Aid Management: Exploring the utility of generic management applications in the humanitarian aid sector

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Abstract

This paper explores some of the problems and current thinking within the humanitarian aid delivery system and traces the evolution of these issues through contextualised examples.

The key issue of the continuum perspective is explored and a model is presented that captures the essence and imperatives associated with management and transition issues within humanitarian aid delivery. The paper then tracks the evolution of the generic aspects of management, their adoption and adaptation into the public sector and explores their suitability for use in the humanitarian aid arena.

Introduction

The sphere of humanitarian aid is well populated with articles, books and reports charting its development, highlighting 'issues of the day' and proposing changes to improve the overall performance of aid delivery systems. As the number of humanitarian aid situations, both natural and man-made, exploded during the 1990s so the number of reports and studies grew accordingly. In addition to an increase in the absolute number of emergencies during the last decade it is important to recognise that the complexity associated with these emergencies has also increased at an alarming rate. Today it is rare to have a simple situation of flood or famine with those affected 'ring fenced'. Increasingly today's emergencies involve internally displaced persons (IDPs), who seek refuge across borders thereby bringing neighbouring states into the situation. In many of the poorer regions economies have difficulty in dealing with such influxes thus increasing tensions in the region at the very time when they need to be eased.

The problems 'on the ground' are significant in their own right, however, today's communications technology has the power to deliver them into the sitting rooms of the developed world. Although this may help in raising the profile of the tragedy, which could benefit organisations that rely on donations, it also highlights the failings in the delivery of aid, especially where lack of coordination is at the heart of the problem. Whilst this 'CNN factor' is not peculiar to humanitarian aid sector, it has been a key factor in formulating international opinion in military interventions in areas such as the Gulf War, the Balkans and most recently Afghanistan.

Given that the emergencies are more complex and that a wide range of players are involved, studies have been conducted looking at the relationships between and

performances of the various players. Chris Seiple[1] (1996) studied the relationship between the US military and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a number of humanitarian aid situations including Northern Iraq, Bangladesh, Somalia and Rwanda. Several key points emerged from this study including the need to recognise that humanitarian operations are implicitly political and that no comprehensive models exist to aid either the military or NGOs. Anthony McDermott [2] (1998) explored the working relationship between the United Nations (UN) and NGOs and used a wide range of examples to highlight key issues such as differences in formality between the UN and NGOs, differences in timescale perceptions and definitions of cooperation and coordination.

Koenraad van Brabant[3] (1999) studied the role of coordination in the effective delivery of humanitarian aid. His research was divided into categories of coordination including the host country level, the donor level, the UN level, the NGO level and the military. His report goes further and outlines a possible framework that, he argues, could help those involved in humanitarian aid to identify the key issues and avoid the coordination blockages. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has written extensively in the area and has produced a number of case studies in humanitarian aid delivery. In particular Borton and Nichols[4] (1994) and Benson[5] (1993) have all written cases covering Afghanistan/Pakistan and Thailand/Cambodia with a focus on the practical aspects of aid delivery.

The idea that humanitarian aid can be defined within the concept of a continuum has been debated for some time. Many deny the notion that a continuum with emergency relief at one end of the spectrum and development aid at the other exists at all. Whilst the idea of a continuum with seamless transitions from one state to another is appealing the reality is that organisations now tend to specialise in specific parts of the humanitarian aid delivery system. One of the key problems in these interventions is the ability to identify the end of a phase and then instructions for the management of the transition process from one phase to the next.

A clear example of this involves the role of the military, whose primary objective is to create a situation where its presence is no longer needed. As Seiple[6] (1996) notes, this objective of moving to an exit situation can result in the military making decisions and taking actions that meet their objectives at the expense of facilitating the efficient and

