



GLOBAL INTERVENTION IN HUMANITARIAN DISASTER: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on global intervention in humanitarian disasters. Records reveal that both man-made and natural disasters are rife in the world today. Disasters like wars, flood, famine, fire, hurricanes, tsunamis, landslides, typhoons, cyclones, and plane crashes etc., are common occurrences in human society. Since these disasters tend to strip most of the victims of the wherewithal of survival, they usually need the assistance of other individuals or institutions to survive. The help that is available is usually based on the degree of severity of the disaster, who the victims are, the region of the disaster and the capacity for response of stakeholders in the humanitarian industry. It should also be noted that aid occurs at many levels which spans local and international organisations as well as governmental agencies. This study is limited to exploring the intervention initiative of humanitarian organisations to disasters from the angle of relevant empirical literature. Humanitarian actors' interest, resources, organisational structure, and functions affect their behaviour and ability to cooperate with other actors in a complex emergency. Humanitarian actors may act in concert or in contention with one another, or somewhere in between. Conflict of interest, competition for resources, incompatible organisational structures and cultures and overlapping functions are the challenges that the actors themselves bring to humanitarian operations.

INTRODUCTION

A humanitarian crisis (or "humanitarian disaster") is an event or series of events which represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. Armed conflicts, epidemics, famine, natural disasters and other major emergencies may all involve or lead to a humanitarian crisis (Minear, 2002). There is no simple categorisation of humanitarian crises. Different communities and agencies tend to have definitions related to the concrete situations they face. A local fire service will tend to focus on issues such as flooding and weather induced crises. Medical and health-related organisations are naturally focused on sudden crises to the health of a community. An ongoing or lingering pandemic may amount to a humanitarian crisis, especially where there are increasing levels of virulence, or rates of infection as in the case of AIDS, bird flu or Tuberculosis. Major health-related problems such as cancer, global warming typically require an accentuated or punctuated mass-event to justify a label of "crisis" or "disaster" (Pattison, 2010).

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) lists categories which include different types of natural disasters, technological disasters (i.e., hazardous material spills, Chernobyl-type of nuclear accidents, chemical explosions) and long-term man-made disasters related to "civil strife, civil war and international war"(Handbook on Humanitarian Crisis). Internationally, the humanitarian response sector has tended to distinguish between natural disasters and complex emergencies which are related to armed conflict and wars (Minear, 2002). Recent humanitarian crises include the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake (Asian tsunami), the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Rwanda genocide, Sri Lankan civil war, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Afghan Civil War, Darfur Conflict, and Iraq War to mention a few.



Conceptualising Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention or action could be defined as an act or feelings towards ameliorating the suffering, injuries both physiological and psychological that might have been inflicted on people either through wars, natural disasters or the incidence of diseases. Through ages, there had been instances of people through impulse or imperative action, who intervene believing in the sanctity of humanity to ameliorate the suffering of people who are wounded, maimed through war or people who had been displaced internally or people who had fled and cross international borders seeking asylum in another or neighbouring country (Minear, 2002; Pattison, 2010).

There are some schools of thought that believe in humanitarian imperative while others believe in humanitarian impulse. An humanitarian impulse may allow other considerations to prevail in deciding whether he should assist or not while an humanitarian imperative which some NGOs and a number of individuals subscribed to do not consider any other reason other than providing assistance whenever it is needed without minding personal safety or negative potential consequences (Smillie & Minear, 2003).

The activities of Henri Dunant who saw more than 40,000 Austrian and French soldiers scattered on a battle field in Solferino in the second half of the 19th Century triggered off the foundation of the Red-Cross. Dunant was able to convince emperor Napoleon III of the need and imperativeness of assisting those that had injured themselves in the war. He was able to convince Emperor Napoleon III to render the first official proclamation regarding the right of those suffering from war injuries. Napoleon released all the Austrian doctors captured during the war to go and attend to their injured soldiers and the sick. Dunant went ahead to establish the Red-Cross in 1864 (Moorehead, 1988).

A political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1773) “found the seeds for humanitarian actions in the nature of human kind. He claimed that it is pity which carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer ... commiseration is nothing but a sentiment that put us in the place of him who suffers”.

Religion all over the world, be it Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism believes in the principles of human conduct that requires a person to acknowledge his or her obligation towards the needy without consideration to self-interest or pay off. The parable of the Good Samaritan in the Holy Bible is a very good example of Christian religion acknowledging the need to always support the needy either in sickness or injury sustained through an act.

Cicero (106-43 BC), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and some modern day scholars are advocates of humanitarian imperatives. St. Thomas Aquinas laid the foundation for challenging a sovereign authority's maltreatment of its people. Hersch Lauterpasht interpreted Aquinas as believing that “justification of the state is in its service to the individual: a king who is unfaithful to his duty forfeits his claim to obedience”. This statement recognises one bond common to all mankind with rights and obligations and the reason for compromising the integrity of the sovereign authority should that authority refuses to fulfill its duty to the welfare of its people.

Hugo Grotius, a Dutch man who is now acknowledged as the father of international law combined the idea of Aquinas who called for civil disobedience towards a malevolent king and the idea of one common humanity. Grotius (1625) *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (on the right of war and peace) “recognised as lawful the use of force by one or more state to stop the maltreatment by a state of its own nationals when the conduct was so brutal and large scale as to shock the conscience of the community of nations”.

The Gains of Humanitarian Intervention

The idea of humanitarian actions has yielded positively over time. It was humanitarian actions and some other factors that led to the demise of slavery and imperialism. It is believed that institutionalisation and codification of humanitarian action was the product of



the West but the West could not claim monopoly of humanitarian actions (Minear, 2002, Pattison, 2010).

