Are the available human resources adequate? What are the respective strengths and weaknesses of national, regional and international staff? What competencies and skills would make national and regional staff most attractive to a broad range of potential employers? What is the scope and content of some of the major existing programs to prepare and train staff for leadership in complex humanitarian crises? Are these programs accessible to professionals from the South? What is the impact on team cohesion of the various „local% and „international% remuneration models currently in use?

These are some of the questions that we explore in this paper. To the extent that we have found credible answers, we have made recommendations how the lessons learned can be introduced into the practice of humanitarian aid delivery. And to allow for the testing of their validity, we propose a modest pilot project where these recommendations can be put into practice.

II. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) was established in 1996 at New York University as an independent institute. It promotes policy research and international consultations on multilateral responses to transnational problems, with a view to producing practical policy recommendations and building the public understanding needed to implement and sustain essential multilateral activities.

As one of its current projects, the Center is examining issues of management, coordination and financing in the humanitarian assistance system. Seeking to improve the quality of aid provided to recipient populations, the project is exploring three interrelated areas of need: alternative funding scenarios for ensuring readiness among the front-line agencies; the potential for and

appropriateness of locating responsibility for response in the regions in which crises occur; and the strengthening of local and regional capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies. In September 1997, the Center convened a meeting on „Resources for Humanitarian Assistance%, which produced a set of recommendations on issues of management, coordination, and financing. As a follow-up to that meeting, the Center is seeking to develop strategies to ensure that the core competencies of humanitarian provider agencies are maintained, and that the resources are available for an effective response to humanitarian crises.

One strong recommendation emerging from the September meeting was for the strengthening and utilization of national and regional capacities in developing countries, in order to build a cadre or reserve of people who could respond at short notice to humanitarian emergencies. This paper was prepared so that the issues raised implicitly by this recommendation could be made explicit, and so that a course could be set for a pilot project to ascertain the feasibility of the recommended approach. The terms of reference for this study can be found at annex I. The authors of this paper come from Africa, Asia, and Europe. They all have worked extensively on development issues, and three of them have been directly involved in the management of humanitarian responses to crises caused by conflict. They have examined a broad sampling of the literature that could be found on the topic, trawled the Internet for information, and conducted over ninety interviews with high-ranking officials as well as with the foot soldiers of humanitarian organizations (intergovernmental, non-governmental, bilateral, regional and multi-lateral), with diplomats, government officials, and, perhaps most importantly, with people who have been on the receiving end of the international community,s humanitarian efforts. They are listed at annex II. In September 1998, a draft of the report was sent to everyone who was interviewed, and all comments received were incorporated in the final text.

This paper is not comprehensive, definitive, or exhaustive. As to capacity building, it focuses mainly on Africa, and the number of interviews conducted on the actual site of humanitarian operations is quite limited. It speaks mainly of North-South issues, although many of its findings and recommendations are also applicable to the West-East axis. Only a restricted number of donor countries were consulted. Similarly, a choice had to be made among the plethora of organizations actually delivering humanitarian assistance. But we believe that the views of a broad range of people are reflected whose contributions, in sum, represent and reflect the cumulative wisdom and experience that can only be acquired by first-hand observation of the complexities which arise when some people try to mitigate the impact of others, follies.

These views are not always uniform ^ on the contrary. But together they allow us to construct a valid picture of the key issues, and search for ways to address them. We have rarely cited individual sources, but rather tried to identify common patterns or threads: what are the relevant facts, trends, developments, areas of consensus and issues where philosophies clash? From this material, in turn, we have developed recommendations and concrete proposals for action.

III. NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAFF: DIFFERENT STRENGTHS, DIFFERENT ROLES

There is overwhelming support, in principle, for the idea that national professionals and professional staff from the region should play a major role in the design and delivery of humanitarian aid in times of conflict and crisis. The level of this support is as emphatic as that for motherhood and apple pie. However, when it comes to the question whether this principle is applicable to one,s own organization, positions vary substantively, and when it comes to actual practice, two distinct schools emerge: proponents and opponents.

Some of those who expressed reservations focused on the effectiveness of nationals ^ and staff from the region - in general; others specifically questioned their impartiality in times of conflict. Among the proponents, many stressed the individual contribution nationals could make, while others emphasized their capacity-building role. It might be helpful at this stage to review these various positions in some more detail, and to compare them to the arguments presented supporting or questioning the role of international, expatriate staff.

Perceived disadvantages of national or regional staff - and some counter-arguments

Very few, if any, agencies will profess to policies that limit the recruitment of national (and regional) professional staff. Yet, in interviews with senior managers, many perceived

disadvantages are mentioned. Often cited is the alleged lack of management skills of nationals, especially when it comes handling financial resources. Many aid organizations have very complex financial planning and reporting procedures, which are often linked to the specific requirements of various donors. Also mentioned frequently is the concern that national as well as regional staff lack analytical skills, have not been exposed to different environments, and have a lower standard of education.

In addition, several references were made to potential corruption and theft. And, most seriously of all, questions were raised about the ability of nationals to remain impartial in a situation where they would by necessity be identified with one of the conflicting parties. This case has been made most cogently by Joanna Macrae, who has pointed out that aid organizations, whether they like it or not, make an essentially political decision when they involve national partners in their work at times of conflict. Their choice of institutional or individual collaborators represents a choice for or against one or more of the parties involved in the conflict, and will have consequences that must be considered carefully. One large agency which supplies physicians and other trained medical staff expressed a reluctance to use nationals and staff from the region in professional functions because they had faced serious problems of insensitivity and even prejudice of these staff in dealing with refugees and victims of war. Moreover, there was no shortage of qualified medical staff from the North. This testimony, however, was not mirrored by other agencies.

Another de facto, though not intentional, opponent of national capacity building in complex emergencies is the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), which was set up as a separate unit of the European Commission (1992) to coordinate the humanitarian policy of the European Union and its member states. ECHO has no policy directives that would give it an incentive to stimulate the use of nationals in crises brought about by armed conflict. Its own operational policies lack flexibility, as they restrict its partnerships to contracts with a limited number of European NGOs. These normally work with their own compatriots. If, however, any European NGOs sub-contract work to national NGOs, ECHO will not raise objections, provided all partners adhere to its extremely complicated financial reporting requirements ^ a condition that is difficult to comply with for nationals of the South who have no access to the specialized training this requires.

Another concern that came up in discussions (but not supported by interlocutors from the South) was that national professional staff hired by the humanitarian agencies would leave critical posts unfilled in their own governments and civil society institutions, thus contributing to brain drain.

Do these perceived drawbacks by themselves add up to a convincing argument that one should shy away from the employment of nationals in key positions when planning and delivering humanitarian assistance in complex crises? In our discussions with managers of organizations that rely heavily on nationals to provide assistance, we have come across many valid counter-arguments.

Training staff, be they nationals or expatriates, in the intricacies of the organizations' managerial and financial procedures certainly takes time and effort. The real problem is the lack of resources for training that plagues so many humanitarian agencies. Here the insistence of many donors on „program delivery% and „low overheads% shows its undesirable side effects: inadequate focus on training and preparation. This problem is compounded by the shortage of up-front funding, allowing humanitarian organizations to build and retain a stable cadre of well-prepared staff. Obviously, any investment in the training of nationals seems to have a lesser long-term value than an investment in mobile international staff. But in fact, as the duration of specific missions has become much longer than in the past, and as the borders between development aid, peace-building and relief begin to dissolve, organizations are often on site for the long haul. The turnover, moreover, among expatriate staff is also considerable.

The belief that national staff suffer from a lack of education belongs to a previous era. There are very few countries nowadays, even among those affected by conflict and disintegration, that do not have a broad range of professionals available for employment. Those organizations that actively seek out competent national staff have no problem finding them. This does, however, require effective and up-to-date recruitment networks, and there again, lack of resources often hampers organizations, ability to move beyond the narrow circuits of their personal and informal contacts. We will argue later on in this paper that there is much to be said for informal networks, and that even the best rosters often remain underutilized. Fact is, however, that many organizations do not even have no rosters, or only outdated and limited ones, and feel donor pressure to keep their recruitment cost at an absolute minimum. As for corruption: while there

are certainly many documented incidents of pilferage or kick-backs that can be attributed to national staff in humanitarian missions, it is important to place such stories in context. As one national employee of a large international aid organization phrased it: „When you see the large amounts of waste, the gasoline and cars used for private purposes, the poorly guarded food and supplies, the international staff,s lack of concern for their organization,s assets, it becomes very tempting to redirect some of this to immediately deserving causes!" There is a clear correlation between the quality of an organization,s management and oversight, the values and behavior of the international staff, and the loyalty and commitment of their national (and regional) colleagues.