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[1] Chris Seiple. *The U.S. Military / NGO Relationship in Humanitarian Interventions.* Carlisle, PA: Peacekeeping Institute, Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, 1996.
[2] Anthony McDermott, "The UN and NGOs: Humanitarian Interventions in Future Conflicts" in *Contemporary Security Policy,* Vol 19, No 3 (December 1998), pp.1-26.
[3] Koenraad van Brabant. *Opening the Black Box: An outline of a framework to understand, promote and evaluate humanitarian coordination.* Paper commissioned by the Disaster Studies Programme of the Centre for Rural Development Sociology of Wageningen, The Netherlands, 1999.
[4] N Nichols and J Borton. *The Changing Role of NGOs in the Provision of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance.* Case study Afghanistan/Pakistan. Overseas Development Institute: London, Working Paper no. 74, 1994.
[5] C Benson. *The Changing Role o of NGOs in the Provision of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance: Case Study Cambodia/Thailand.* (Overseas Development Institute: London, 1993)
[6] Ibid, Seiple

effective delivery of aid. The effects of increased complexity have been most clearly seen in the operations of some UN departments and agencies, whose response to the changing environment has been dramatic and wide ranging and has included decentralisation/ specialisation, coordination and back to centralisation. The UN has a particularly difficult task because it is involved in a very large number of humanitarian issues ranging from conflict prevention, peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions through the full spectrum of activity *vis-a-vis* development programmes through a number of sub-organisations operations such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and others. Each of these sub-organisations has its own priorities, degree of autonomy and need for funding. In addition to the above aspects many of these operations have been struggling with significant internal problems in terms of staffing, reporting structures, performance reporting/evaluation, change management issues and most importantly, the very decision-making processes necessary to deal with such pressures.

The issues being confronted by the donor community and the other organisations that make up the aid delivery structure are difficult enough given the issues of complexity and quantity of deserving cases, however, overarching this is the limited availablity of funds. Increasingly bilateral donors such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and multilateral donors such as the UN and the European Commission (EC), are having to deal with a world community that is suffering from disaster exhaustion.

Consequently, such organisations have a clear remit to demonstrate that they are delivering their mandates in an efficient and effective manner. The situation is not helped when reports are circulated that highlight inefficiencies, corruption and the misuse of funds within the humanitarian aid delivery system. Not surprisingly, the issue of accountability has become high on the agenda for many organisations. Raynard[7] (2000) highlights this in an ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance) report concerned with mapping accountability in humanitarian assistance. Several key points emerge from this work including the need to identify appropriate metrics against which to judge performance, and the need for standards against which to make comparisions. However, for accountability to be meaningful it is also necessary to have a body to whom the organisation is accountable and for that body to have authority to take meaningful actions against organisations that fail to meet the required standards.

In some ways the 'middlemen' in the delivery process have felt the pressures from above and below and have taken initiatives to try to establish some form of standards through projects such as Sphere, People in Aid or the use of planning frameworks. However,

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[7] Peter Raynard. *Mapping Accountability in Humantiarian Assistance.* (A report presented to ALNAP at the bi-annual meeting in April 2000 and revised to reflect comments), Overseas Development Institute: London, May 2000.

laudable as these initiatives are, in order for them to deliver their full potential they have to be embraced by all players in the aid sector. The failure in this respect has resulted in tomes extholing the importance of the role of coordination and calls for better communication, which ultimately needs to be addressed through stronger more professional management.


The Dynamics of Aid Situations

The contemporary nature of international intervention parallels the complexities inherent in each theatre. Forces of globalisation have swept through even the most collapsed and underdeveloped regions, resulting in an injection of transnational economic activity that dilutes the significance of national borders. Whilst this has brought in an influx of private sector and multinational activity to these regions, it has also encouraged black market activity amongst small gangs, paramilitary groups and government security forces. Due to the state of the national infrastructure, in particular the security sector, the state cannot support this expanded activity, which becomes increasingly criminal and violent.

The battle for the control of scarce resources or, in some cases, a natural disaster that occurs within this type of environment, can displace huge numbers of refugees and incite further problems along neighbouring border areas. Recent experiences of the Albanian Kosovars in Macedonia and Albania proper, and the flight of the Sierra Leoneons to Guinea, both serve as good examples. A deterioration of health, limited access to food, water and shelter, a lack of political authority at the national, regional and municipal levels and ongoing fighting all help exacerbate the problem to the point where pressure on international donor funding mounts rapidly.