There are ample evidence of humanitarian idea in Africa and throughout non-Western world. Oral history, folklore songs revealed many instances of generosity in times of famine and disease. It should be recalled that the first humanitarian operation (late 18th – early 19th century include the 1793 relief operation for French Aristocrats falls to the Santo Domingo during a slave uprising; the 1812 earthquake in Caracas, the United States organised assistance by boat and in 1821 aid for the Greeks (only) during their war against the Turks. The Italian war of unification especially the battle of Folferious in 1859 and Heris Dunant's Help mark a decisive moment on the modern concept of humanitarian actions. His effort led to the formation of Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (Moorehead, 1988).

The Matrix of Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises. The primary objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity. It may therefore be distinguished from development aid, which seeks to address the underlying socioeconomic factors which may have led to a crisis or emergency (Waters, 2001). Humanitarian aid is delivered by governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, and other non-governmental humanitarian agencies according to humanitarian principles set out in Resolution 46/182 of the United Nations General Assembly (for governments and UN agencies), and in *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (for NGHAs) (Minear, 2002; Cottey, 2008).

They are funded by donations from individuals, corporations, governments and other organisations. The funding and delivery of humanitarian aid is increasingly being organised at an international level to facilitate faster and more effective responses to major emergencies affecting large numbers of people (e. g. Central Emergency Response Fund). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinates the international humanitarian response to a crisis or emergency pursuant to Resolution 46/182 of the United Nations General Assembly (Minear, 2002).

The Sphere Project handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, which was produced by a coalition of leading non-governmental humanitarian agencies, lists the following principles of humanitarian action:

- The right to life with dignity
- The distinction between combatant and non-combatants
- The principle of non-refoulement

The Quality Project, based on the Quality Compass, is an alternative project to Sphere, taking into account the side effects of standardisation and those of an approach based on "minima" rather than the pursuit of quality.

Every organisation participating in humanitarian aid operations has its own particular rules, regulations and preventive plans of action for keeping their aid workers as safe as possible. Nevertheless, the dangers and threats inherent to these kinds of operations have always existed and are not easy to minimise as each field of operation is unique. Even in areas with relative calm and tranquility, violence can suddenly appear (Roberts, 1999).



The world of humanitarian action, as exhibited in the mass media is one of refugees and displaced people all over the world looking hungry, traumatised, emaciated and living in tents and camps while humanitarian agencies both governmental and non-governmental are trying to provide relief materials such as clothing, food, drugs and other forms of assistance. Through the media, we have been made to know that there is humanitarian crisis in Dafur, Sudan, the Palestine, Kosovo, Rwanda, Bosnia and a host of other places around the world.

There are several wars raging around the world. These wars have taken millions of lives especially that of women and children. Relief workers are faced with a daunting task, risking their lives to treat the needy in environments where “roads are often impassable, food and medical supplies are pilfered by combatants and pharmaceutical firms still send unusable, outdated medicine in order to be able to claim charitable tax deductions” (Weiss and Collins, 2000).

There is a great concern all over the world that a greater number of people lack clean water or sanitation and are chronically hungry. There are fewer resources and hopelessness which gives rise to environmental degradation, massive migration and quick spread of diseases not adequately addressed. There is increased conflict all over the world with the attendant proliferation of light and conventional weapons.

Humanitarians provide relief and protection to victims of war or natural disasters. In each crisis that occurs, the needs are different “The challenges and dilemma of humanitarian assistance in war zones presents tortuous tradeoffs to policy makers, to those working directly with victims” (Weiss and Collins, 2000). There are many options one would want to take. Will one take noncombatants to a safe place where they could be provided with food or allow belligerents to cart away the food supplied? Will one focus solely on the provision of food and medicines and turn eyes away from gross violation of human rights in the refugee camp such as rape and torture? In deciding these options, one would tend to consider the agenda of one’s employer (Wiener, 2000).

The international humanitarian system comprises governmental, institutional and individual actors. All these actors interact with one another and at times compete with one another with a view to render humanitarian assistance to victims of disaster either man made or natural (Waters, 2001).

The task of an humanitarian organisation or worker include “gathering data about the severity of a crisis, negotiating a frame work with the warring parties, providing aid, mobilising the necessary resources, orchestrating the aid effort, delivering the goods, staffing the operation, and assuring appropriate accountability” (Waters, 2001, Weiss and Collins, 2000). Most often, war becomes a barrier in providing relief assistance to war victims and non-combatants, as a result of these; humanitarian assistance may be augmented by a military presence. When there is an armed conflict or natural disasters such as flood, hurricane, humanitarians face challenges that are far more acute. In war zone for example, relief agencies may be unable to maintain impartiality or political neutrality, equal access to all non-combatants or adequate communications with belligerents (Falk, 2005).

Impartiality means helping without discrimination as to ethnic, religious beliefs or political opinion. Neutrality on the other hand means not taking sides in conflict situation or engaging at any time in controversies linked to an armed conflict. Neutrality does not mean remaining silent in defending the victims’ rights especially when those rights are being grossly violated by belligerents (Falk, 2005).

There is a view that all human beings deserve respect and dignity and should be treated as such. Humanitarian is the antithesis of the “us versus them” mentality that characterises ethnicity and ethnic nationalism or racism. A humanitarian therefore is one who is devoted to human welfare or one who engages in promoting human welfare (Waters, 2001; Weiss and Collins, 2000).



Statement of the Problem

The global interventions during humanitarian disasters have been rather pathetic and haphazard. There had been slow responses to humanitarian crisis such as plane crashes, collapsed buildings, flood, Tsunamis, Typhoons, cyclones, wars and other man made or natural disasters. Despite the institutional frame work set up by various international bodies and national governments, inadequate funding, lack of local donor agencies and modern equipment that could help in ameliorating the sufferings of disaster victims has been the order of the day around the world. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost and hundreds of thousands of people have been rendered homeless as a result of these problems.