The concern that the hiring of nationals might lead to brain drain was dismissed by several discussants from the South with the observation that more often, there are far more well qualified people on the labor market than the Government or civil society institutions can absorb, given their budgetary constraints. Also, they argued, „a brain trained is a brain gained" and the capacity-building and sustainable impact of national involvement contributes directly to the country,s or region,s long-term development.

A more fundamental concern is that national and regional staff may find it hard to be impartial, and may not be seen as politically neutral. Mary Anderson, in her groundbreaking study *Do No Harm*, makes a very strong case, based on lessons learned from the experience of many agencies and individuals, that there is another side to this argument. She takes the position that there are people in every conflict who do not side with the partisan extremes of their political, ethnic, or religious group, but who seek a path to peace: „In the delivery of their programmes of assistance, aid agencies can provide a place where people can act in Œnon-war, ways or where they can engage with people on Œother sides, of the war in joint endeavours." This, in turn, can lead to contemplation of a shared future. By providing space for people who want to get involved in „non-war" activities, agencies can contribute to a process of reconciliation and inclusion.

Moreover, as Antonio Donini points out in his case study of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, not all of the relief agencies active in an area of conflict work on all sides of the battles simultaneously. While large international organizations such as ICRC and the various UN agencies normally try work across factional divides, the smaller agencies often choose one specific area, and thus should find it easier to involve national staff in their relief efforts. While the reluctance of many players to use nationals and staff from the affected regions to participate in the planning and direction of relief operations in war-torn areas can be rationalized, it can not be defended.

The case for the employment of national and regional staff

As a growing number of organizations and agencies is turning to national and regional staff to reinforce their presence in the countries where they serve, there is also a growing body of testimony supporting the effectiveness of this approach. Those who advocate their inclusion in the design and execution of relief efforts do so on the basis of three key elements: cost, effectiveness, and capacity building.

As for cost, it is clearly to the advantage of agencies to use nationals, and even staff from the region, given the wide gap between „international%" and „national%" remuneration. In a separate chapter, we will address the potential drawbacks of a situation where people work side by side, doing work of comparable worth, while receiving dramatically disparate levels of compensation. But in terms of the organizations, bottom line, the positive value of using national human resources, both men and women, is beyond dispute.

In terms of effectiveness, there are numerous considerations that came up in our interviews:

- Language skills
- Familiarity with local environment
- Awareness of cultural, geographic, historical, tribal, social and political factors
- In-depth knowledge of key issues related to conflict
- Ability to mobilize local people who want to help
- Ability to relate with, and gain cooperation from, the local population
- Ability to direct resources effectively
- Skills in working with local media, in local vernacular
- Capacity to identify and motivate community leaders willing to support „non-war%" efforts

- Commitment to alleviate suffering of their own people
- Ability to assess and circumvent security risks
- Less prone to alcohol dependency and other symptoms of stress due to hostile environment and separation from loved ones
- Negotiating and facilitating skills adapted to local culture

One firm believer in the importance of these factors is the Dutch NGO Novib. It takes the position, based on many years of experience, that it will exclusively use nationals in its relief operations. „It,s their problem, it,s their solution.“ In Afghanistan and Somalia, for example, Novib worked on its humanitarian programs using national professionals, while at the same time, and in the same place, Medecins Sans Frontieres was doing similar work with only international staff. Novib felt that, as a result of its approach, its work was not only sustainable, but also contributed to capacity building.

Capacity building through nationals

In addition to the individual attributes that nationals can bring to a relief operation, there are advantages of their participation that are linked to their communities, efforts to rebuild their lives. Rarely, if ever, do relief operations take place in isolation. They usually occur in the context of efforts to make peace, and to create an environment where development can resume. Rarely, if ever, is the so-called „continuum“ from relief to development a linear process, where one finds a neat and logical sequence of events.

This is recognized by many aid agencies. The 1994 „Code of Conduct“ developed by the International Red Cross and Crescent Movement, together with a group of NGOs, working in disaster relief, specifically states: „We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capabilities.“ This applies equally to natural and war-driven disasters, and addresses both planning and implementation.

Many of the practitioners and diplomats from the South whom we interviewed, however, took the view that there was a lot of rhetoric when it came to capacity building among the agencies and international NGOs. Changing that rhetoric into reality, they said, was a major concern. Yet, a renewed emphasis on capacity building would provide opportunities to explore and formulate new methods and alternative strategies for the whole spectrum of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, and development.

The idea that peace-making, relief and development are three separate activities is largely derived from the budgetary process in the donor capitals and in the large international organizations. The experience on the ground often belies these distinctions. Mounting a relief operation without an exit strategy is a fairly hopeless enterprise, and if the exit strategy is peace and development, nationals must play a key role. ⁹

Thus, the integration of national staff in the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance already paves the way for a hand-over period where these national leaders and managers can transform these external efforts into a sustainable and internalized process, and where the fragile institutional structures and coping mechanisms built up during the relief phase can be reinforced to provide the foundations of a new civil society.

The complementary value of international staff

No one we have spoken with has argued that international, expatriate staff should be banned from international relief operations. On the contrary. While drawbacks were mentioned such as their relatively high cost, lack of local language skills, occasional cultural insensitivity or emotional problems, inadequate understanding of local coping mechanisms, inadequate contributions to sustainability, and short-term commitment, there were also many references to their indubitable strengths. **What emerged from our discussions was a sense that national and international staff are complementary, that each group brings skills and qualities to the process that are absolutely indispensable for success.**

Some of the specific attributes that distinguish international staff:

- Ability to apply lessons learned in a range of different operations
- High levels of professional competence
- Independence to act as advocate on human rights issues

- Ability to intervene in conflicts from a position seen as „neutral“
- Ability to resist corruption; reliability in handling resources
- Experience in planning and programming
- Familiar with agencies, policies and procedures
- Ability to see problems in broader context
- No kinship or political ties to any of the local power groups
- Familiarity with their organizations „management culture“
- Ability to obtain donor support from their own constituencies
- Advocacy within their own communities upon return

Clearly, what is needed, then, is a judicious mix of national, regional and international staff that matches the specific nature of the humanitarian crisis to which a response is being mounted.

That, however, is more easily said than done. What is the capacity of institutions in the South (and East) to train and mobilize the necessary human and financial resources? What is the corresponding potential „market“ of professional managerial and technical employment opportunities for national and regional staff? How can supply and demand be matched? What are the options, what are the obstacles?

IV. NATIONAL STAFF IN DEMAND: EMERGING MARKETS

If indeed a strong case can be made for an increased involvement of national and regional staff in managing humanitarian aid operations, new questions arise. Is there sufficient demand? Who will employ them? What is the size of this „labor market?“

What is the scope of the employment opportunities?

It is extremely difficult to estimate how many people are involved at any given time in humanitarian assistance activities, and how many of them can be described as „professionals“, doing work that requires a level of skills and experience normally associated with tertiary education. It is equally difficult to estimate the turnover in these functions, and thus to have an impression of the range of possible job openings. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the distinctions between peacekeeping, humanitarian work and development work are fluid, and that the number of people employed varies widely from year to year as crises erupt or relative stability returns. The number of internationally recruited staff in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, for example, dropped from 13,000 to 2,000 within a three year period, from 1995 to 1998.

The fact that there is quite a gap between organizations that combat the effect of natural and man-made disasters (such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and organizations that deal with complex crises caused by armed conflict (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross) further muddles the picture. Staffing figures of relief agencies, furthermore, do not include the number of people who work under sub-contracts. If, for example, an international agency has hired a local NGO to take on some relief functions, this will show up in the budget and in the accounts, but not in the personnel records. With all these caveats, there is one source of information that appears reliable and up to date: Francesca Taylor's study on relief personnel, cited earlier, which contains the results of a survey conducted in 1997 among 195 organizations in Europe and the U.S. She comes to the conclusion that „a minimum of about 17,000 people were employed in emergency relief in 1996.“ Of these, roughly half were recruited internationally. Taylor does not indicate what percentage of the locally recruited staff held other than support functions, but from our interviews, it appears to be a relatively low number. As to the staff working under sub-contracts, one organization, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), indicated that it spends approximately 10% of its annual budget (over \$80 million in 1997) on „umbrella contracts“ with NGOs. UNHCR, to cite another example, has an operational partnership with some 500 NGOs through project agreements. Many of these are based in the South. This is illustrative of a growing trend to work through networks of sub-contracted implementing agencies. Statistics on turnover are more difficult to come by. Only half of the agencies sampled by Taylor had full-time salaried staff; most used short-term contracts, often for no more than three months at a time. Mobility, according to the people whom we interviewed, is generally high. People burn out. UNHCR, for example, which has 900 posts in the field and 400 in Geneva, rotates some

300 to 400 of its staff every year in order to maintain a balance between hardship and comfort. People move from agency to agency, and from crisis to crisis. Many agencies make efforts to retain their best people, but few have the resources to bridge their staff from one assignment to the next. Often, training is used as a way to fill gaps in employment. More frequently, agencies do not invest in training because their high turnover renders the cost too high. Overall, though, the need is mainly for people who are available at short notice, who come with considerable professional skills, who do not need much training, and who have a place to go at the end of their assignment. That is why some organizations, such as UNHCR and the World Food Programme, have extensive „stand-by" arrangements with a number of donor countries who supply well-prepared staff on demand.

