New Approaches to New Realities
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New Approaches to New Realities
First International
Emergency Settlement Conference

April 15–19, 1996
University of Wisconsin–Disaster Management Center
Department of Engineering Professional Development
University of Wisconsin–Madison USA

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This Conference is dedicated to the honor and memory of Fredrick Cuny. Fred was a co-founder of the University of Wisconsin–Disaster Management Center in 1982. Until his death in 1995, he served on its executive committee, contributing enormously to the programs of the UW–DMC. Fred encouraged the development of the Emergency Settlement Project and the conference as a member of the board of advisors. The world has lost a great humanitarian.

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Foreword

We are pleased to host the First International Emergency Settlement Conference. The Conference provides a forum for individuals with a wide range of expertise, experience and organizational affiliations to discuss the critical issues concerning populations in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.

These Preliminary Proceedings contain the working drafts of papers built on information solicited from a wide array of UN agencies, NGOs and other internationally respected consultants. Individuals involved in the preparation of each topic paper are acknowledged at the start of the paper. The mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use. The views expressed in the papers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any specific individual or organization.

The conference coordinators acknowledge the contributors to each paper for their cooperation and timely submittal of materials. We also wish to acknowledge the special efforts of the following individuals: Lynne Bethke, Charles Dufresne, Jim Good, Eva Jensen, Jeff Klenk, Kate Olle, Marcy Ostrom, Darrell Petska, Sheila Reed, Philip Sarginson and Jennifer Wedberg. This document and this Conference could not have been successfully completed without their assistance.

Conference Coordinators

Don Schramm  Paul Thompson
UW–DMC  InterWorks

April 1996, Madison

Theme ONE: Identification and Planning of Emergency Settlement

Topic 1 – Introduction and Overview: Typology and Causes of Emergency Settlement

This paper was prepared by Eva Jensen of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:

Elizabeth Ferris – is Director of the Immigration and Refugee Program for Church World Service in New York.

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.
Introduction

Emergency settlement is a major issue that affects an increasing proportion of the world’s population. Today more than forty-five million people are displaced by natural and human-made disasters. Most uprooted peoples are struggling to survive without adequate food, health care, shelter, information and services. Furthermore, the causes, categories and circumstances of emergency settlement populations have become increasingly complex. International humanitarian institutions and non-governmental organizations which seek to provide protection, assistance and long-term solutions are challenged by the vast numbers of refugees and displaced persons and the complexity of situations which are generating these movements.

This paper provides an overview of the current state of affairs regarding emergency settlement – the types of emergency settlement populations; causes, contexts, types and duration of emergency settlement; and potential long-term solutions. An awareness of the full range of populations, causes, situations and issues associated with emergency settlement is essential in order to respond to the challenges presented by the rapid and sometimes overlapping succession of uprooted populations who are in need of protection and assistance in the world today.

The Emergency Population

Today, the providers of humanitarian assistance and protection have moved beyond strict adherence to legal categories and principles when serving emergency populations. The following typologies include legally recognized categories of uprooted persons; others who are recognized and provided assistance, though no legal status has been ascribed to them; as well as those who fend for themselves, without the benefit of legal status, protection or assistance from international providers.

■ Internally Displaced Persons

People who, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights, natural or human-made disasters, or development projects, have been forced to flee their homes but remain within the territory of their own country are considered internally displaced persons. Increasingly, international institutions and organizations are called upon to protect and assist internally displaced persons; however, much less institutionalized support is available.

■ Externally Displaced Persons

People who, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights, natural or human-made disasters, or development projects, have been forced to flee their homes and have crossed an international border, but who are not legally recognized as refugees are externally displaced persons. Many people within this category are not included in the mandates of the UN and other providers of humanitarian assistance although they may be assisted by them.

De facto refugees are a sub-category of externally displaced persons. They are persons not recognized as refugees within the meaning of Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and who for reasons recognized as valid (especially war and generalized violence), are not willing to return to their country of nationality or, if they have no nationality, to the country of their habitual residence. They are externally displaced persons who are generally treated as refugees but lack the formal designation.