Microcosmic Intervention in Humanitarian Disaster

In responding to humanitarian crisis locally, governments at the federal, state and local levels have played significant role while responding to humanitarian crisis in all countries. Also, various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) especially the local Red Cross also have a special *modus operandi* for responding to humanitarian crisis be it man-made or natural (Waters, 2001).

At the federal level, the National Emergency Management Agencies coordinate the management and response to humanitarian crisis at the federal level whose functions include:

- a. Formulating policy on all activities relating to disaster management in the country and coordinating the plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disaster at national level.
- b. Coordinating and promoting research activities relating to disaster management at national level.
- c. Monitoring the state of preparedness of all organisations or agencies which may contribute to disaster management in the country.
- d. Collating data from relevant agencies so as to enhance forecasting, planning and field operations of disaster management.
- e. Educating and informing the public on disaster preventions and control measure.
- f. Coordinating the activities of all voluntary organisations engaged in emergency relief operations in any part of the country.
- g. Receiving financial and technical aid from international organisations and non-governmental agencies for the purpose of disaster management in the country.
- h. Distributing emergency relief materials to victims of natural or other disasters and assist in the rehabilitation of the victims where necessary.
- i. Liaising with the UNs Disaster Reduction Organisations or such other international bodies for the reduction of natural and other disaster.

There are three levels of disaster that are recognised and they are:

1. **Minor Disaster:** i.e., disasters that are within the response capabilities of local government.
2. **Major Disaster:** i.e., disasters that exceeds the capabilities of local governments but are within the capability of state governments.
3. **Catastrophic Disaster:** any disaster that will require massive state and federal assistance.

It should be noted that in categories 1 and 2, the federal assistance is offered in forms of relief materials or cash assistance. In category 3, through a presidential declaration, the military may be mobilised through the Disaster Reaction Unit (DRU) which are based throughout military formations in the country.



At the state level, the State Emergency Management Authority serves as the coordinating body or a link with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health and its medical facilities, the Red Cross, the Police Force, the Fire Service, Civil Defence and other key partners. It is also noted that State Emergency Management Authority provides funds to meet part or all costs in providing relief materials to victims of humanitarian disaster. Furthermore, it should be stated that the Federal and State Emergency Management Authority serves as a coordinating body to other organisations that are in the field of humanitarian work (Kapila, 2005).

Coordination is about intelligent sharing of information and the frank constructive discussion of issues and possible course of actions among independent organisations with a common purpose. Coordination in the humanitarian world is based on mutual respect for the competencies and agreed responsibilities of each party and the willingness to cooperate in addressing and solving problems in pursuit of a common aim. Coordination in the humanitarian world also helps to determine who will take on a task when two or more organisations are ready and able to do it (Mowafi et al, 2007).

Macroscopic Global Intervention in Humanitarian Disaster

At the global level, intervention in humanitarian disasters has largely been undertaken by the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an organ of the United Nations (UN). The body was created in 1951 among other non-governmental international agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Oxfam, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Save The Children Federation, World Health Organisation (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP) among others. These agencies intervene in complex humanitarian emergencies such as refugee flow and its attendant problems, large scale internal displacement occasioned by human right violations, ethnic cleansing (genocide) and all other human right abuses (Olagunju, 2006; Adekunle, 2008).

All disasters make people flee their homes to seek for refuge elsewhere either by crossing international borders which qualifies them to attain refugee status or as internally displaced people if they have not crossed borders. Such people's condition warrants international interventions to preserve human dignity. The pattern of responses to humanitarian crisis shows the UNHCR as the custodian of the mandate to take care of refugees in their countries of asylum. Refugee camps are set up where refugees are taken care of by providing them with their basic needs for survival. Various humanitarians supply relief materials to these refugees to ameliorate their sufferings (Cohen & Deng, 1998).

Furthermore, there had been military interventions in form of peace keeping operations in troubled spot around the world. At the height of the Kosovo crisis, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1999, NATO conducted a 78-day air bombing inside Serbia proper, without UN or (OSCE) Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe oversight or legitimation, to end what it deemed a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. Another issue that arises in humanitarian intervention globally is the sending of diplomatic missions to warring factions urging them to solve their problems through dialogue rather than engaging in carnage or wars of destruction that brings about hardship and great suffering on large number of people (Mowafi et al, 2007).

There is also the establishment of international courts for criminal justice to bring to book war criminals who had violated international humanitarian laws or laws of war. The United Nations Security Council has established two of such courts. The tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda on 17 July 1998, a Diplomatic conference convened by the United Nations in Rome adopted the statute of the International Criminal Court. For the first time in history, a permanent international court has jurisdiction over crimes committed not only in the course of international armed conflicts but also during non-international armed conflicts. More so, economic sanctions or blockades has been a continuous trend within the United Nations to respond to humanitarian crisis that occurs in several countries



where there had been sustained crisis which had resulted in mass dislocations of people or mass killings which calls for international interventions (Mowafi et al, 2007).

Main Actors in Humanitarian Responses

The following scenarios are valuable for understanding the diversity of actors and issues in the humanitarian system. A local health care worker in a Zairean refugee camp counsels a Rwandan mother about the health needs of her sick baby. He treats the infant with medical supplies donated by the U.N. International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in a tent provided by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The local staff are part of the medical team put together by Medecins Sans frontiere (MSF doctors without borders) a non-governmental organisation that split from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) more than four decades ago, an ICRC principle is to wait for the consent of local governments before providing assistance; MSF does not wait (Kapila, 2005).

In the humanitarian world, money and politics merge a continent away. While the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), an inter-governmental organisation contemplates its annual budgets and recipient list, setting aside a substantial donation to MSF. The mood is somber, however, in Washington as personnel in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) worry about their jobs and their relief and development programmes. In Paris, administrators of medicines du Monde (MDM or doctors of the World) a relief and development NGO founded by former MSF staff are troubled by their increasingly successful but seemingly unethical behaviour in seducing the media so as to increase donations. They are also worried about a government elsewhere relying too heavily on MDM for the care of the poor and not taking sufficient responsibility on itself.