In order to arrive at some order of magnitude, we are assuming (conservatively) that there is a 25% annual turnover rate, and that most of the posts staffed internationally, i.e. some 8,000, are professional. **This would then lead to the conclusion that there are some 2,000 professional positions annually in relief work that need to be filled. If one were to set a modest initial target for nationals and regional staff to fill 25% of these substantive functions, we would come to a range of some 500 openings a year worldwide.** Clearly, this projection is only indicative, but it does allow us to assume that we are talking about hundreds, not thousands, of openings in relief work annually that could be staffed by nationals. It is evident, moreover, from the available information about turnover patterns, that these assignments normally would be of relatively short duration (three months to a year), reflecting the staffing patterns in the field.

Who will employ national and regional staff? Existing organizations

If there were a sufficient supply of qualified candidates within the humanitarian organizations, field of view, would these employers be interested? In Taylor,s survey, most organizations stress the shortage of experienced personnel with appropriate language skills and suitable technical skills who are available at short notice. Several respondents (18%) specifically singled out the recruitment of staff from the South as a key priority for future operations.

While many major relief organizations seem reluctant to bring in nationals, there are others, such as the International Rescue Committee (200 expatriates, many from the south, and 3,000 local staff, including many refugees), Life and Peace, the Asia Foundation, USAID, DANIDA, NORAD, SIDA, the World Food Programme, Australian Aid, CARE, World Vision, and Norwegian People,s Aid (to name just a few), that make every effort to do so to the extent possible, as a matter of policy. The International Organization for Migration, to give another example, has 1200 staff in the field, with 70 offices around the world: only 10% of its field staff are expatriates. At least 400 of its local field staff are doing fully professional work.

All of the United Nations system organizations, agencies, programs and funds, by their very nature, employ large numbers of nationals from developing countries among their professional and managerial staff. In addition, many of them use „national professional officers%" in their program countries, who are not subject to international reassignment. These national officers work on development issues as well as relief operations, and many of them in due course move into the international category. The same goes for the United Nations Volunteers, a low-cost source of competent expertise that is tapped for relief and development activities alike.

Sub-contracting is also widely used by the UN organizations. The World Food Programme, which has 117 national officers in its field network, employs over 1700 nationals yearly on so-called „special service agreements%", a kind of consultancy contracts, normally of short duration. These people are considered a valuable resource: over 500 nationals attended WFP training courses in 1996 alone.

Clearly, there are a large number of organizations nowadays that welcome national staff, and it appears from our interviews, as well as from Taylor,s survey, that the interest in achieving diversity, and thus enhancing effectiveness, is rapidly expanding in the world of complex emergencies relief work.

Who else will employ them? Emerging institutions

While we have signaled a gradually increasing demand for national and regional staff among the existing relief agencies, this does not fully meet the need for a truly endogenous response capacity to the humanitarian crises caused by armed conflict. Such a response will have to come from national and regional institutions in the South (and the East). What is the likelihood that we will see a gradual devolution of responsibilities from the North to the South in fielding the front-line response to humanitarian crises caused by arms?

In fact, the capacity to provide a response is gradually emerging. In order to assess its true scope, one has to look beyond the immediate confines of the humanitarian aid machinery specifically geared to deal with the effects of armed conflict, and focus on the broader range of relief organizations and capabilities that have come up in recent years to address natural and man-made disasters. This will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter, where we examine the availability of suitable recruitment sources.

In addition, moreover, to the purely humanitarian institutions in the South that already now competently provide disaster relief, one has to be aware of the growing range of political institutions at the regional level in the South which have disaster relief as one among their many mandates, or which may add this field to their future areas of concern.

Does the political will exist in the South to take on more of the humanitarian burdens caused by armed conflict?

To examine this question for at least one part of the world, we conducted a series of discussions with diplomats from Africa, as well as officials of intergovernmental and international organizations. Overall, the answers we received were positive and moderately optimistic. We would hope that what holds true for Africa is valid globally, and that the trend for regional organizations to share some of the responsibilities traditionally shouldered by the international organizations and the donor community is going to continue.

In Africa, particularly, old institutions are gaining in influence and scope, while new institutions are emerging in a process closely linked to the democratization and commercial integration that characterizes large parts of the continent. In June 1993, in a landmark decision, the Assembly of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) established a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, and it designated its Central Organ, a committee of member states, to take charge of the process. The OAU's Assembly recognized that internal conflicts generated massive flows of refugees, spurred crime, encouraged the proliferation of arms, destroyed the investment credibility of the region and eventually affected the economic viability of the continent. A Commission on Refugees makes recommendations to the council of ministers, supported by a Bureau for Refugees of the OAU Secretariat. In addition, the OAU Coordinating Committee on Assistance to Refugees in Africa provides institutional linkages between the OAU bodies and other organizations which provide support to refugees in Africa. As African countries therefore recognized that internal wars tended to have external consequences, they concluded that collective action was now both appropriate and necessary. In general, it has become clear that Africa is prepared to assume more responsibility for peacekeeping and conflict management on its own continent. Apart from the normal operating expenditures of the Central Organ and the OAU's Conflict Management Division (which is covered by the OAU's regular budget), the OAU has set up a separate Peace Fund. Thus far, African countries have contributed approximately five million US\$, while the donor community has matched this sum. The OAU now has its own Humanitarian Affairs Office, and while its operational capacity is still limited, it could ^ with proper funding and training support ^ evolve into a viable presence in the region.

Similarly, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through ECOMOG, which has taken on peace-keeping responsibilities in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the community of East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD, uniting the Horn of Africa with Kenya, Uganda and the Sudan), and the Maghreb Union can all be expected to develop their own humanitarian response capacity over time. As to burden sharing, several discussants pointed at the contributions made by the OAU in the past: it has harbored refugees, supported liberation movements in cost-sharing arrangements with Western donors, and established voluntary funds for specific crises. With the establishment of the Peace Fund, this trend towards self-reliance can be expected to accelerate.

Illustrative is also the work of Synergies Africa. This major African NGO, with considerable political clout, has successfully mediated several crises in the region. At the end of 1995, it created an alliance of NGOs from the Great Lakes region that jointly operated a Humanitarian Unit out of Bukavu. While this particular initiative came to an abrupt halt when the war reached the Kivu province, it represented a conscious effort to provide regional leadership.

Of particular interest is the rapidly growing influence of the new Southern African Development Community (SADC), presently chaired by President Mandela, which has a defense and security component which would allow for disaster preparedness training. Indicative of SADC's current capacity to coordinate its member states, activities in this area was the Initial Framework for

Drought Contingency Planning, which SADC developed in 1997 in cooperation with the World Food Programme.

The World Bank has recently been asked to support an initiative by the African Governors of the World Bank Group to develop more effective ways to build and utilize human and institutional capacity in Africa. This has led to a „Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa%, with its secretariat in Harare, and focal points in most sub-Saharan countries. It aims at transforming the public sector, strengthening the private sector, improving the quality of education, and strengthening civil society. Since the initiative is still in its infancy, it is not clear whether there is room for disaster preparedness training within its program, but a discussion on the revitalization of African universities, the enhancement of regional centers of excellence, and the establishment of an African Virtual University has already started.

It appears reasonable, therefore, to conclude that one may expect quite some growth in the opportunities for involving national and regional staff from the South in future humanitarian assistance operations: there is a growing demand among existing aid organizations, and there is an increasing interest on the part of the regional and sub-regional organizations in the South to take on an expanded operational role.