■ Refugees

Convention refugees, within the meaning of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, are people whom governments have determined that “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, are outside the country of [their] nationality and [are] unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, [are] unwilling to return to it.” Recognizing that many externally displaced persons are not covered by this definition, 42 African and 10 Latin American governments signed regional instruments which expand this definition.

Mandate refugees are people recognized by the High Commissioner for Refugees according to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which specifies the following inclusion elements: well-founded fear; persecution; reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion; and outside the country of origin.
Refugees “Sur Place” are persons who were not refugees when they left their country, but who have become refugees due to developments in their country of origin or because of their actions outside of the country.

■ Asylum seekers

People who cross borders and appeal for refugee status on grounds of fear of persecution for political, ethnic or religious reasons or membership in a particular social group are asylum seekers. Decisions on asylum status are made by governments based on their interpretation of the refugee definition contained in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol for those countries that have signed the protocol.

■ Returnees

Returnees are those who return to their homelands or communities of origin. Their return may be voluntary or involuntary.

■ Disaster Survivors

Disaster survivors are those who have lost their homes due to a disaster, live in temporary shelter, and expect to return to their community. They may be internally or externally displaced. The distinction between a displaced person and a disaster survivor is based principally on the close proximity of the survivor’s temporary housing to his/her original home and/or on the disaster survivor’s expectations of returning to his/her own community. Nevertheless, some disaster survivors whose homes were wiped out by a landslide or volcanic eruption will never be able to return to their home site. Disaster survivors may require emergency humanitarian assistance; however, they are not regarded as persons imperiled by political oppression or civil conflict.

■ Non-combatants

Non-combatants are civilians trapped in their habitual location or place of residence by war or civil conflict and who have lost access to the elements essential to survival, such as security, food, water, land, shelter, or health care. Sometimes the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is not clear. In many conflicts (Cambodia, Mozambique and Sudan), young boys are forced into military service or resistance movements by conscription or desperation as a way of protecting themselves or providing for their families. In other situations community members are forced to participate in violence against others by the militia who move through an area.

There is danger in classifying uprooted populations, because it tends to establish presumptions regarding the scope of need or a hierarchy of entitlement, with convention refugees at the top. There are established international structures to assist certain categories of emergency populations. Assistance providers, however, fail to reach the majority of uprooted populations, many of whom are in desperate need of protection and/or assistance. Though internally displaced persons currently outnumber refugees, much less institutional support is available to these people. The causes and consequences of their displacement may be identical and the differential treatment in humanitarian assistance provided may be unjustifiable. Recognition of such differentiation in assistance may warrant a re-evaluation of the system of response and assistance. Perhaps the major difficulty in reaching international agreement about assistance to the internally displaced is the issue of national sovereignty. If a government does not recognize the needs of the displaced or does not want an international presence in a combat zone, it is difficult for the United Nations or for NGOs to provide assistance.

The typology specified above is generally based on the perspective of governments and intergovernmental institutions and organizations. The complex and interrelated causes of displacement are not evident, nor are the needs of those involved apparent. The categories may be helpful in order to identify some of the different issues that uprooted persons face and the support that they need. However, the contextual differences and complexities involved must be analyzed in order to evaluate comparative need, prioritize and plan assistance responses, and implement durable solutions.

Social Attributes of Emergency Settlement Populations

Though uprooted persons may be categorized by one of the above typologies, they have particular personal and social characteristics which affect their status and experience as part of an emergency population.
people have social roles and relationships in their communities and their assistance and protection needs vary depending on that role and the circumstances of their displacement, as well as changes in social structures and relations that the emergency may have created.

The **social and economic characteristics** of an emergency settlement population should be assessed in order to identify their needs and resources. Households are often selected as units of analysis in order to make such determinations. In such examinations it is essential to recognize gender and generational roles within households as well as the power relations within and between households. Household characteristics that are important to consider are: family type, household size, age and sex composition, skills, education and class.

**Gender and age** differentially affect household members and one cannot assume that households are socioeconomic units whose members strive for a common end (Geisler, 1993), equitably sharing their resources and incomes. The social relations of gender and age and the concomitant inequalities in access to land, production and income must be recognized. Humanitarian assistance programs must be designed to integrate women and acknowledge the differences between men’s and women’s economic and social roles in ways that support the development of everyone’s capacities if humanitarian protection and assistance is to benefit all members of an emergency population.