Elsewhere, few donators who covered the Rwandan massacre struggle to come to terms with what they have witnessed and continue to witness; "if you think we did enough" one journalist wonders, it's not our fault that the world did not react to the massacre (Kapila, 2005).

The entanglement of issues and actors outlined above can frustrate analyses. Local humanitarians rely upon NGOs and the United Nations for supplies and salaries. Relief and development NGOs disagree over guiding codes of conduct in war zone. The mission of NGOs such as the United Nations is subject to the interest of state and party politics. The media have ability to draw attention and donations towards or away from human tragedy. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the field continue to provide relief regardless of whether or not the safety of their mission is supported or compromised by military involvement (Kapila, 2005).

Complete humanitarian challenges require multiple responses from a variety of actors, none of whom is capable of responding alone yet some are willing to forfeit control of their operations to a centralised coordinating authority. Governments including their militaries, intergovernmental organisations such as the UN, ECHO and NATO and non-governmental organisations such as the ICRC, CARE, MSF and Catholic Relief Services represent the three basic categories of actors that respond to complex humanitarian emergencies. Within each development or agency of an individual organisation, there are said to be three distinct tiers of donations and authorities:

1. the tiers that formulate policy;
2. the tiers that design plans for implementing the policy; and
3. the tiers that implements the plans.

The actors within each organisation and its agencies are institutionally conditioned to be the problem associated with humanitarian crisis differently from actors in other organisations or in other agencies within the former own organisation substructure. An actor's interest, resources, organisational structure, and functions affect his behaviour and ability to cooperate with other actors in a complex emergency. Actors may act in concert or



in contention with one another, or somewhere in between. Conflict of interest, competition for resources, incompatible organisational structures and cultures and overlapping functions are the challenges that the actors themselves bring to humanitarian operations (Mowafi et al., 2007).

Governmental, Non-Governmental, Military and Inter-Governmental Interest in Humanitarian Responses

According to Weiss and Collins (2000) in their book "Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention" Second Edition, they contended that "The interest of humanitarian actors is what motivates them to respond to a plea for help. What an actor states to be its motivation for responding may not be the primary explanation for its participation. Concealed motivations or hidden agendas mean that an actor may pull out of a humanitarian mission or threaten to do so if its unexpressed interests are not being served".

Washington's involvement in Somalia and the withdrawal of its troops later is an example of changing priorities in U.S interest. Its initial involvement may have served the perceived interest of decision makers particularly a lame duck president to demonstrate proactive American leadership to the world. Somalia seemed a relatively safe arena for such posturing, at least in comparison to Bosnia. However, as the bodies of dead U.S service men were dropped through the streets of Mogadishu, the interest in demonstrating leadership paled in comparison with the public relation (Weiss & Collins, 2000).

Also, Italy's contribution during the Bosnia crisis was to allow NATO the use of its airfields. Italy threatened to discontinue open use of its landing ships if it was not made part of the multi-National contact group mediating the peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio. Humanitarian concern was mixed with a desire to play a larger diplomatic role, which Italy perceived would enhance its stature as a player in international affairs (Weiss & Collins, 2000).

Government Interest in Humanitarian Crisis

Primarily, governments have an interest in protecting the state against internal conflict or civil unrest and external interference in the states affairs. External conflicts that yield immense human suffering touch upon the interests of states in different ways. Voluntary participation in humanitarian operations may reflect a reasoned national or material interests in the region of conflict, such as the production of oil reserves in Kuwait or the preservation of European stability through peace keeping in Kosovo, former colonial relations with the country in crisis, such as Belgium's and France's involvement in Rwanda, USA's in Liberia and Italy's in Somalia and Albania, a national identity that considers humanitarian assistance a moral responsibility, such as that of Norway; a need to acquire foreign exchange currency through payment for peace keepers as in the case of Bangladesh, or a desire to rekindle military honour as in Argentina.

Humanitarian assistance allows a government to appease a public that morally demands that its government "do something" while avoiding the commitment of military recourse. Due to the nature of democratic societies, political leaders have an interest in satisfying the will of voters and special interest groups. Governments can be shared into involvement in humanitarian operations or constrained from involvement by public protection, particularly if soldiers' lives are at risk. Therefore, election years, the configuration of conservatives and liberals within a government and the influence of politically or financially powerful minorities can have an impact on the contributions that governments are willing and able to make towards humanitarian actors and related peace keeping efforts. U.S. involvement in such efforts in the Middle East since the 1960s has satisfied various economic interests as well as the Jewish lobby in the United States. The U.S military intervention in Haiti in 1994 ameliorated the influx of Haitians refugees onto Florida's southern shoreline at the same time as it relieved political pressures brought to



bear by the black congressional caucus and the Haitian diaspora (Bolton, Brass & Murray, 2007).

On a more abstract level, governments also have an interest in maintaining the integrity of the international system of states which hinges upon respect for state sovereignty and the principles of no interference as enshrined in article 2 (7) of the U.N charter. Each time the U.N Security Council invokes chapter VII (the legitimate use of force) for humanitarian reasons, the legitimacy and sanctity of the state sovereignty lose ground to basic human rights (Sphere project, 2006).

States are the most powerful actors in the humanitarian system and often least predictable. Because the motivations for a state's involvement in a humanitarian crisis dramatically vary across time and among different government as a result of political, economic, geographic, social and security considerations, however, the other actors in the humanitarian system cannot rely upon states for consistent support behaviour.