In response to such diverse needs, donor funds injected into these areas become allocated to numerous different players, each with different core competencies. These range from UN agencies or higher offices that provide some sort of regional authority in the absence of a government, to more specialised more autonomous agencies, such as UNHCR or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and a plethora of NGOs all specialising in different fields. Multinational military forces also add to the effort, either in a front-line or support capacity depending on the severity of the fighting. As time goes by, other more 'second-line' organisations enter the scene, such as the development programmes, NGOs specialising in reconciliation, programmes encouraging disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants and perhaps specialised agencies re-training a new military or police force. Each group either receives a further slice of the donor funding or solicits other bilateral and multilateral sources that are disboursed independent to the initial funding arrangements. Not surprisingly, after one year of ongoing activity in any theatre of operations, the number of international players and agendas becomes excessive.

As previously highlighted much has been written on the issue of 'coordination' and the way in which these players need to cooperate with each other to provide a more

integrated effort. In order to understand why problems with coordination occur, it is helpful to study the nature of the organisations that participate in different interventions in relation to certain variables. For example, it is possible to show diagrammatically the positioning of these groups and organisations relative to the intensity of activity on the ground and time.
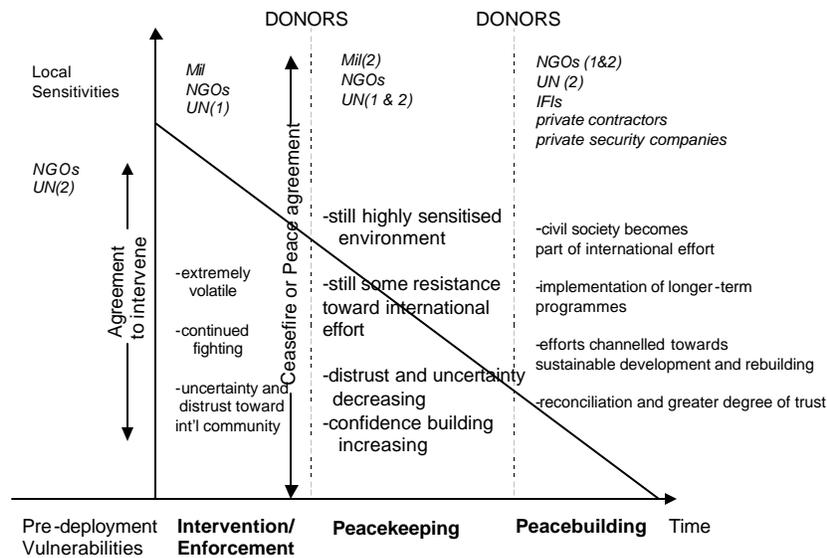
Figure 1: Inter-agency intervention

Figure 1 outlines three phases of a typical multi-agency intervention. The first phase presupposes a hostile environment that requires either robust military force to bring a situation under control or a desperate need to saves lives. During the first phase, there is an assumption that some sort of decision has been taken by an international authority to intervene. The region is likely to be riddled with animosities and hatred. Moreover, significant feelings of distrust and uncertainty towards the efforts of the international community develop in all levels of society. Even the most well-intentioned actions, such as humanitarian efforts by a military, can be misconstrued and become counter productive. The actors involved at this stage will have a narrow but specific breadth of service catering to the immediate need. Examples might include reputable medical and emergency aid organisations such as Medecins sans Frontieres, UNHCR and a UN or NATO-led multinational military force, such as the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia.

Until a peace or cease-fire agreement has been signed, the environment remains extremely volatile. Once an agreement has been reached, international parties may then be required to 'keep the peace' or engage in peacekeeping activities. At this stage, the

environment is more stable, allowing regular humanitarian deliveries to be brought in and help administered to the vulnerable populations. Agencies and NGOs with a much broader range of services, such as the World Food Programme and OXFAM, which specialises in water and sanitation, are more likely to contribute at this stage. Even the multinational military force that entered with a more robust posture may now settle into more of a support role, providing a background technical, logistics and security role. Such was the case with the transition of the 1995 Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia to the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in 1996 – the same is true for the 1994 UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) that transformed into the UN Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH) in 1996.