In an emergency population, **the vulnerable** are those who are more exposed to violence and exploitation, as well as those who are unable to cope with risk, shocks and stress of disaster. Some people are more vulnerable than others and may require additional assistance. Often they are the same people who would be considered vulnerable under normal circumstances – women, children and the elderly; those who are sick, injured, or physically or mentally challenged; and those who are socially disadvantaged or excluded from the wider community of which they are a part. For those people who have been exposed to atrocities and widespread violence, the trauma and grief experienced may be incapacitating or lead to a breakdown in social norms. In every uprooted community, vulnerable groups and their particular needs must be identified if they are to be included in the provision of protection and humanitarian assistance.

**Causes of Emergency Settlement**

The forces creating emergency populations are interrelated and often inseparable from one another. Economic and environmental conditions are usually linked to political policies and practice. Economic factors often influence environmental circumstances. Sometimes the forces which cause disasters are immediate and violent. In other situations the disaster may be the result of ongoing low-intensity conflict, steadily declining economic conditions or low-grade political repression or neglect. The variety of forces which displace populations traumatize people in different ways and create different needs. When establishing priorities and providing protection and assistance it is essential that the responses are based on needs. Understanding the various causes of emergency settlement, some of which command more attention than others, can positively contribute to the design of appropriate humanitarian assistance responses.

**Political dynamics**

Political dynamics – civil conflict and war, mass expulsions and forced displacements, state repression, human rights violations or abuse of minorities – may create emergency populations. Ongoing low-intensity conflict destabilizes social equilibrium, erodes infrastructure and the ability of people and communities to survive. Military operations, which could include invasions of an area, sweeps, occupation, or forced conscription, are major triggering events that uproot populations.

Government policies which discriminate and disadvantage certain groups may create displaced populations. Some emergency populations are created by the forced resettlement of communities by their own governments. In Ethiopia in 1985, the government relocated Tigreans and Eritreans, justifying their action in economic and environmental terms; most observers recognized their action as a politically motivated relocation. In Indonesia, the government has relocated people from the crowded island of Java to the more sparsely settled Irian Jaya, resulting in the displacement of Irian Jayans within their country and to neighboring Papua New Guinea.

Efforts to consolidate power or establish rule may involve domination, exclusion, repression, expulsion or attempts to eliminate groups whose language, ethnicity, religion, culture, political beliefs or socio-economic status is different. Civil conflict is often fueled by ethnic, racial or religious differences.

**Economic dynamics**
Economic dynamics which cause the loss of any of the essential elements of settlement are often linked to sustained conflict situations where local or national economies erode or collapse under the weight of military destruction. When war disrupts agricultural production, food marketing and distribution, a lack of income for food producers and suppliers as well as a shortage of food supplies result. Economic deprivation may lead to the inability to purchase adequate food for people in their homes. Such impacts on the agricultural system may lead to famine and even greater population displacement.

Conflicts also usually impact the country’s industrial sector and destroy transportation and communications infrastructure necessary for the resumption of economic life. When factories are destroyed, unemployment increases and survival becomes more difficult.

The collapse of world markets (e.g. gold, steel, minerals, agricultural commodities) may have significant negative impacts on national economies. In contexts of poverty or near subsistence economies, disputes concerning the distribution of resources, attempts to preserve the economic standing of one group over another, or attempts to avoid or allocate blame for economic conditions may heighten instability and aggravate conflicts.

### Environmental dynamics

Environmental forces which create emergency populations may be natural disasters or catastrophes caused by humans. In both situations people are forced to leave their homes because the land on which they live has become uninhabitable or is no longer able to support them. The impact of environmental forces depends, in part, on the economic development of the affected region.

Natural disasters – including floods, drought, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, land instabilities and strong winds – in addition to causing serious environmental damage and loss of life, may destroy the homes and physical infrastructure of communities as well as agricultural and business industries and the local economy. Mass migrations of uprooted populations may result, or those communities that remain may become emergency settlements as they lose access to essential elements of a healthy life.