Non-governmental Organisations and Humanitarian Intervention

The term "Non-Governmental Organisation" or NGO came into currency in 1945 because of the need for the U.N to differentiate in its charter between participation rights for inter-governmental specialised agencies and those of international private organisations. At the U.N, virtually all types of private bodies can be recognised as NGOs. They only have to be independent from government control, not seeking to challenge government either as a political party or by a narrow focus on human right, nonprofit making and non-criminal (Weiss & Collins, 2000).

The structures of NGOs vary considerably. They can be global hierarchies with either a relatively strong central authority or a more loose federal arrangement. Alternatively, they may be based in a single country and operate transnationally. With the improvement in communication, more locally based group, referred to as grass-root organisations or community-based organisations, have become active at the national or even the global level. Increasingly this occurs through the formation of coalitions. There are international umbrellas NGOs providing an institutional structure for different NGOs that do not share a common identity (Weiss & Collins, 2000).

At times NGOs are contrasted with social movements. Much as proponents of social movement may wish to see movements as being more progressive and more dynamic than NGOs, this is a false dichotomy. NGOs are components of social movements. Similarly, civil society is the broader concept to cover all social activity by individuals, groups and movements. NGOs are so diverse and so controversial that it is not possible to support or be opposed to all NGOs. They may claim to be the voice of the people and to have greater legitimacy than governments, but this can only be a plausible claim under authoritarian government. However, their role as participants in democratic debate does not depend upon any claim to representative legitimacy (Mowafi et al, 20070).

NGO is typically found on cooperative rather than commercial basis. The world Bank define NGOs as private organisations that provide activities to alleviate suffering, promote the poor, provide basic social service, undertake community development projects amongst others. Many diverse types of bodies are now described as being NGOs. There is no generally accepted definition of an NGO and the term carries different connotations, in different circumstances. Nevertheless, there are some fundamental features. Clearly an NGO must be independent from the direct control of any government. In addition, there are those other generally accepted characteristics that exclude particular types of bodies from consideration.

An NGO will not be constituted as a political party; it will be nonprofit making and it will not be a criminal group, in particular it will be non-violent. These characteristics apply in general usage, because they match the conditions for recognition by the United Nations. The boundaries can sometimes be blurred: some NGOs may in practice be closely identified with a political party; many NGOs generate income from commercial activities, notably



consultancy contacts or sales of publications: and a small number of NGOs may be associated with violent political protests. Nevertheless an NGO is never constituted as a governing bureaucracy, a party, a company, a criminal organisation or a guerilla group. An NGO may therefore be defined as an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis for some common purpose, other than achieving government, office, making money or illegal activities. NGOs are non-state, non-profit, private organisations whose principles mandates, functions and accountability in responding to civilians in crisis defy any standard organisational form or predictable behaviour. By definition, NGOs are not staffed by civil servant, although there is a career progression among NGOs personnel some of whom spend their entire active careers in the voluntary sector (Weiss & Collins, 2000, Gierycz, 2010).

Many international NGOs are unfailing defenders of single issues such as gender equality, humanitarian assistance, development, human rights or the environment. A well-funded NGO may not necessarily complement coordinated action in the field. What other humanitarian actors and war victims may need from an NGO may not coincide with the desires or interest of the NGOs main financial contributors. Non-combatants in a safe area may need a rebuilt sewage system to stop the spread of diseases but NGO donors may restrict the NGO's activity to providing food. When one consider that there may be more than 200 NGOs in an area providing food and few working on water sanitation, it is easy to understand the need for more centralised coordination of humanitarian activity. Staff experienced in field operations know the needs of the people through close mark with local humanitarians, but field staff missions can be held hostage by donors. Somalia represents an example of the need for NGO coordination (Weiss & Collin, 2000; Gierycz, 2010).

The cooperative for American Relief to Everywhere (CARC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision, the ICRC, World Food Programme (WFP) and the UNHCR formed largely on food distributions which were clearly needed; but meanwhile, other programmes were comparatively underrepresented: water, sanitation, essential drugs, care findings, public health worker outreach and other health interventions.

International NGOs have grown rapidly in number, character and influence. In the mid-90s, between 15,000 and 20,000 NGOs were operating in three or more countries with funding from sources in more than one country. The large number of NGOs is one indication of the broad range of interests that they bring to humanitarian operations. The list of major international NGOs that respond regularly to complex emergencies include Catholic Relief services, Lutheran federation, Oxfam, World Vision, Medicines Sans Frontier and Safe the Children Federation.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is a unique NGO. Although it receives considerable funding from governments and government representatives sit on the ICRC's board; the interest of the ICRC remain independently humanitarian. The ICRC is the most coherent and perhaps has the most parsimonious list of interest motivating its behaviour during humanitarian missions. Where there is suffering, the ICRC will respond, its interest are operationalised with strict adherence to apolitical principles, operational neutrality and international humanitarian law. The ICRC is the custodian of the Geneva Convention and its additional protocols. The ICRC philanthropy is political neutrality, impartiality and independence from the interests of the actors. The ICRC employs a steadfast patience in waiting for the approval of host state authorities before intervening in conflict zones (Roberts, 1999).

Inter-governmental Organisations and Humanitarian Interventions

The United Nations is an example of an intergovernmental organisation (IGOs) - a multi-state – created institution designed to further state interests. IGOs benefit states by serving as a forum for state to state dialogue, by reducing the cost of information gathering, and by sending forth guidelines for reciprocal state behaviour. IGOs with humanitarian agendas, such as the United Nations and its agencies, often find themselves in the impossible position



of juggling the political interests of governmental elites with their own mandate to provide relief wherever there is suffering. Although, IGOs theoretically represent the collective interests of all member states, the governments that are able and willing to pledge the highest amount of money to emergency budgets for individual crisis have much to decide about where and how their allocations should be spent.