V. LINKING CAPACITY AND DEMAND: A NETWORK

If, indeed, the demand exists, is there a corresponding institutional and human pool of talent in the South? To obtain a comprehensive picture, one has to look beyond the confines of relief operations in response to the impact of armed conflict, and survey the mechanisms that exist in the South to deal with natural and man-made disasters. To a large extent, these require the same mix of managerial, logistic and technical resources as operations geared to operate in the midst of armed conflict, although the political context is very different. In other words, if there is a capacity to deal with natural disasters, there should be a corresponding ability to deal with most aspects of disasters caused by armed conflict.

Within the scope of this paper, and within the limits of our broad-based but certainly not exhaustive survey, it is difficult to do justice to the rich and wide-spread array of institutions, organizations and entities in the South that are capable of mounting disaster relief operations ^ and to the wealth of capable and motivated people who staff these organizations. But a sampling of the many that were brought to our attention may demonstrate that the capacity exists, in ample proportions.

Institutional capacities in the South: a sampler

One indicator is the strength of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which has member societies in 169 countries. Much of the Federation,s work is concerned with mobilizing world help in times of disaster, and it sends relief supplies from its strategically located emergency warehouses, calls for other member societies to send help to a stricken area, and coordinates overall relief efforts. Operationally, though, the Federation relies fully on the national capacity of its members. It runs training programs for national societies, and considers capacity building one of its main tasks. Illustrative for this type of growing response capacity is, for example, Bangladesh,s ability - through early warning systems, networks of shelters, food stockpiles, communications networks, and emergency health-care systems ^ to mitigate the impact of the floods and typhoons that regularly devastate its low-lying areas. The loss of lives, which used to be tremendous only a decade ago, has been reduced dramatically through these integrated strategies.

Another NGO with a widespread network is the International Islamic Relief Organization, based in Saudi Arabia, with more than 100 offices abroad, covering humanitarian activities in more than 120 countries worldwide. It often acts in partnership with UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, and it operates in disaster areas as diverse as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Tanzania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Chechniya. A major financial contributor is the Islamic Development Bank, which earmarks interest earnings (deemed usury under Islamic law) for charitable causes through its Islamic Solidarity Fund. ¹⁹ This, in turn, is closely linked to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an international organization with 55 members around the world.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), with funding support from CIDA, OFDA/USAID and the Department for International Development (DFID, formerly ODA) in the UK, has established a very sophisticated Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Program. This program focuses on the health sector, but it works very closely with other international and regional organizations, and since it was set up

twenty years ago, it has developed into a highly refined network of health professionals and institutions in the region, trained and prepared to respond to the demands for medical services caused by natural and man-made disasters. This network has links with the civil defense structures and the military in its member states; it is highly computerized, it has web sites, its partners communicate mainly by e-mail, it operates a wealth of training programs, and it is well-established throughout the region. In a region prone to earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods, the PAHO program has proven its value time and again.

Similarly, USAID's Office of Disaster Relief Assistance (ODFDA) has over time helped governments develop disaster response mechanisms, using local expertise, sharing lessons learned, and pre-positioning large stores of relief supplies near disaster prone areas. Thus, when in the 1990s an earthquake hit the island of Flores, the Indonesian government had trained assessors, and effectively coordinated its military and civilian resources to provide relief and orchestrate the recovery process.

These few examples of effective institutions and organizations should be sufficient to dispel any lingering assumptions that the capacity in the South to provide leadership and expertise to humanitarian assistance operations might be lacking. These organizations are clearly able to draw on a pool of talented professionals to staff their programs. The question then arises: how can one tap into this same reservoir to develop an cadre of well prepared professionals from the South who can be called upon at short notice to lead humanitarian operations in their country or region in times of armed conflict?

Developing recruitment sources: the need for institutional networks

It is essential to recall at this stage the observation made earlier in this paper that very few humanitarian aid agencies working in war zones offer anything like stable careers. While most agencies have some core functions filled by career staff, the largest part of their work, particularly away from headquarters, is either done by staff on standby arrangements, or by short-term staff, often unkindly described as „cannon fodder%. These short-term staffers are usually young, overly idealistic, relatively inexperienced, and frequently suffer from burn-out after a few missions. The enormous fluctuations in workload of these organizations does not allow them to retain more than a skeleton staff between assignments.

The most effective organizations, in terms of rapid staffing capability, are those that have stand-by arrangements, such as the World Food Programme, Medecins Sans Frontieres, the ICRC or UNHCR. These can usually benefit from the largesse of one or more donors or institutions (such as hospitals) who keep highly qualified staff on call. Professional staff on standby normally have:

- stable jobs in their own country, so their careers are not dependent on tenure with a volatile aid agency;
- access to government-sponsored training opportunities to study best practice in humanitarian assistance, directly linked to their area of expertise;
- a continuing income in their home base while they are away on mission;
- a pre-negotiated contract, guaranteed by their own government, and adequate coverage for death and disability;
- the opportunity to accept or refuse missions in accordance with their personal schedules and priorities;
- the opportunity to gain experience and to mature over time.

One such prominent donor standby arrangement is CANADEM, whereby the government of Canada manages a resource bank of Canadians with skills in areas such as human rights, peacebuilding and democracy, to serve as a civilian standby mechanism for the UN and other international organizations.

When considering how to create conditions favorable to the employment of national and regional staff, one should take the characteristics of these stand-by arrangements into account. Many of the experts whom we interviewed, in the aid organizations as well as in the donor community, stressed continuity, expertise and stability as the key conditions for the effective staffing of aid operations.

This implies that, in the identification and development of recruitment sources in the South, one should aim at institutions rather than at individual people, and build networks rather than rosters.

Working with institutions, one can:

- identify partner institutions that value the concept of capacity-building;
- select people with specialized competencies who have a verifiable track record;
- work out secondment arrangements with these institutions;
- link the selection and assignment of candidates to the institution's learning and development plans; and
- build an institutional training capacity in support of the partnership.

Why is a simple roster of qualified candidates, developed centrally or by humanitarian agencies separately, not adequate? Even in those organizations that have ample resources for their recruitment operations, rosters often languish. While some pre-screening takes place before people are placed on the roster, they are usually not interviewed, their references are not checked, and their work experience has not been assessed. Often, rosters are not updated frequently enough. When a vacancy comes up, program managers much prefer to consult their personal „short list", which usually consists of people whom they have used before, or who come highly recommended by trusted colleagues.

It is human nature to shy away from hiring someone you don't know. Successful job hunters have always known that gaining access to decision makers is half the battle. If there is merit in supporting the recruitment of national and regional staff from areas of armed conflict into relief work, a situation has to be created where the potential employers and the potential employees know each other face to face, and have built trust on a basis of institutional collaboration.

This call for „rosters plus", as exemplified by the register that RedR in the U.K. maintains: candidates are thoroughly pre-screened, their references are checked, they are interviewed, their competencies are assessed, and only those considered suitable for humanitarian work are accepted. The register is regularly updated, returning staff are debriefed and evaluated, and the outcome is reflected in the register.

This also calls for networks of institutions in the North and the South, the West and the East, which have agreed to work together, and which have arranged for the exchange of staff and for the visits back and forth that cement contacts and that build confidence. These networks can be North-South, South-South, West-East or East-East - as long as they bring together potential employers and seconding organizations, much as the current North-North standby arrangements do.

These „releasing" institutions can vary in nature: government agencies, universities, NGOs, professional associations, associations of retirees and organizations in the private sector may all harbor professionals with appropriate competencies. By involving national and regional institutions in the recruitment process, the risk of brain drain is reduced, good people can be found who would not be on the open job market, and the experience gained strengthens institutions and individuals alike.

As to the private sector: many of our interlocutors stressed the importance of involving private firms, since in an era of privatization many skills have migrated from the public sector to private industry. Expertise in telecommunications, civil engineering and trauma medicine, for example, which even a decade ago could usually be found in the civil service, has now moved to the private sector, together with the institutions where they found a home.

It is equally important, as several diplomats pointed out, to focus on people who are no longer in the workforce. With the arrival of structural adjustments, many governments in the South have been forced to reduce staff, and often this has led to the early retirement of very capable and dedicated civil servants. Similarly, many countries have scaled down their military forces, and released large numbers of personnel with outstanding technical and managerial skills. These groups could be approached, through their respective associations, and be brought into the network.

Another recruitment source that deserves close scrutiny is the reservoir of expatriate nationals. UNDP, for example, through its TOKTEN program (Transfer Of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) has been able to mobilize many professionals who had left their country to return temporarily for development consultancies or project work. Such networks could also play a role in the field of humanitarian assistance.