Human–caused environmental disasters include slow–onset disruptions which may result in famine, deforestation, land degradation, erosion, salinity, siltation, waterlogging and desertification; or accidental industrial disruptions which may involve chemicals, nuclear waste and other toxins. Urbanization and development–caused disruptions may involve land degradation, or over–exploitation, or encroachment which displaces or destabilizes and impoverishes populations.

### Uprooting as a process

The following diagram illustrates the range of factors influencing migration flows and highlights emergency populations which are created. The horizontal axis places migration along a voluntary–forced continuum identifying the degree of voluntariness or coercion involved. Most emergency migrations are involuntary; people are forced to move in response to various dynamics which are operative in their place of origin.

Although it does not convey the full complexity of the causes of emergency displacement, the vertical axis identifies these dynamics along an economic – non–economic continuum. While economic dynamics cannot be separated from other causal forces, in many situations economic issues predominate. In other situations, political, religious, racial, ethnic and other social dynamics prevail. Environmental dynamics often involve both economic and political factors. While the continuum highlights the predominance of economic dynamics in some situations, a complex mix of factors create emergency populations.
Truly accurate numbers of emergency population types are nearly impossible to obtain and verify. At least one current estimate believes the population exceeds forty-five million people. The U.S. Committee for Refugees' December 1994 statistics estimate the following:

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<th>EMERGENCY POPULATION TYPE</th>
<th>ESTIMATED SIZE OF POPULATION</th>
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<td>Internally displaced</td>
<td>26,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally displaced</td>
<td>3,073,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and asylum seekers</td>
<td>16,267,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>45,340,000</td>
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In addition to the uprooted populations specified above, the number of people displaced by development projects worldwide is estimated to be over 90 million (McDowell, 1995, p. 30). While such displacement does create social disintegration and impoverishment resulting in emergency populations, the circumstances and needs of this population lie beyond the scope of this emergency settlement project. Unlike other emergency populations, people and communities displaced by development projects are often populations identified years prior to their displacement and the responses required to protect their human rights and assist their resettlement can be planned with the effected population and implemented as part of the development effort. Other emergency populations require immediate protection and assistance in order to survive, establish refuge and a temporary solution to their crisis.

**Contexts of Emergency Settlement**

There are numerous factors which affect emergency settlement populations. Displaced persons and refugees are rarely free agents who are able to choose where they will settle on an emergency basis. Host communities among whom they settle are frequently not consulted. Logistical, political and economic factors are often the deciding factors which direct the flow of emergency populations and prescribe the design and implementation of protection and assistance which agencies and organizations provide. The following are factors which may determine where settlement occurs.
The geographic location of emergency populations may be *in situ*, in-country, or within the region of origin. When the population is a community trapped at home by conflict, settlement is *in situ*. Such emergency populations may include displacees as well as local residents. Cross-border operations and corridors of tranquility or safe passage are established in order to provide humanitarian assistance to such populations in need of emergency relief. In Sudan, Lebanon, Kampuchea, El Salvador and other places assistance has been provided utilizing these methods.

More recently, designated “safe havens” have been identified by the U.N. and international humanitarian assistance providers as a means of responding to the protection and assistance needs of emergency populations trapped at home. In 1991, following the Persian Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 688 which identified the Kurds of Northern Iraq as “sufficiently threatening to international peace and security to authorize outside military intervention and create safe havens for them” (Minear and Weiss, 1993; see also Chopra and Weiss, 1992). Having established a protected area of safety, international humanitarian assistance was provided to the emergency population, both displacees and local residents.

Similar operations have been mobilized in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. However, these safe havens are not always safe. Four UN protected areas were set up in Croatia and six Muslim enclaves were designated as safe havens in Bosnia – Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Srebrenica, Gorazde and Bihac. The protection offered to these areas was extremely limited and the populations remained vulnerable to continued attacks. In fact, Zepa and Srebrenica fell to Bosnian Serb forces and thousands of people were uprooted. While UN officials appealed to governments in the areas of protection and they were able to restrain abuses against civilians, when Zepa and Srebrenica fell thousands of non-combatant men and boys were murdered. In 1993, UNHCR prevailed on the Croatian government to restart registering Muslim refugees, an initiative important to many who, lacking proper documentation, were subject to *refoulement* to Bosnia (Minear, et. al, 1994).