The larger the IGO and the more diverse its functions, the greater the diversity in interests among its internal organs and member states. The United Nations include virtually all states (188 in 1999) and performs security, economic, social and humanitarian functions. In contrast, the European Commission Humanitarian office mandates only the fifteen members of the European Union (EU) and functions largely to disburse humanitarian aid. NATO is an IGO with restricted membership and security functions that became linked to humanitarian efforts after the end of the Cold War.

The AU, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth of Independent states are examples of regional IGOs responding to regional security challenges as well as to economic, humanitarian and social problems. The OAS, OAU and ECOWAS have increased their involvement in conflict resolution in recent years, partly as a result of developed countries receding security interests in Third World conflicts. Of the IGOs, the United Nations and ECHO are most relevant for understanding humanitarian actions.

Military Interest in Humanitarian Interventions

Although, armed forces are generally considered instruments of societies and governments, they have interests of their own. The armed forces are a highly influential interest group in foreign policy making. Defence budgets have to be justified especially during peace time. Armed forces commanders and politicians with connections with individual defence firms may have interest in demonstrating the continued need for new weaponry and technology and for the maintenance of troop strength which they can do through humanitarian operations (Seybolt, 2007; Bordat, 2009).

As in civilian bureaucracies, in the armed forces career advancement is a primary interest of individual member. A number of U.S soldiers involved in Somalia complained of the seeming overabundance of officers who they believed were using the Somalia operation on a career advancement strategy. Stereotype of military personnel do not readily lend themselves to a humanitarian imaging but there are soldiers who have a personal commitment to helping and who volunteer for duty that allow them to express their humanitarian impulse. Some U.S soldiers who volunteered to provide humanitarian assistance during the Hurricane that devastated Florida in 1991 also came forward for the humanitarian mission in Somalia in 1992 (Waters, 2001; Seybolt, 2007).

In the field, military units can be found holding informational meetings for all humanitarian actors operating in the same area. Military forces have offered technical expertise and sheer labour power to other actors that are short on both. "Bright Star'95 an operation conducted in Egypt was the largest coalition exercise since Desert Storm bringing together veterans of the Gulf War and of interventions in Haiti and Somalia. According to a U.S army commander, "we demonstrate we can work together and we can fight together". The mixture of political, military and humanitarian interest is needless to say not always as complimentary as analysts and the actors themselves would like. Interests can clash in the field and armed forces can turn a relief operation into a theatre of military engagement (Somerville, 2008).

Patterns in Humanitarian Interventions

The United States armed forces unilaterally invaded Iraq for amassing weapon of mass destruction (WMD). They were later joined by the British. The action of the U.S. defying the United Nations conventions has brought about a new trend to intervention in humanitarian crisis. The invasion brought about mass destruction of properties, killing of thousands of people occasioning several displacements of people. The invasion also brought about the



fall of Saddam Hussein regime. Women and children, the aged and innocent citizens suffered and various NGOs reacted to this human catastrophe providing relief materials (Seybolt, 2007; Hehir, 2010).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in Geneva had for decades an article of faith that must be neutral, impartial and independent to fulfill its task. It observes strict rules of secrecy to project its impartiality. Yet in recent times, the ICRC has embarked on an anxious internal debate to decide whether it can any longer maintain that scrupulous attitude. It wants to know whether neutrality, impartiality and humanity still have a universal meaning and a popular resonance; "is it still realistic to claim not to take sides" (Roberts, 1999). The fact that the Red Cross feels forced to discuss such questions is an alarming indication of the degree to which the world has been polarised since September 11, 2000. It is a consequence of the advent of global terrorism and the U.S. led "war against terror" in response.

The question of impartiality is not just a theoretical debate. It has had dramatic consequences particularly in Iraq, where the ICRC closed its operations after few assassinations and a suicide bombing. The ICRC's pulling out of Iraq is all the more dramatic because it managed to stay in the country during the bitter Iran – Iraq War in the 80s, then in the Gulf War. But the situation has changed dramatically. "The political circumstances changed totally after the fall of the old regime", officials posit. "We were practically targeted by proxy. Anything considered related to the western world was resented". ICRC workers see it as a two-sided problem that requires a two-sided solution. "There are people of goodwill on both sides, dedicated to humanitarian values. It is not legitimate to see these two worlds in antagonism" (Roberts, 1999; Seybolt, 2007)

The ICRC like the U.N itself is caught up in the propaganda and counter propaganda of the "war" on terrorism. The true nature of the problem is very much related to the concept "You are either with us or against us". If that is accepted, it is very difficult to demonstrate that there can be a space in the sake of humanity, it is essential to demonstrate that there is still a space for neutrality that can be preserved (Roberts, 1999).

It is the same problem that is confronting the United Nations which is agonising over whether it can continue to control Iraq under the guise of the United States of America. When the military intervention in Iraq was first mooted, there were three essential arguments to justify it under the somewhat ill-defined concepts of international law. One was the imminent threats of weapons of mass destruction; (WMD) the second has a humanitarian intervention to prevent further mass killings by Saddam Hussein; and the third was to reinforce the rule of international law and ensure respect for the United Nations and the resolution of the security council (Marjanovic, 2011).

The threat of weapons of mass destruction was based on extremely flimsy intelligence and even then exaggerated. It was not an imminent threat so the argument that the intervention was humanitarian seemed more plausible. The Human Right Watch, an independent New York based human right organisation, comprehensively dismissed the humanitarian argument in particular and argued that the war was not an action to stop mass killing or prevent imminent slaughter, it said, Mr. Hussein had certainly been guilty of such atrocities before, notably in 1988 when he massacred 100,000 Kurds. But the western world declined to act; as such no such evil was looming in 2003.

All diplomatic alternatives to military intervention were not exhausted; and no attempt was made to charge Saddam Hussein with crimes against humanity, there were inadequate efforts to avoid civilian casualties, and the action was not clearly supported by the U.N or other international bodies. Human Right Watch concluded that calling the action in Iraq humanitarian "breeds cynicism about the use of military force for humanitarian purposes and could be devastating for people in need, for future rescue" (Marjanovic, 2011).