On a smaller scale, but illustrative of the work that could be done world-wide, there is the directory of Somali professionals compiled by Dr. Kevin Cahill, Director of the Center for International Health and Cooperation in New York. This represents an effort to identify, locate and involve Somali professionals willing to return to their country to participate in the planning

and implementation of relief and rehabilitation projects. This directory was distributed to international agencies as well as NGOs, „who found it indispensable in their search for qualified Somalis," according to Dr. Cahill.

Exemplary in its efforts to create a recruitment network is Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), a regional, non-sectarian NGO, staffed and managed by a faculty of African professionals, with its headquarters in Addis Ababa. It describes its operational mission as: „to render rapid and effective humanitarian response to emergency situations and to ensure sustainable livelihoods support to post-crisis transition areas in the continent through the provision of direct service delivery, technical assistance/consultation, field based research/dissemination, and indigenous community empowerment through capacity building initiatives." For this purpose, AHA has set up and maintains an up-to-date data base of over one thousand African professionals available for rapid deployment across the continent, in response to humanitarian emergencies, local capacity building needs, and sustainable development endeavors.

Equally promising is the initiative taken by the Norwegian Refugee Council, which has established an African Standby Force (NORAFRIC) of some fifty African nationals with experience in international refugee work. They have been trained and prepared for deployment at short notice, and their skills cover a wide range of specializations, including telecommunications, logistics, security and social services.

The institutional capacity to participate in standby recruitment networks certainly exists in the South, if the situation in Africa is any indication, and there is no doubt that there is a wealth of individual professional talent that could be more effectively mobilized in this context if the gap between potential employers and suitable candidates could be bridged.

VI. TRAINING: CREATING COMMON COMPETENCIES

Profile of competencies sought

What competencies and skills are in demand? There, agencies and NGOs alike present extensive wish-lists of essential as well as desirable qualities and qualifications. These lists have three dimensions: technical abilities, managerial skills, and personal attributes.

In terms of **technical professional skills**, it appears from our interviews that there is a particular demand for:

- Physicians
- Nurses
- Public Health Specialists
- Nutritionists
- Hospital Administrators
- Finance Managers
- Education and Training Specialists
- Community Development Officers
- Civil Engineers, particular for the construction of bridges
- Water and Sanitary Engineers
- Telecommunications Engineers and Technicians
- Truck Drivers and Mechanics
- Security and Police Officers
- Logistics and Supply Management Specialists
- Lawyers with a background in protection, human rights and electoral processes
- Social Workers
- Field Officers
- Shelter and Food Distribution Officers

People with these backgrounds, however, can not necessarily just step in and be operational in a complex emergency. Often, they will need specialized training so that they can apply their professional knowledge in a crisis, working in an improvised setting, with very few professional tools, having to make difficult choices under severe time pressure and emotional strain. In the field of health, for example, the PAHO/WHO training network in Latin America and the Caribbean, described earlier, demonstrates to what extent the field of disaster management is a specialization within a specialization.

The demands in terms of managerial skills are equally complex, but less clearly defined. Each agency or NGO has its own rules and procedures, and very often they will have further distinctions within those procedures based on donor reporting requirements. Thus, for example, NGOs working with funding from the European Union face complex financial budgeting and reporting procedures, and managers have to be trained specifically in the application of these procedures before they can function effectively. Most, if not all, employers require computer literacy. Emphasis is also placed on previous field experience. Other skill requirements are more general:

- ability to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate complex and intricate operations, with very little lead time;
- ability to motivate and supervise a broad array of staff with different backgrounds, who normally have not yet blended into teams; and
- ability to work in a politically charged environment, setting course with due consideration of the broader impact of operational decisions.

Clearly, national capacity building is best served by the increased presence of nationals and regional staff at the managerial level, where policies and strategies are formulated, and operational decisions are taken that may have political implications, or that may affect the prospects of long term development.

As to **personal attributes**, the agencies and NGOs interviewed all stressed traits such as:

- cultural sensitivity;
- creativity;
- flexibility;
- compassion;
- conceptual abilities;
- high energy level;
- commitment to human rights; and
- the ability to communicate.

In addition, great value was placed on language skills, political insight, and an understanding of development issues.

Training opportunities provided by the international organizations and NGOs

There is an enormous choice of learning and training opportunities in the field of disaster relief. Unfortunately, most of these opportunities are only available in the North, and many of them are primarily for people already employed by the major humanitarian agencies and NGOs.

The organizations of the United Nations common system are a prime source of training activities, mainly for their own staff, but also in many instances designed with capacity building in mind. An overview can be found in the Humanitarian Assistance Training Inventory, a web site maintained by the Crisis Environments Training Initiative (CETI), which is a joint venture of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (a coordinating body for humanitarian issues) and the United Nations Staff College Project. Increasingly, this site also lists training activities and materials offered by the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, IGOs, NGOs, and academic institutions.

CETI, established in 1997, has become a clearinghouse for the exchange of information on humanitarian assistance training for the UN common system. It provides a forum for dialogue, and it coordinates the production of training materials for common system use. Given the current financial constraints at the United Nations, however, the future of CETI is uncertain. A review of the CETI inventory shows that most of the training activities in the UN organizations are specifically designed for staff, but a few exceptions stand out.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), jointly with the UN Development Programme, has developed a Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP), aimed at improving the capacity of national institutions in disaster-prone countries. The DMTP holds workshops where government officials, local authorities, NGOs, agency staff and

donor representatives analyze training needs, develop strategies to meet these, and deliver initial training and simulation exercises.

In Cambodia, UNDP manages a rehabilitation and regeneration scheme, CAREERE, which has well structured training programs for Cambodian professionals on project management, financial management, and logistic ^ all skills that could easily be transferred to complex emergency relief programs. In Central America, UNDP/UNOPS developed similar training programs under its PRODERE project, meant for refugees returning to Guatemala.

UNICEF, as well, organizes workshops in different regions of the world, not only for its own national and international staff, but also, by invitation only, for national counterparts. These workshops cover topics such as complex emergencies, early warning, vulnerability assessments, international humanitarian law, media management, and program planning. The United Nations Staff College in Turin provides courses on the management of field coordination, mainly for UN system staff, but also for national officials interested in emergency management, negotiating skills and conflict transformation. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research, based in Geneva, conducts a Disaster Control Training Programme for government officials, and has held a series of workshops in the Sahel countries.

Very supportive of its local partners is also UNHCR, which is engaged at the field level in providing on-the-job training, workshops and small-scale financial support to local NGOs, delivered in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the Open Society Institute, and the OSCE. During 1995 and 1996, some 8,000 NGO staff members in 128 countries benefited from training with UNHCR. Some 50 per cent of this was protection training in Eastern Europe and the CIS, while 25 per cent was protection training outside Europe. In July 1997, UNHCR further adopted a training strategy which includes the training of operational partners as a capacity building tool.

Also aimed at participants outside the United Nations system are the many courses provided by PAHO/WHO in Latin America and the Caribbean, which were described earlier in this paper. Especially noteworthy is PAHO,s sophisticated humanitarian supply management system, SUMA (financed by the governments of Canada and the Netherlands), which is rapidly becoming the global standard, now that some 1700 users have been trained. In Africa, WHO operates a Pan-African Emergency Training Centre, located in Addis Ababa, which prepares training materials for emergency health workers, disaster managers and others throughout the region. WHO,s Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action also each year organizes an International Diploma Course in Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management, mainly for an audience from the North. In collaboration with the ICRC, WHO further sponsors a 3 week course on Health Emergencies in Large Populations, which is, inter alia, given at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Bangkok.

Most of the large international NGOs have some training activities for their staff. In the field, they provide on-the-job training. Formal courses, however, are few and far between. Many NGOs complain that donors see training as a luxury, part of administrative overheads that must be kept to the lowest levels possible, not appealing to tax payers, and thus not deserving of funding. This complaint is linked to the more general one about the lack of up-front funding for humanitarian NGOs, forcing them to adopt inverse „feast or famine% management strategies. One of the most active providers of training is the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, conducting some 20 one-week workshops around the world each year, with some 500 participants in total, focussing on disaster management, emergency response, civil conflict and complex emergencies.

Training opportunities offered by academic institutions

In the academic world, there is a wealth of training opportunities to be found in the area of disaster relief and preparedness. In fact, it is a growing field. Within the confines of this paper, it is hard to give a comprehensive overview, but a range of examples should provide some flavor. Again, most of these academic activities are concentrated in the North. In the United States, there is a lively interest in the field. Tufts University, for instance, initiated a one year Masters of Arts in Humanitarian Assistance, which commenced in September 1998. Similarly, Hunter College of the City University of New York, in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the New York-based Center for International Health and Co-operation (CIHC), has developed an International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance, which was taught in the summer of 1998.