After a sustained period of compliance, strategies for a longer-term solution are implemented to help restore a society back to its *status quo ante*. Programmes designed to rebuild communities and to re-empower civil societies are implemented by development agencies and organisations. Concurrently, donor funds are re-channeled from pure humanitarian aid to longer-term projects such as construction, reforming social structures, agricultural programmes, and education and teaching. Intervening organisations may be extended to include UNDP, the UN Food and Agricultural Association (FAO), international civilian police forces, private construction firms and various International Financial Institutions (IFIs).[8]

During this 'peacebuilding' phase, international efforts are accepted and trusted and the likelihood that further problems will develop is reduced. However, the peacebuilding phase is still critical for promoting reconciliation and removing the acrimony. The increase in the number of foreign companies and expatriates should not shadow the needs of the primary public, who must play an integral role in developing a peaceful and functioning society.

Contrary to popular belief, the military is often not the first to respond to these conflicts. This is primarily due to the nature of the emergency or the political sensitivities involved. For example, UN agencies and aid organisations were the first to respond to the ethnic cleansing and humanitarian problems in Rwanda. Similarly, the plight of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq was first attended to by UNHCR long before the involvement of western military forces, whose primary responsibility included the control of Iraqi airspace (deemed a 'No Fly Zone') above the Kurdish settlements. Ongoing development programmes already operating in these areas can be upturned by sudden outbreaks of fighting or natural or man-made disasters.

The Processes behind the System

Despite the lack of overall coordination between them, these intervening agencies are expected to exercise a certain degree of cooperation and coordination to fulfill an international mandate. As the leading world authority on peace and security, the UN

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[8] Examples of IFIs include the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

traditionally starts the process by passing a resolution in the General Assembly or, in very serious circumstances that require a more immediate response, in the UN Security Council.[9] The UN Secretary General then tasks a special committee to identify operational requirements. Plans are then developed and used to identify potential national contributors. If military intervention is identified as an operational imperative, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) conducts separate planning with the selected contributing nations. Similarly, the 'executive agent' for the provision of Humanitarian Aid is UNOCHA, which often calls for the support of other UN parties. This includes UNHCR (to manage refugee movements), UNDP (for longer-term development programmes), UNOPs (to serve as an implementing agent and provide logistical support) and the World Food Programme (WFP) (to arrange for the delivery of foodstuffs).

This process develops into a UN-endorsed, UN-led operation. However, it is sometimes the case that multinational donors, such as the European Commission (EC) or their multinational counterparts, including USAID or the UK's DFID, augment UN funding or even take the lead in launching their own programmes. In these circumstances, a bilateral or multilateral agreement to invest in a troubled area is reached and contracts are tendered to match the requirements. The World Bank's recent pledge of $30 million to separate the factions, clear the landmines and encourage a sustainable peace in Eritrea and Ethiopia serves as a good example.

These options, and numerous other organisational groupings and hierarchies, can fill a theatre of operations with diverse capabilities, personalities and experience. The greatest challenge to all these groups then lies in their ability to enhance interoperability by adapting their individual, organisational cultures and approaches to those of the international mandate. Past experience has shown an unsatisfactory record of inter-agency coordination. Indeed, as recently as October 2001, a senior UNOCHA Head of Strategic Policy openly admitted that the organisation had yet to develop a workable definition for coordination.[10] Recent multi-agency interventions in Sierra Leone, Gujurat and Jordan further underscore the fact that those policy makers and practitioners tasked with improving coordination, but who are ill-equipped with the wrong tools, run the risk of eroding the overall effort by implementing systems based on micro-management.

The dissimilarities of each operational theatre makes the development of case-specific training, or 'generic templates', difficult and impractical. Moreover, the multitude of stakeholder interests that are brought to these regions makes it very difficult to unite organisational efforts. This is highlighted by the reluctance of NGOs to relinquish their

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[9] A UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) usually requires the majority vote of the 185 UN General Assembly members. Measures taken by the UN Security Council, which includes France, United Kingdom, United States, Russia and China, only require the support of the 'Permanent Five' (P-5) members although all P-5 members retain the right to veto any decision.

[10] Based on a presentation given by Mark Bowden, Head of UNOCHA's Strategic Policy and Planning Division, ALNAP bi-annual meeting, Washington, 25 October 2001.

independence, a trait which they believe allows them to make more humanitarian progress than other politically tied groups, such as the military or UN aid agencies.[11] Even the strained relationships that develop between the humanitarians, for example, between the 'family' NGOs, donors and other humanitarian agencies, reveal large gaps that could be narrowed with more coherent and holistic strategic planning.