The argument that the war reinforced the rule of international law is not also justified because international law was compromised from the start by the unilateral nature of the US intervention, which was not preserved as legitimate, inside or outside Iraq. International



institutions such as the UN and the ICRC have been caught in an impossible position. If they are forced to choose sides, they will lose their neutrality and thus compromise their own legitimacy.

It is a situation where the end; the creation of a peaceful, stable and democratic Iraq has been tragically compromised by the means, a military invasion led by the world sole super power. For those seeking to provide impartial humanitarian assistance, it presented a terrible dilemma (Marjanovic, 2011).

World Responses to Humanitarian Disaster - The Tsunami Experience

The tsunami exacted a heavy toll on coastal communities and especially fishermen in the region. In India and Thailand, government and civil society organisations were able to mobilise resources and responded as quickly as possible. India also provided assistance to neighbouring countries and was the first nation to respond by sending naval ships and personnel to the countries due to its proximity. The people and governments in the nations of Sri Lanka and Indonesia were to some extent overwhelmed by the enormity of the catastrophe, especially in inaccessible areas (Thomas, 2005).

The first task of governments and humanitarian aid agencies was to ensure access to food and clean water and medical care for the injured. The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that the number of deaths from preventable diseases such as cholera, diphtheria, dysentery and typhoid could rival the death toll from the disaster itself. These diseases are largely spread by loss of normal sanitary facilities, the shared use of inadequate facilities in makeshift refuges and the lack of clean water (Thomas, 2005).

Many usual sources of water were spoiled by salt water, broken by the force of the tsunami, contaminated with bodies of dead people or livestock, requiring water purification equipment or trucking portable water into the affected region. Other high priorities were delivery of medical supplies and personnel to overwhelmed hospitals and clinics, tent shelters and clothing to people who have lost their homes and belongings, and food especially baby food (Thomas, 2005).

Governments, humanitarian organisations, Asian expatriates and individuals around the world scrambled to offer aid and technical support. The World Bank initially estimated the amount of aid needed at 5 million US dollars. Although, countries are providing relief funds. The UN had criticised both the U.S and Europe for allocating inadequate resources. In the wake of the disaster, Australia, India, Japan and the United States formed a coalition to co-ordinate the effort to streamline immediate assistance. However, at the Jakarta summit on 6th January, the coalition transferred responsibilities to the United Nations (Thomas, 2005).

Criticism of Donor Response to Tsunami Crisis

The U.N reportedly categorised charitable contributions of rich countries as “stingy” even though the responses were positive. Serious concern was raised that the international relief effort had faltered because many nations did not honour their pledges. The former U.N Secretary General, Kofi Annan urged donor nations to ensure that their pledges would be fully honoured, pointing to previous cases where “we got lot of pledges, but we did not receive all the money”.

On 5th January 2005, as countries jockeyed to make large donations, Jan Egeland, former UN undersecretary said “I would rather see competitive compassion than no compassion”, adding that too many countries were making pledges that may never arrive. Sri Lanka criticised the nations and organisations that clamored to pledge donations. “Not a penny had come through yet. We are doing the relief work with government money”. Sri Lanka is still waiting for the money pledged by the donors.

There was also the issue of relief aids sent by donor agents and governments that were not needed by recipient nations. Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Laxman Kadirgamar stated in a BBC interview: “A lot of aid which has been coming in lately is I'm afraid and



sorry to say, not very useful, for instance there was a container full of teddy bears. They are obviously given with good will, nobody says no to that". He also said "for instance we do not need rice, we are expecting a bumper harvest, anyone who sends rice is wasting their time and money.

In the early stages, before the extent of the disaster became severe, Sri Lanka refused Israeli offers of aid, objecting to the inclusion of 60 Israeli soldiers in the 150 person mission planned by Israel's army to set up field hospitals, including internal medicine and pediatric clinics. Corruption, bureaucracy and nationalism hampered the humanitarian response in Indonesia.

Policies of Humanitarian Responses

There is no doubt that humanitarian interventions both by governments, non-government organisations and the United Nations and its agencies responsible for responses to humanitarian crisis have brought relief and succour to various devastated communities, all over the world, it is worth examining the policies that guided their various interventions. Successful humanitarian intervention requires appropriate and effective policies supported by sufficient infrastructure and resources. A policy is a plan, adopted by the government or organisations and which is designed to influence and determine subsequent decisions, actions and other matters. Policy regarding humanitarian intervention takes a variety of forms, such as government directives, UN Security Council mandate, humanitarian agencies mission statement, and military doctrines and rules of engagement (Bolton, Brass & Murray, 2007; Hehir, 2010).

Governments exercise political control and direction over the domestic affairs of their citizens and they conduct foreign affairs. Criminal government behaviour, for example, the illegal occupation by Iraq of Kuwait or Baghdad's efforts to enslave and repress its minority Kurdish and Shiite population reflect governmental policies that may lead to outright intervention legitimated by international law. Mandates contained within UN Security Council resolutions provide blue prints for humanitarian interventions. They describe the contours of functions and responsibilities of peace keepers and other third party intervention in a particular crisis at a particular point in time. They also provide guidelines for determining the number and type of personnel required to attain a specific goal.

Mission statements of UN humanitarian agencies are in essence policies that describe the boundaries of those agencies' duties and responsibilities. The UNHCR mission statement for instance explicitly limit its responsibility to the category of terribly displaced persons legally recognised as refugees, but it has also extended its services to other categories of displaced persons when asked to do so. UNICEF's mission statement explicitly limits its responsibility to children and mothers (Darcy, 2004).