Croatia, however, later revoked Bosnian Muslims’ right to stay. Emergency populations residing in safe havens may be extremely vulnerable.

**In-country emergency settlement** is that which occurs within the country of origin. Internally displaced as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights, natural or human-made disasters, or development projects, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes but remain within the territory of their own country. In contexts of conflict where border areas are contested and ruling powers are shifting what constitutes “in-country” is not always clear. In addition, many refugees and displaced persons move back and forth between their area of emergency settlement and their place of origin. In Sri Lanka, centers for displaced persons were set up, but people moved between these centers and their homes in conflict zones, seeking to retain their holdings and protect belongings.

**Emergency settlement** that involves movement *across an international border* generally occurs within a geographical region. When people are uprooted by actions of their government, when their governments are unable or unwilling to protect them, or when people are not able to find or access a place of refuge within their country of origin, they will cross international borders. Cross-border movement may involve less travel than some in-country movement. Again, uprooted populations that have crossed borders may move between their area of emergency settlement and their place of origin. Mozambican refugees in Malawi, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Guatemalan refugees in Mexico would periodically cross back and forth into their countries for a variety of reasons: to look for firewood, check on their farms, continue the military conflict or assess whether it is safe to return.

The living situation for many refugees and displaced persons is constantly in flux. They may move from a settlement camp to a city and back again. They may rotate between an area where they have chosen to self-settle and a camp, or the members of a household may separate, some living in a camp, some in a city and others in a rural location of self-settlement. Such strategies may be adopted in order to maximize their chances for survival. A crucial aspect affecting the context of emergency settlement is the degree of coercion involved in the emergency populations’ choice of settlement.

Another important factor is the density of uprooted persons relative to the host population. When refugees or displaced persons outnumber the hosts, the local impact is significant. Planning, resource mobilization and management, as well as community relations require particular attention. If the number of uprooted persons is small, it may be possible to integrate them into the local population with limited local impact.
Economic conditions in the community of settlement are a significant factor influencing the process of settlement for emergency populations. When economic conditions are perceived as improving and resources are abundant, policies toward emergency settlement are usually more generous. When conditions are poor, unemployment is high or the economy is declining, hospitality is diminished and outsiders may be scapegoated.

In resource poor or developing countries, the needs of emergency populations may exacerbate existing conditions of poverty and contribute to social and political instability. African countries have had much more liberal policies towards refugees than many other countries and an African “tradition of hospitality” to serve uprooted persons of the same ethnic origin from across the border has been relied upon to address the needs of many. Kibreab exposes the myth of this tradition and identifies the difficulties that poor countries and their citizens face when an influx of emergency populations arrive. Many in African rural society are living in abject poverty; land scarcity is an increasing problem; and basic resources of water, sanitation, food and fuel are limited. Hospitality is a function of resource availability. While, initially, the presence of people who speak the same language and share common cultural traits may provide a “soft landing”, such affinity cannot be relied upon in the long run to ameliorate the plight of emergency populations (Kibreab, 1985).

The availability of land and water are critical factors impacting the settlement of emergency populations. When land and water are not available, the displaced are more likely to be settled in camps, to settle on marginal lands or to settle on small plots of land where they cannot sustain themselves. In such circumstances, the uprooted are forced to find wage labor or rely upon assistance that is available. Land and water shortages may also encourage increased urban settlement where the displaced seek employment and alternative ways to support themselves. The anticipated availability of jobs is also an influencing factor which affects the settlement of the uprooted.

Emergency populations also comprise a wide range of skills. The occupations, experiences and skills of the inhabitants, in addition to the resources available and the circumstances in the place of settlement, can make a difference in the degree of dependency or self-reliance of the population. For example, refugees and displaced persons of urban origin are unlikely to thrive in organized smallholder agricultural settlements. When the place of settlement is one that provides opportunities and resources which match the skills and abilities of the uprooted population, they are more likely to be able to sustain themselves.