The latter course (which was first held in Dublin in 1997) is of particular interest since it aims at establishing „an internationally recognized basic minimum standard of training which will enable

humanitarian workers function effectively both as individuals and as members of a team in acute and chronic situations of conflict and disaster. It has been designed in consultation with the United Nations, the International Red Cross, specialized agencies and NGOs working in the field, and it has targeted practitioners as its audience.

There is a clear trend to create alliances between practitioners and operational institutions on one hand, and academia on the other. In Europe, the University of Geneva offered a new one-year program in humanitarian assistance for practitioners, commencing in the fall of 1998, based on an earlier version introduced in 1995 as a collaborative effort among the University, the ICRC, the WHO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, and Medecins sans Frontieres. This program is interdisciplinary, creates links between research and practice, and focuses on management as well as on communications.

Across the French border, close to Lyon, a special training institute, Bioforce Developpement, has been established to train staff hoping to find employment with the Geneva-based humanitarian agencies and francophone NGOs. This institute provides a three year technical course leading to a diploma of „Logisticien de la Solidarite Internationale“, with a strong emphasis on the management of health care in complex crises. WHO has contributed considerably to the curriculum. Given its emphasis on practical experience, two of the three years are spent in the field. While mainly serving students from the North, Bioforce Developpement reserves 10 places out of 85 every year for students from the South. Funding comes mainly from the European Union, the French government, and the Rhone-Alpes region. The key players, however, are linked in a „Network on Humanitarian Assistance“, initiated by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). The Network issues a one-year Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance, which is taught by a group of universities in Belgium (Brussels and Louvain), France (Aix-Marseille III), Germany (Bochum), Ireland (Dublin), Italy (Sapienza, Rome), Spain (Deusto-Bilbao), and Sweden (Uppsala). This consortium of universities developed its post-graduate diploma courses in close consultations with UNHCR, WHO, and the ICRC, which all offer two-month internships for the network's students as the final part of their training.

The course represents probably the closest thing to a common curriculum, based on employers needs, that is currently in use. It covers geopolitics, anthropology, international law, epidemiology, management and logistics. After the first semester, students choose one of these fields as specialization.

ECHO also maintains a register of other universities and institutes, not part of the „Network“, which provide training in humanitarian assistance, often as part of broader professional programs in areas such as public health or development. As of early 1998, ECHO had received information from 63 institutions, mainly in Europe.

While this is a very impressive lineup, it also represents a nearly hermetically sealed closed circuit of training activities designed in the North, delivered in the North, and mainly used by participants from the North. When it comes to institutions in the South, information is harder to come by, but it appears that opportunities in the academic world to study the workings of humanitarian assistance are relatively rare. From our interviews, the impression emerged that most of the preparedness training in the South is linked to the Red Cross/Red Crescent network, civil defense activities, or the ad-hoc training provided by international organizations and NGOs.

Again, there are notable exceptions. We have mentioned earlier the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, as well as the training activities linked to universities working with PAHO and WHO. There are also several universities and research centers in the South that focus on related topics such as conflict resolution, ethnicity, and peace keeping, all topics that have strong relation to humanitarian aid.

Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Africa University, the United Methodists, university in Zimbabwe, jointly established in 1998 a series of short-term but comprehensive emergency capacity building training programs for students enrolled in Africa university, as well as ACT member church and agency personnel. A longer course (15 weeks) is planned for 1999, with the intent that the program will in due course create a cadre of national and regional leaders and managers.

One particularly interesting initiative comes from the Association of African Universities, based in Ghana, which is developing a Graduate Program in Humanitarian and Refugee Studies, and which has submitted a project proposal to UNHCR (for advice) and the donor community (for funding). This proposal presents a process in three phases, beginning with an inventory of African institutions that currently provide, or have the capacity to provide, training on

humanitarian and refugee issues; the next phase consists of program and curriculum development, and the final phase is a pilot project, as yet to be defined. In their proposal, the African university leaders note the scarcity of academic programs that address humanitarian issues, and while courses at the University of Durban and Moi University's Centre for Refugee Studies are cited, the consensus is that this field deserves to be promoted actively.

Overall, though, the conclusion is inevitable: the capacity to train professionals to provide leadership and expertise for humanitarian assistance operations, particularly in complex emergencies, is virtually limited to institutions in the North, while access to these training activities is severely limited to interested parties from the South, for reasons of geography as well as financial resources. The need for such training, however, is at least as pressing in the South as in the North. Unless this need is met, the capacity in the South to solve and heal local and regional conflicts will remain well below its potential.

VII. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE: RECONCILING THE IRRECONCILABLE

From our interviews, a nearly unanimous position emerged that the quality and long-term impact of relief efforts in complex emergencies will benefit from the leadership and professional participation of more national and regional staff. There is a willingness on the part of all concerned to work towards greater national participation. The talent and competencies can be found, and if training opportunities are currently rationed, they can be made more readily available. But one more set of obstacles stands in the way of full and equal participation of national, regional and international staff in the planning and delivery of humanitarian aid: the often very disparate conditions of service that affect expatriate and local staff.

These disparities were less jarring when most of the local staff did menial or support work, while professional functions were carried by expatriates. But when national and expatriate physicians, engineers, and scientists work side by side, while the concept of „equal pay for equal work% is visibly swept aside by market forces, an uneasy feeling, if not outright anger, can rapidly take hold.

To some extent, institutions of the North have carried the colonial model of „service overseas%, complete with expatriate allowances and home leave, straight into the post-colonial era. To some extent, also, it simply makes sense to pay people who have to relocate enough to maintain their purchasing power, and to make the transition without loss or gain. We all know that, as a rule, professionals in the North make far more than their counterparts in the South, and if we can live with that thought globally, why not accept it locally? Yet, this sense of uneasiness can not be reasoned away so easily. And particularly the diplomats and professionals from the South who spoke with us voiced their concern about this issue. They understood the economics of it all, but they did not understand the implicit indignities and the Orwellian implications of a pay concept that makes „some more equal than others.% It is not clear whether most large international NGOs are fully aware of the problems involved. The People in Aid Code of Best Practice adopted in 1997 by a group of eleven major NGOs in the United Kingdom, for example, places considerable emphasis on sound human resources policies and on responsibilities towards field staff, but its guidelines deal exclusively with conditions of service for expatriates. Similarly, the Code of Conduct adopted in 1994 by the French Red Cross Society, the ICRC, Caritas Internationalis, Save the Children, the Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, and the World Council of Churches, speaks of ways to involve program beneficiaries, and to build local capacities „by employing local staff", but it does not pronounce itself on the role these local staff should play, nor on the relationship between expatriates and nationals.

Currently, InterAction and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) are collaborating on an international venture called „The Sphere Project" to identify standards and best practices to be employed in humanitarian relief. Several UN agencies have stated their support. The project is a work in progress, and its final shape is still uncertain, but as of late 1998, its program of work („to compile a set of minimum standards covering essential goods and services, implementation of assistance, and stake-holder accountability") did not include the development of standards for human resources management, and certainly no reference is made to the need for common standards for the employment of national and regional staff. Most promising thus far is the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol adopted by a large group of disaster relief groups based in the United States. The signatories have agreed to instruct their representatives to cooperate in the field, to consult with other NGO representatives, and to try to

reach consensus in dealing with a wide range of issues, including local employment practices. These are defined as:

- Wage and Benefit Levels and Economic Consequences
- Political Involvement of Local staff
- Conditions of Employment
- Hiring Diversity
- Training of Local Staff and Beneficiaries.

The signatories to the protocol are now developing discussion papers to identify the underlying issues involved, and this may give the impetus to a further effort to set common standards.

From the perspective of many of our discussants, especially those from the South, it would seem that such standards, in order to be effective and practical at the same time, should be based on two complementary principles:

- **ensure equity in terms of employment conditions on site, and**
- **allow staff to maintain their domestic commitments.**

The first principle would imply that employing organizations would provide, to staff doing equal or comparable work, the same standards of on-site housing, medical care, life and accident insurance, access to consumer goods, and per diem to cover daily expenses. The second principle entails that pay would be set with reference to previous earnings and the prevailing rates in the country of origin. Thus, all staff, national and expatriate, would live under the same equitable and comparable levels of (relative) comfort and material wellbeing in the context of the relief operation, but at the same time, everyone could send home or save an amount that would match expectations in their own context.