Dearth of Local Humanitarian Agencies Responding to Humanitarian Disaster

The dearth of local humanitarian agencies in some African countries made some Non-Governmental Agencies in the Western World to send their expatriates to provide relief and reconstruction work in some war ravaged countries in Africa. In September 1992, at the height of the famine and war in Somalia, many Western agencies were faced with a difficult decision. Should they intervene in a country in which the need was enormous but where they had no prior experience and no local partner or must they sit and watch as the famine worsened and more and more people died (Anderson, 1994).

Among the many NGOs that decided to intervene was a small, twenty-one year old Irish agency named Trocaire, the relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Somalia happened to be the first country in which the agency felt that with the apparent dearth of locally organised effort during the critical stages of famine, the only alternative was to initiate its own operations on the ground. This it did with a multi-sectoral relief and rehabilitation programme based in the Gedo region in South Western Somalia, one of the areas mostly seriously affected by famine (Anderson, 1994).



Gedo was one of the areas of the country, the most strongly affected by the 1992 war, in part because the area is home to the majority of the Marehan clan, the group from which Barre emerged and drew much of his political support. During Barre's regime, Gedo had enjoyed considerable patronage and largesse from the central government. With his fall, Gedo's favoured position ended and other clans that had resented Gedo's relative wealth took advantage of the warfare to loot and destroy the region. Many residents were chased from their homes or killed (Anderson, 1994).

Trocaire began its work in the Gedo region by distributing fund and other emergency supplies in September 1992. By January 1993, however, its efforts shifted to reconstructing for the future through rehabilitation programme in agriculture, health, education and water. By the end of 1994, veterinary and sanitation programmes had been added. Between 1992 and 1994, Trocaire spent US 4.5 million on its Gedo programme (Anderson, 1994).

Humanitarian Intervention and Conflicts

When international assistance is given in the context of conflict, it both affects and is affected by that conflict. Experience shows that even when it is effective in doing what is intended to do to save lives or promote development aid, too often also; it feeds into, reinforces, and prolongs conflict. Aid workers feel how their aid is distorted by local policies and is misappropriated by warriors to support the war because aid resources represent economic wealth and political power, people engaged in war will always want to control them. It would be odd even subversive to their cause if they did not do so. Thus it can be unproductive and naive for aid providers to expect warlords to accept fully the humanitarian principle that victims on all sides of a conflict have equal right to aid (Smillie & Minear, 2003).

Experience had shown among providers that aid's economic and political resources affect conflict in five predictable ways thus:

- (1) Aid resources are often stolen by warriors and used to support armies and buy weapons.
- (2) Aid affects markets by reinforcing either the war economy or the peace economy.
- (3) The distributional impact of aid affects inter-groups relationship, either feeding tensions or reinforcing connections
- (4) Aid substitutes for local resources required to meet civilians' needs, freeing them to support conflict.
- (5) Aid legitimises people and their actions or agendas supporting the pursuit of either war or peace.

Among others, one pattern that is noticeable about the effect of aid in war situation that has led to most humanitarian crises is theft. Warriors often steal aid goods and use them to finance their war efforts. Stolen foods, blankets, vehicles and communication systems can be used by armies directly or be sold to buy needed supply. Theft is the most widely recognised process by which aid feeds into conflict (Minear, 2002).

Aid workers have been extremely inventive in developing strategies to deter theft. Some aid agencies delivered goods unannounced, episodically, according to no fixed schedule and never to the same location twice so that thieves lack sufficient knowledge to allow them to steal. Some agencies consciously lower the resale value of their aid goods without damaging their usefulness, thus undermining thieving incentives. Others make theft so inconvenient that the effort required is not worth the return. For example, in Somalia, the Red Cross distributed blankets to families; theft was common because blankets were scarce and profit could be made from their resale. Agencies staff began to cut each blanket in half. Families could easily sew the blanket back together, but meanwhile their resale value dropped. In other situation, aid agencies have stopped delivering high priced grains and substituted sorghum or other less valuable but equally nourishing products. The food sustains recipient health but resale is not lucrative so there is little incentive for theft (Minear, 2002).



Conclusion

It can be concluded that humanitarian intervention at the global level is usually prompt at the level of making promises and pledges, When action is required however, the intervention is slow, inadequate, politicised and in some cases useless or unnecessary because it does not take into cognisance the geopolitical and cultural context of the nations in need of aid. There is an aspect of selfishness as evidenced by the activities of international humanitarian actors during intervention while only a few are selfless.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered.

- (1) All levels of international, intra-governmental, government and non-governmental agencies should play a *leadership role in disaster intervention and give humanitarian aid to victims as a right and not as a privilege.*
- (2) Humanitarian aid and response should be *integrated* in a cross-cutting way into all social and economic policies and programmes including employment, education, health, housing and urban planning, justice and social services for victims.
- (3) Humanitarian intervention strategies should be built on *co-operative partnerships* between government institutions and ministries, community and non-government organisations, and the business sector and civil society.
- (4) There must be *adequate funding* and other intervention based resources, and clear *accountability* to ensure the implementation and sustainability of humanitarian response and management strategies.
- (5) Humanitarian strategies and interventions should be based on a sound *knowledge base* about the impact of disasters, effective practices, the right of the victims and availability of resources to address it.
- (6) All humanitarian aid initiatives must *respect human rights and the rule of law.*
- (7) Account must be taken of the links between *local and transnational humanitarian initiatives and bodies and the effective channelling of this into a problem solution package.*
- (8) Humanitarian response and aids strategies should take particular account of the *different needs of men and women*, and the most vulnerable members of society.
- (9) The principles of victim rehabilitation should be adhered to strictly and honestly by all levels of government, intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organisations.
- (10) Proper socialisation into an emergency readiness mentality via mass media appeals should be instituted and carried out to a logical conclusion among the citizenry.
- (11) The government should also try as much as possible to avert disasters before they become a threat to life and property.



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