Most of today’s host countries of emergency settlement are among the least developed countries in the world. The vast majority of emergency populations move within their own countries and the next largest share move across national boundaries within the less–developed world (Meissner, et. al, 1993). Without protection and assistance, uprooted persons are vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. The better–off and more visible hosts may gain from the presence of refugees and refugee programs. In contrast, the poorer among the hosts and refugees can be losers, especially where land is scarce and labor relatively abundant. The poor can lose from competition for food, work, wages, services and common property resources (Chambers, 1986).

International assistance is essential if the plight of uprooted people and their hosts is to be redressed, however, this dependency of poor countries on international assistance also makes them more vulnerable to international pressure.

In industrialized countries with established economic systems and infrastructures, more resources may be available to provide assistance. However, when economic conditions are in decline, competition for work, wages, housing and social services are likely to negatively impact the poor in those countries and the refugees or displaced persons. Foreigners may be blamed for the wider economic and social problems and marginalized from the society. The governments of rich and internationally influential countries are also more likely to be able to enforce exclusionary policies and prevent the flow of refugees into their countries. For example, the U.S. government has the capability to physically prevent most Haitians from arriving on its territory by interdicting ships and returning Haitians to Haiti. The refugee camp in Guantanamo, Cuba, which the U.S. established and maintains outside its territory, also prevented an influx of refugees to the mainland.

However, the governments of both rich and poor countries are unable to fully control emergency populations. In both cases, there are large numbers of undocumented people living on the margins of large societies.

■ Political

Political factors which affect emergency settlement are multiple, varied and complex. Today’s complex emergencies are characterized by conflict stemming from varied political factors and response to the emergencies must take into account the political dimensions of the situation. In addition to assessing the needs and resources of the emergency population, humanitarian assistance providers need to know who the
actors are, who is in control of what areas, what kind of alliances may or may not exist and who is benefiting and losing as a result of relief efforts (Slim, 1995). The political dynamics operative in specific contexts will impact uprooted populations and emergency settlements and humanitarian assistance personnel must become more politically savvy in order to alleviate suffering and avoid being used by various parties in the conflict. These concerns are addressed more fully in topic paper 8.

The extent to which a local or state governing authority or party faces political opposition will affect its attitude and response to emergency populations. In both multi-party states and governments of single-party rule, governments are more likely to adopt a restrictive hard line policy toward emergency populations than when they are more secure. Vulnerable governing authorities fear their local support will be eroded if they welcome outsiders and extend services to needy populations.

On the other hand, governments and communities that are more heterogeneous and have a history of immigration are more likely to respond to uprooted populations, providing emergency settlement. Australia, for example, opened a camp for Cambodians living on its northern shores. In contrast, Japan, a homogenous society, has been historically opposed to immigration and was unwilling to receive South-east Asian refugees (Ferris, 1995).

The ethnic composition of a country or area of settlement and its relationship to political power will affect the treatment of refugees and displaced persons. For example, the admission of large numbers of Soviet Jews into the U.S. is influenced by the political influence of Jewish constituencies in the United States. The responses of local communities and governing authorities to internally displaced persons are similarly influenced.

Regional disparities and politics within and between countries also influence the attitudes and policies of receiving communities and countries towards emergency populations. Internal and external political factors contributed to an ambiguous response to Guatemalan refugees in the first couple years of their flight into Mexico. Critical of governmental repression in Guatemala and sympathetic to the plight of Guatemalan refugees, the Mexican government provided limited assistance and legal status to some refugees. Fearful that the influx of Guatemalan refugees into the state of Chiapas would exacerbate conditions of poverty and potential insurgency within Mexico, the government deported large numbers who sought protection and assistance (Ferris, 1993). Similarly, in the heavily impacted states of Florida and California in the United States, Haitian and Cuban refugees are deported in order to mitigate negative domestic political repercussions generated by the fear of social and economic instability. Fleeing political violence in Algeria in response to the upsurge in Islamic fundamentalism, many Algerians have sought asylum in France. Concerned to minimize the number of Algerian refugees in France, the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) has required Algerian refugee claimants to show that the persecution they feared was at the hands of the government. The Office has had a very low approval rate for Algerian claimants (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1995).