Ironically, the organisations that underwrite these integrated interventions are often to blame for a coordination failure. Donor organisations vary tremendously in their experience, intellectual capacity, and degree of involvement in the field. For example, some bilateral donors such as the UK's DFID have been known and applauded for their hands-on involvement in theatre as well as their front-line participation on intellectual thought. Other more passive donors, such as CIDA, prefer to channel most of their humanitarian funding through multilateral channels such as the UN, and 'outsource' the decision-making. In addition, each donor has a different approach to managing accountability, evaluation and reporting. Whilst some have recently developed results-based methodologies to improve accountability and the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations, no system is being developed to cater to greater standardization within the donor community.[12] Even basic elements such as terminology, the interpretation of that terminology, funding practices and reporting standards need to merge together so one donor-funded intervention does not pose difficulties for another. Such was the case when the European Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO) made a unilateral decision in August 1998 to suspend all its funding to NGOs operating in Kabul, with disregard for the consequences on the operational capacity of agencies that were also receiving funds from other donors.[13]

Organisational and national disparities are also evident within multinational military forces. Despite reading off the same set of rules of engagement and standard operating procedures, different interpretations based on national practices can erode the unity of military effort in theatre.[14] This often results in very confused signals being sent not only to the other civilian agencies but also to those indigenous populations who are anxious to receive their help. For example, one national military's robust way of defusing a riot or firefight may be entirely different to that of another national military contingent, which perhaps pursues a softer approach through careful diplomacy and not force.

However, despite the barriers to effective multi-agency co-ordination, the technical delivery of more recent intervention programmes has been impressive. The British Army's expeditious moves in 1999 to set up refugee camps along the Macedonian border for the fleeing Kosovar Albanian refugees, was in full cooperation with local NGOs

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[11] Nick Roseveare, "Inter-Agency Co-ordination and NGOs" in *Inter-Agency Coordination in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies,* presented at a conference held at Cranfield University/RMCS, 14-15 September.

[12] CIDA, UNDP and the ICRC have all developed results-based management methodologies for measuring performance.

[13] Van Brabant, op cit, p. 11

[14] See Ann M Fitz-Gerald, "Understanding Local Dynamics in Civil Wars", in *Civil Wars,* Issue 3, Volume 1, Spring 2000, pp.1-16

contributing to the effort. The Kosovo Force's (KFOR) Headquarters staff based in Pristina also displayed exceptional skills in information sharing, joint planning and technical and logistical support in their work with staff from the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) staff and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). Also applauded has been the British Army's more recent cooperation with the UNHCR teams in Sierra Leone, in helping them manage thousands of refugees fleeing towards the Guinean border. However, the breakdown of more holistic planning, coordinating and transitioning concerns itself more with management approaches, rather than technical delivery. Success not only depends on the personalities leading intervention efforts but also to the management skills, approaches and organizational mindset that they bring into theatre.

The Importance of Management and its Role in the Public Sector

Management plays an important role in all walks of life and on a scale ranging from management within government to the management of personal finances.
Much of the management literature devotes itself to telling the reader how the organisation should be structured and how to apply best practice. However, popular press and scholarly journal articles also provide an endless stream of examples of where management went wrong and how the organisation can improve. Perhaps it is the human condition that promotes this line of enquiry or perhaps it is simply that mistakes are easier to see and good practice goes unnoticed.

The amount of information on the subject has exploded during the last 30 years and in many cases academics and consultants have been the drivers behind the growth. A major element has been the move towards increasing levels of specialisation in subject areas and within subject areas. For example, the subject of marketing is itself relatively new but as a functional area it has developed a life of its own. Within the field of marketing people now train for careers in one or more of the following areas:

Marketing strategy, Market research, Consumer behaviour with a consumer psychology bias, Communications, Services marketing, Relationship marketing, Database marketing or Business to business marketing.

A similar case can be made for most of the other functional areas of management. Clearly, the commercial competitive market has been the key driver behind this explosion of interest in management subjects and sub-sets within subject areas. Within this context the universities have simply been responding to customer demand. Academics have also followed the model and produced an ever-increasing number of scholarly articles for a growing number of journals with increasingly narrow audiences.