In this manner, one can avoid the kind of excessive payments to national staff that might distort the local labor market and siphon good people away from valuable work in their own community. At the same time, their dignity is visibly acknowledged. If expatriate staff members are willing to live soberly, and if their agency displays a management culture of accountability and frugality, the inherent tensions between national and expatriate staff can be much reduced. An investment in the training of local staff would further demonstrate that they are regarded as essential members of the team.

In all this, transparency is essential. Nationals should be involved in local salary surveys, for example, and pay rates should be in the public domain. Many of the people whom we interviewed emphasized that openness, a frank acknowledgement that disparities exist, would go a long way in helping national staff to accept the injustices of the global market. At the same time, the employing organizations would have to make a major effort to align their benefit structure for national and expatriate staff. Far too often, one learns that insurance and health coverage for national staff are either non-existent or minimal.

If, moreover, most employers would concentrate on the recruitment of national and regional staff through secondment arrangements with existing institutions or companies, these principles would be even easier to implement. The secondment contract with the releasing institution would ensure that a candidate's salary and benefits would be reimbursed in full for the time of the contract, and the employing aid agency would cover all expenses and allowances on site, at the same level as for expatriate staff doing comparable work.

RECOMMENDATIONS: BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CADRES

A broad range of people with a strong commitment to peace and development has participated in the discussions that led to this paper. Taking into account some of the ideas they have generated, the Center on International Cooperation may wish to present the following recommendations:

- The international community, and particularly donor countries, should actively pursue a policy of „promoting local defense mechanisms% in complex crises, balancing the need for external intervention with the need to empower local coping strategies, in order to pave the way to a transition from aid to rehabilitation and development.

- In doing so, donor countries should channel their resources to those inter-governmental and non-governmental agencies that consider capacity building an integrated element of their response to complex crises, and that have a track record of doing as they say.
- As an incentive for their implementing agencies, donor countries should include demonstrated success in local capacity building as a key indicator to judge the relevance of funding proposals for complex crises interventions, and treat capacity building as an essential benchmark for purposes of monitoring, evaluation and continued funding.
- Donor countries should make it clear in this context that they consider the employment and development of national and regional staff as a key element of any capacity building strategy.
- Donor countries should support the efforts of IGOs and NGOs to maintain a high level of preparedness by earmarking funds specifically for both training and proactive recruitment programs.
- Donor countries should, at the same time, support institutions that have the capacity or potential to provide training in humanitarian assistance to professionals from the South, and preferably in the south.
- Aid agencies, both inter-governmental and non-governmental, should make every effort (if they are not already doing so) to involve national and regional staff in every aspect of their operations in response to complex crises, as part of an exit strategy founded on support for local coping mechanisms and local rehabilitation capacity.
- Aid agencies should develop proactive recruitment programs, actively building links with institutions and associations in the South that could serve as recruitment sources, and developing contractual instruments for „secondments%” that will allow for the temporary redeployment of professionals in the South from their regular employer to the agency concerned.
- Aid agencies should seek or expand partnerships with development agencies, development NGOs, academia, and the private sector, North and South, in order to develop both the policies and the practical tools needed to integrate national capacity building into their delivery of assistance in complex emergencies.
- Aid agencies should ensure that their terms of employment for national, regional and international professional staff provide for equal and equitable conditions of service on site, and for adequate means to meet domestic obligations. Particular attention should be paid to such benefits as health insurance and insurance against accidental injury or death. All staff, regardless of origin, should have equal access to training and learning activities appropriate for their duties and responsibilities. Hiring as well as remuneration policies should be transparent, and staff should be given a voice in their design.
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- Academic institutions in the North that currently offer programs in humanitarian assistance should seek out partnerships with institutions in the South, not just to share their knowledge and experience, but also to gain from the additional dimensions and insights this type of exposure can bring.
- These partnerships should have the purpose of increasing access for professionals from the South to programs they consider relevant, and to build the capacity of institutions in the South to develop and deliver such programs as a meaningful contribution to regional and national capacity building.
- Such partnerships could also serve as a forum to reach further global consensus on norms, standards, and best practice, which could then be introduced into curricula. As the academic „consortia%” of the North expand their network to the South, they might bring potential employers into the discussion, and agree on a common core curriculum that reflects current needs as well as knowledge.
- Ultimately, this might lead to a „certification%” program recognized by a wide range of humanitarian aid agencies as a helpful tool in assessing the qualifications of candidates for „standby cadres%” from the South.

FROM IDEAS TO ACTION: PROPOSAL FOR A PILOT PROJECT

In order to test the validity and viability of the findings and recommendations set out in this report, the Center on International Cooperation might, as a next step, consider initiating the design and implementation of a modest pilot project with components such as:

- A funding source committed to the concept of national capacity building as a key element of effective humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies.
- One or more regional institutions that wish to expand their ability to deliver humanitarian assistance in the context of their overall responsibilities for peace and development in their region.
- One or more humanitarian aid agencies interested in strengthening the role of national and regional staff in the design and delivery of their programs.
- A small group of training institutions and universities in the North and the South that are interested in collaborating on the development and delivery of humanitarian assistance training that reflects the needs and requirements of professionals in the South.
- A group of institutions in the South, public and private, that are interested in releasing their professional staff for training in humanitarian assistance, and that are willing to place their staff, once trained, on „standby“ for service on pre-arranged contracts with humanitarian aid agencies.

The objective of the pilot project would be to identify interested parties in each category, and to bring about a process of discussions and negotiations leading to an alliance of like-minded people and institutions. The alliance could become the nucleus of a small-scale „standby“ network. This network should be „owned“ by all parties equally:

- it would provide start-up financial support;
- it would initiate the development and delivery of new and meaningful training opportunities for professionals from the South;
- it would provide a learning and training opportunity to public and private entities willing to make their professional staff available for „standby“ service;
- it would create an initial limited pool of well prepared professionals from the South who could be released at short notice;
- it would initiate basic contractual arrangements to make this possible; and
- it would represent a commitment from the participating humanitarian aid agencies to utilize the network as a key recruitment source.

Should this pilot project prove to be successful, it stands to reason that it would further expand on its own, and it is to be hoped to make a meaningful contribution to people's efforts to recover from complex emergencies.

Annex I

Terms of Reference

Consultancy on Regional and National Staff

Recruitment and Capacity-Building for Humanitarian Assistance

„Resources for Humanitarian Assistance“ Project

Center on International Cooperation

New York University

In September 1997, the Center on International Cooperation convened a meeting on „Resources for Humanitarian Assistance“, which produced a set of recommendations on issues of management, coordination, and financing. As a follow-up to that meeting, the Center is seeking to develop strategies to ensure that the core competencies of humanitarian provider agencies are maintained and that the resources are available for an effective response to humanitarian crises.

One strong recommendation from the September meeting was for the strengthening and utilization of national and regional capacities in developing countries, in order to build a cadre or reserve of people who could respond at short notice to humanitarian emergencies. In pursuit of this objective, the Center will undertake a feasibility study on Regional and National Staff Recruitment and Capacity-Building for Humanitarian Assistance. Center staff will work with consultants to examine a range of issues related to this topic.

Specifically, the consultants will:

Prepare a paper examining current practice and the potential for growth in creating national and regional cadres in developing countries (as well as in countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS) of professionals who can assume leadership positions in humanitarian operations. Research will

include a review of the literature on this topic as well as interviews with officials of NGOs and intergovernmental agencies, regional organizations, governments and other relevant agencies, from the North and the South, the East and the West. The paper should present:

- the respective comparative advantages and potential drawbacks of using national, regional and international staff in humanitarian operations (citing arguments drawn from the experience of several representative organizations);
- the competencies and skills profiles that would make national and regional staff most attractive to a broad range of potential employers;
- the scope and content of major existing programs to train and prepare national and regional staff from developing countries (as well as from Eastern Europe and the CIS) for humanitarian operations (providing an overview of the most prominent North/South and East/West institutional arrangements currently in place);
- some quantitative indicators of the types and numbers of staff emerging from these programs, and of the extent to which their services are used subsequently;
- a broad and indicative assessment of the potential to expand the number and scope of such programs, taking into account both a) the nature, range and accessibility of the current pools of talent and skills in various countries and regions and b) the institutional and operational capacity of existing national and regional organizations to provide training;
- an initial assessment of the potential demand for an expanded number of national and/or regional staff to take on leadership positions in humanitarian operations, taking into account the views of potential employers interviewed;
- a discussion of the impact on team cohesion of various „local% and „international% remuneration models currently being used in humanitarian operations;
- various options available for strengthening and utilizing regional capacities, including enhanced regional recruitment and training programs;
- proposals for the development of a „regional cadres preparedness and availability% model, based on North/South and West/East arrangements between donors, employers, and training institutions.