Although the private sector has been both a driver for and user of the advances in our understanding of the subject of management this has not been the case in the public sector. Traditionally, bureaucracy and administration have typified the public sector. The heart of the public sector has been the budget, and management has involved spending the budget whilst having systems in place to record the disbursements.

Although the public sector has been active in terms of reducing costs and improving efficiency in the management of public services it has also been subjected to pressures to adopt a change in perspective. The key change has been away from an internal focus of the department and the budget to an external focus and delivering value to customers; in the UK, this is typified by a host of 'Peoples Charters' for performance. The point to note is that if a delivery system is not meeting basic customer expectations, despite how efficient it is made, it will still not be valued by those customers. Thus the public services require a two-pronged approach of improving both efficiency and effectiveness. As reported by Metcalfe and Richards (1987) the issue then develops into one of structure and a need to move to a more decentralised approach in order to deliver stakeholder expectations.[15] The advantage for the public sector, which in marketing terms would be described as a 'slow follower', is that they have a wide range of tools and techniques that have been developed by the private sector for evaluation and application. Consequently, public sector organisations are seen adopting (and adapting) approaches such as benchmarking, Total Quality Management (TQM) model, and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence model. Even the military is using the balanced scorecard as a basis for strategy development and implementation.[16]

Strategic management is concerned with the effective development and delivery of the actual strategy, its implementation and performance evaluation[17]. Most of the problems frequently reported in the press indicate that the organisation in question has been successful in one or more of these elements but has failed in the others. The key to success in managing any organisation is to achieve at least a 'pass mark' in all three areas. All too often the focus is on the part over which management has some control. As a consequence, organisations spend a great deal of time and effort measuring performance outputs only to find that the failure of the strategy is due to a lack of recognition of a key factor, such as cultural change issues, within the strategy implementation phase.

Current Management Tools used in the Aid Community

The humanitarian aid community is also a 'slow follower' in the adoption of management tools and techniques. In some ways this can be explained or defended on the basis that humanitarian aid is delivered in an environment where no two situations are the same. Consequently there is no single model that can be applied and the absence of effective lessons-learned mechanisms that ensure positive and negative experiences are addressed throughout all levels of the organisation encourages reinvention with each deployment.

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[15] Les Metcalfe and Sue Richards. *Improving Public Management*. European Institute of Public Administration, SAGE Publications: London, 1987, p.16.

[16] The Department of Performance and Analysis within the Ministry of Defence develops a Corporate Plan, within the overall Defence Strategic Plan, which is based solely on a balanced scorecard.

[17] Gerry Johnson & Kevan Scholes. *Exploring Corporate Strategy, 5th Edition*. (Prentice-Hall: London, 1999), p.11

However, in recent years there is evidence of greater scrutiny and a growing critique of humanitarian operations, particularly following events in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia.[18] Mark Duffield justified calls for reform of aid management when he stated that:

> *Northern NGOs stood accused of being ineffective and dishonest about their achievements; of lacking in accountability and the ability to learn; of acting as sub-contractors for the major donors in a humanitarian industry...and of having a vested interest in their own survival.[19]*

This view is compounded by a growing 'contract culture' where a focus on the fulfillment of contracted inputs and outputs, rather than on actual humanitarian outcomes, allows the industry to demonstrate contractual success even within spectacularly unfulfilled mandates.[20]

This and other sources of criticism of the humanitarian and development sectors have led to a recent explosion of management related initiatives. The pressure for change has resulted in some initiatives being self-imposed by NGOs but others have been imposed upon them by donors. Earlier sections recognised the Sphere Project, the People in Aid Code of Best Practice[21] and different results-based methodologies (RBM) recently introduced by CIDA, UNDP, ICRC and USAID. The Logical Framework, known to many in the humanitarian aid field as the 'Logframe', is another project management tool that attempts to set out a clear hierarchy of inputs, activities, and objectives and to relate these to assumptions made about the external environment.[22] Today, the Logframe and its variants are the most common planning frameworks used by bilateral and multilateral agencies. The Logframe is used by DFID and USAID in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of a project. It helps programme managers to be able to report on the project, highlighting where changes need to be made and adapting the project accordingly.[23]

Whilst both the Logframe and RBM have encouraged more systematic project-based thinking and working to meet expected results, rather than managing solely on the basis of activities, it is more suited to longer-term rehabilitation and development projects that take many years to show specific results. It can also be applied to shorter-term projects, where the ability to demonstrate that a situation is no longer deteriorating may be equally valid. However, there is a view that it is too slow and rigid to work well within crisis

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[18] Chris Roche. *Impact Assessment for Development Agencies – Learning to Value Change.* (OXFAM Publications: Oxford, 1999), p.3

[19] Mark Duffield, "Post-Modern Conflict, Aid Policy and Humanitarian Conditionality", *ECSOR Research Paper,* found in Ibid, Roche, p.4

[20] Stockton, Nick. *The Collapse of the State and the International Humanitarian Industry – The New World Order in Emergencies.* (Oxford University Press: United Kingdom), 1995, p.15.

[21] The People in Aid Code of Best Practice focuses specifically on the management and support of aid personnel. The code has embedded an accountability mechanism into its seven principles, whereby agencies that adhere to the code are required to report and account on their compliance to the principles.

[22] Hugo Slim. *International humanitarianism's engagement with civil war in the 1990s.* A Briefing Paper to Action Aid UK. (taken from Ibid, Roche, p. 13)

[23] Ibid

situations, where the situation on the ground may be extremely fluid.[24] Nonetheless, there is still much potential for the further development of RBM and its contribution to improving performance through the structured measuring of results will increasingly lead to greater accountability.

Efforts to embrace management tools and techniques have also been initiated by the NGO community. The Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP), which was formerly known as the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project, is a non-government inter-agency effort to act as an impartial and independent voice for people affected by disaster and conflict. The project emerged from the broader debate on accountability in humanitarian assistance. In recent years, there have been several initiatives to establish sector-based codes and standards of practice, such as the Code of Conduct from the International Red Cross Movement and International NGOs in Disaster Relief, as well as the more recent Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere Project).[25] However, of particular concern was the fact that few existing structures encouraged humanitarian agencies to be accountable to their clients, the beneficiaries of humanitarian intervention. In addition, some commentators suggested that the Sphere standards assumed ideal environmental circumstances, which is rarely the case.[26]

Responding to the concerns of the beneficiaries, the Ombudsman Project was launched by a consortium of UK-based NGOs to ensure the credibility of the humanitarian system by improving the accountability of humanitarian claimants.[27] It was further identified that there needed to be a beneficiary 'voice' and an external mechanism to ensure standards and codes of humanitarian relief were upheld. Notably, during the feasibility study for the project, it was recognised that agencies themselves were aware that they did not engage with the local population as much as they should, particularly during the acute, early stages of an emergency.[28] Whilst the initiative must be closely linked to the Sphere standards (a model for improving quality), Raynard suggests that the two projects have been developed independently. Consequently, problems are likely to arise when the Ombudsman is trying to mediate between an agency, which has met the Sphere standard, but the recipient is nonetheless still dissatisfied.[29]

The ODI was the driver behind ALNAP, which became an inter-agency forum working to improve learning and accountability in the international system.[30] The current

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[24] Based on discussions with representatives in the Emergency Response Division at UNDP and in the Humanitarian Affairs Department at CIDA.

[25] Ombudsman Project Working Group. *The Ombudsman Project: Summary of work to date: 1997-1999*, London, 2000. For more information on the Sphere standards, see *The Sphere Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (OXFAM: Oxford, 1998).

[26] Based on discussions with Koenraad van Brabant, Overseas Development Agency, London, 16 July 2000.

[27] Members of the steering committee included: ActionAid, British Red Cross, British Refugee Council, CAFOD, CARE International, DFID, Merlin, ODI, OXFAM, Save the Children Fund UK and World Vision.

[28] *Summary of work to date,* op cit, Phase 3, Pilot Testing, found at: http://oneworld.org/ombudsman/phaseiii-e.htm.

[29] Raynard, op cit, p.14.