Annex II

List of People Interviewed

Belgium

February 17, 1998

- Ms. Patrizia Bocchi, Project Officer Africa, Directorate-General VIII, European Union (EU), Brussels
- Ms. Francesca Mosca, Head of Unit, Directorate-General VIII, EU
- Mr. Mikael Barfod, Head of Strategy, Planning and Policy Analysis, European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO)
- Mr. Robert Cox, Senior Adviser and Operational Coordinator, ECHO

Canada

March 16 to 20

- Ms. Gina Watson, Senior Program Officer, International Humanitarian Assistance, Canadian International Development Agency, Hull, Quebec
- Mr. Melvin Peters, Food Security Program Officer, Oxfam Canada, Ottawa
- Ms. Kate Whiden, International Service Officer, Canadian Red Cross Society,

Ottawa

- Ms. Celina Tuttle, Executive Director, Mines Action Canada, Ottawa
- Ms. Caroline Lavoie, Project Officer, Peace Building Unit, International Humanitarian Assistance, CIDA, Hull, Quebec (interviewed by phone)
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- Mr. Sean Lowrie, Program Officer, Humanitarian Emergencies, CARE, Ottawa

- Mr. Grauri Sreenivasan, Policy Coordinator, Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa
- Mr. Ahmed Farah, Badar Islamic Organization, Ottawa
- Mr. Ahmed Jama, Social Worker (Ex-Director of refugee program in Somalia), Nepean, ON
- Mr. Mohamed A. Yassin, Former Deputy Director, Cooperation Department, African Development Bank
- Individual refugees from Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Rwanda living in Canada were also interviewed.

Cambodia
January 15 and 16

- Mr. Jean-Claude Rogivue, Acting Resident Representative, UNDP
- Mr. Benoit Thierry, Programme Officer, UNDP
- Mr. Timothy Bertotti, Executive Officer, USAID
- Mr. Bill Costello, First Secretary Development Cooperation, Australian Embassy
- Mr. Kazuhiro Nakai, First Secretary, Japanese Embassy
- Ms. Sue Nelson, Acting Head of Division and Senior Democracy Adviser, USAID
- Ms. Friedrun Medert, Head of Delegation, ICRC
- Mr. Peter Poetsma, ICRC
- Mr. Steven Sharp, Country Representative, Pact Cambodia
- Mr. Jon Summers, Representative, The Asia Foundation
- Mr. Harald Wie, Resident Representative, Norwegian People's Aid

Italy
January 27

- Mr. Chris Cushing, Program Manager, Peace-Keeping & Crisis Management, UN Staff College, Turin

March 13

- Ms. Arlene Mitchell, Chief, Training and Career Development, Human Resources Division, World Food Program (WFP), Rome
- Ms. Kartini Oppusunggu, Adviser, Operational Policy and Support Division, WFP
- Ms. Darlene Ferguson Bisson, Officer-in-Charge, Technical Support Service, Operations Department, WFP
- Mr. Pablo Recalde, Chief, Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit, WFP
- Ms. Dyane Dufresne Klaus, Director, Human Resources Division, WFP
- Mr. Jean-Jacques Graisse, Assistant Director General (Operations), WFP

The Netherlands
February 4 to 13

- Mr. Marc Moquette, Senior Policy Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Roel van der Veen, Policy Planning Staff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Jeroen Verheul, Deputy Head, Humanitarian Aid Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Loek de la Rive Box, Director, European Centre for Development Policy

Management (Maastricht)

- Ms. Helena da Silva, Project Officer, Latin American and Caribbean Section, Hivos
- Mr. Martin Doornbos, Professor, Institute of Social Studies/ UNRISD War Torn Societies Project

- Ms. Alexandra Oud, MSF (Netherlands)
- Mr. Eric de Wilde, Senior Staff Member/ Head of Human Resource Development, MSF (Netherlands)
- Mr. Rob van Bentum, Co-ordinator Emergencies, Novib
- Mr. Mario Weima, Policy Adviser, Novib

Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, Norway)
March 2 to 6

- Mr. Niels Dabelstein, Head of Evaluation Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen
- Ms. Eva Asplund, Head of Humanitarian Assistance Division, SIDA, Stockholm
- Ms. Marika Fahlen, Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance, Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, Stockholm

- Ms. Monica Paulson, International Programme Division, Radda Barnen (Swedish Save The Children), Stockholm
- Mr. Aage Eknes, Political Analyst, Oslo
- Ms. Nina Juell, NORAFRIC, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oslo
- Ms. Ragne Birte Lund, Ambassador/Special Adviser on Humanitarian Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo
- Mr. Trygve Nordby, former Head of Norwegian Refugee Council, Oslo (Member of CIC Advisory Group)
- Mr. Terje Steen, Project Officer, Norwegian People's Aid, Oslo
- Mr. Rannveig Spjudvik, Programme Coordinator, International Dept., Norwegian People's Aid, Oslo

Switzerland
March 17 to 27

- Mr. Raymond Fell, Chief, Recruitment and Career Management Section, UNHCR, Geneva
- Mr. Kasidis Rochanakorn, chief, Emergency Preparedness and response Section, UNHCR
- Mr. Mathias Stiefel, Director, War-torn societies Project, UNRISD, Geneva
- Mr. Larry De Boice, Deputy Director, Emergency Response Division, UNDP, Geneva
- Mr. Chris Kaye, Inter-Agency Support Branch, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations, Geneva
- Mr. Harald Siem, Division of Emergency and humanitarian Action, WHO, Geneva
- Mr. Jon Ebersole, International Peace and Security Training Cluster, United Nations Staff College Project, Geneva
- Mr. Guido Gianasso, Director, Human Resources Division, International Organization for Migration, Geneva
- Mr. Hassan Ba, Secretary-General, Synergies Africa, Geneva

Thailand
26 January 1998

- Mr. Rienk Wiersma, Head of Development Cooperation, The Netherlands' Embassy, Bangkok

United States
March 2

- H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Duri, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, New York
-
- H.E. Ambassador Hussein Hassouna, Permanent Observer to the United Nations, League of Arab States, New York

March 3

- Ms. Norah Niland, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations, New York
- Mr. Teferra Shiawi, Senior Humanitarian Early Warning Adviser, OCHA/UN
-
- Mr. Leonard Kapungo, Chief, Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peace-Keeping Operations, UN
- Mr. Mohamud Jama, President, C.C. Horn of Africa Relief, Inc., New York

March 4

- H.E. Ambassador Mokthar Lamani, Permanent Representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to the United Nations, New York
- Mr. Shahid Husain, Senior Adviser, OIC, New York
- Dr. Kevin Cahill, President, Center for International Health and Cooperation, New York
- Ms. Elizabeth Gibbons, Senior Policy Officer, UNICEF, New York
- Dr. Omotayo Olaniyan, Senior Economist, Organization of African Unity, New York
- H.E. Ambassador Paul Mukasa-Ssali, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, New York

March 5

- Ms. Patricia A. Bittner, Program Management Officer, Emergency Preparedness Program, PAHO/WHO, Washington DC
- Ms. Nicole Ball, Fellow, Overseas Development Council, Washington DC
- Mr. Claude I. Salem, Program Officer, Capacity Building for Africa, World Bank, Washington DC

March 12

- H.E. Ambassador Carlos dos Santos, Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations, New York

April 2

- Mr. Luiz da Costa, Chief, Staffing, UN/DPKO, New York
- H.E. Ambassador Yusuf Ismail Khalaf, former Somali Ambassador to Iran, New York
- H.E. Ambassador Gideon Dayinamura, Permanent Representative of Rwanda

to the United Nations

- H.E. Abdiraheem A. Farah, former Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, United Nations
- Mr. Abdillahi Haji Ahmed, NGO Consultant

May 6

- Ms. Marianne Buenaventura, Program Assistant, Great Lakes Region, International Rescue Committee (IRC), New York
- Mr. Art Carlson, Engineering Coordinator, Rwanda Program, IRC
- Mr. Harald Northrup, Program Officer for Europe and the CIS, IRC
- Mr. Andrew Roberts, Regional Recruitment Officer, IRC
- Mr. Semir Tanovic, Program Officer, East Africa and Asia, IRC