[30] Overseas Development Institute. *About ALNAP*. Founds at: http://www.odi.org.uk/alnap/workplan.html

workplan includes three themes that will be developed over the next two years: Making the humanitarian evaluation process more effective, strengthening accountability frameworks within the humanitarian system and improving field-level learning mechanisms.[31] Since ALNAP's creation, it has launched several initatives to engage with the issues of accountability and has acted as a forum for the Sphere Project, People in Aid and HAP. It has also undertaken to develop an annual survey of humanitarian assistance, with the preparation and publication of an Annual Review of evaluation of humanitarian programmes. In support of this work, ALNAP has also undertaken work to develop criteria for assessing the quality of evaluation reports on humanitarian action.

The use of project management tools and concepts described above represents a laudable step forward in improving the way in which aid operations are managed, however, there are still some gaps. The aid community must deal with a dynamic and constantly mutating learning curve that implies frequent organisational change and adaptation. There is a clear divide between the willingness and propensity for NGOs and agencies to remain committed to these reactionary measures and the donors and institutional organs financially responsible for their activity.

Arguably, it is easier for an organisation with a narrower breadth of service and focused range of products to adapt to new needs and requirements identified in their micro and macro environments. Bilateral and multilateral donor organisations were conventionally modeled based on the needs of the developing nations. As regional conflicts became more locally contained and within (as opposed to across) national borders, the problems facing the international community became more humanitarian in nature. The growing tendency for states to provide assistance to countries with weak infrastructures facing natural or man-made disasters, added more core competencies to the donor's sole remit of traditional development programmes. 'Humantiarianism' and 'Civil Defence' related projects now occupy as much of their time as programmes that strive to eradicate poverty, encourage sustainable development and build national capacity.

In most organisations, this would imply the creation of new departmental structures bound by an overall strategy, which makes for coherent decision-making and policy development. Recognition would also be made of the links between the departments and the relationships that must underpin the service that organisation aims to provide.

As the chart in Figure 1 shows, donor organisations must be prepared for a range of contingencies, which could alter the whole scope of their service and the role they play in humanitarian interventions. Recent research conducted by Cranfield University shows that the emergency relief and humanitarian sections of development agencies are developing in isolation to the rest of the organisation.[32] Moreover, it indicates that management and project tools contrived by the more functional and technical sections of

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[31] Overseas Development Institute. *ALNAP Current Work Plan.* Found at: http://www.odi.org.uk/alnap/workplan.html
[32] Based on a six-month research project undertaken by Cranfield University funded by the UK's Department for International Development, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, May 2001 – November 2001.

the agencies have little applicability for the humanitarian and emergency response teams. This is particularly evident in the lessons-learned processes, evaluation and reporting, and strategic management decision-making between the field and headquarters levels.

ECHO has recognised transition points at which development and emergency relief agencies must interact and work more closely in the field. However, in response to this, the organisation recently decided to retreat back to its core competencies and only involve itself with the emergency relief phase of an operation.[33] It feels that it is the responsibility of the development sector to come closer to them and close the gap, which they have labeled as 'The Forgotten Crisis.'[34]

Other emergency response divisions of donor agencies have complained that the management tools being developed by the rest of the agency have little utility for emergency teams who, in the majority of cases, cannot even identify their specific objectives until they deploy into theatre. Moreover, the situation for these groups is likely to change more rapidly than circumstances for development teams. This questions the effectiveness of planning tools like the Logical Framework and Results-based management methodologies as, without the appropriate holistic management structures and systems in place, the information collected through these mechanisms cannot be used to its full advantage.

Conclusions

Further research is required to identify mechanisms and procedures within donor organisations to discover the barriers to developing more holistic management systems between the emergency relief and development functions, and to promoting standardiszation amongst donors to make life easier for the agencies in receipt of their funds. Regardless of the implementing agency, be it an NGO, UN agency or even the military, the chief stakeholder underwriting their operations has the ability to influence the outcomes. As such, donors must develop better management systems that cater to range of contingencies, in which many different types of organisations will inevitably become involved. Merging the humanitarian and development discipline together with generic management studies may be the most appropriate starting point.

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[33] Based on discussions with representatives from the Strategic Planning and Policy Division of ECHO, Brussels, 22 June 2001.
[34] Ibid