If a host government considers the emergency population to be a dissident faction which could destabilize relations between the host and sending countries or relations among people within the country, potentially expanding conflict and violence into the host region, the governing authorities are likely to require strict security and closed camps. Perceiving Salvadoran refugees as guerrillas and fearing that they would find fertile ground in Honduras, the Honduran government kept Salvadoran refugees in strictly controlled camps. Concerned about the refugees close proximity to the border and internal security, as well as their relations with El Salvador, the camps were kept under close military surveillance. Nicaraguan refugees, on the other hand, were given much more freedom because they were not feared and the Honduran government actually supported their efforts to oppose the Sandinista government (Ferris, 1993).

### Social

Several social factors influence emergency settlement patterns, including the ethnic identity of the uprooted persons and the host populations, the social organization of the uprooted, the timing of their flight, and their skills and experience. Uprooted persons will tend to go to areas where they have family members or areas of the same ethnic group. For example, many of the refugees in Croatia and Chechnya stayed with family members in areas which are less affected by the conflict. Ethnic Hungarians from the former Yugoslavia have fled to Hungary.

When people move in advance of the crisis of a disaster, they often move as individuals or households and tend to self-settle with relatives, on small land-holdings or in urban areas where they can support themselves or rely upon the initial support of relatives. Those who move in smaller units tend to have more flexibility and,
therefore, options for settlement.

When refugees move in response to a crisis they are more likely to be vulnerable and part of a larger flow of refugees. They may have lost their resources and suffered violence, conflict and the loss of loved ones. When the numbers are large, a mass program of relief will be needed and money will end up in camps and settlements. If the mass movement of uprooted persons consists of people from the same community or area of origin, they may have some social leadership structures and relationships that they can continue to rely upon. If the population is one that has been divided, the unique vulnerabilities, skills and resources of the people will have to be assessed and some additional temporary support services may be essential. If the population is one that has expanded as they moved from their area of origin to their place of settlement, community formation and leadership development may require support.

- Topographic, environmental and climatic factors

In addition to the economic, political and social factors which effect the settlement of emergency populations, settlements may be differentiated by physical environment. The terrain may be mountainous, hilly or flat. Agricultural resources must be considered: forested area, pastureland, cropland, soil type and vegetation. Proximity to water is a critical factor. Climactic variations effect housing and livelihood options. Environmental degradation has serious impacts. Proximity to transport routes and communication links is also critical in terms of providing necessary supplies to any settlement and assuring that the displacees have access to services, employment and other resources.

Site selection is limited by availability of land. Settlement land should be exempt from the right of ownership or use by other people. When uprooted people are settled on land to which others have legal claim, conflicts with the local population may arise and the livelihood of all may be threatened. In addition, sites should be located a safe distance away from any military targets and a safe distance away from their country of origin in order to prevent hostile attacks either against the refugees or against the country of origin. It may be that land shortages limit the availability of land to marginal holdings of questionable habitation. Such sites require additional outside assistance. Minimum physical and planning standards (detailed in topic paper 13) must be met when establishing sites for emergency populations.

Sometimes political factors override the consideration of logistical factors. For example, in Kenya, Somali refugee camps on the coast, which have been relatively easy to service were moved to the interior where they were much more difficult to service. The relocation was motivated by several political concerns: to encourage the Somalis to repatriate, to move them away from populated areas where they have become engaged in business, and because the coastal camps were located on valuable land. Care should be taken to minimize such political concerns when they threaten the livelihood, safety or security of the emergency population.

**Types of Emergency Settlement**

The types of settlement in which uprooted populations settle vary considerably. The following overview provides a brief description of the major settlement types.

- Spontaneous or dispersed settlement

The majority of uprooted people settle themselves, “seeking livelihoods outside organized settlements or camps and without sustained official assistance.” (Chambers, 1982). Spontaneous or dispersed settlement may occur in situ, in country, or involve cross-border settlement. Internally displaced populations more often self-settle and are dependent on their own resources and ingenuity, in addition to the generosity and tolerance of host communities, because of the limited mandates of humanitarian assistance organizations that address their needs. Settlement is often with extended family members or in communities with people of the same ethnic background. It may be either rural, urban or peri-urban. In some cases the U.N. has promoted this kind of settlement by providing food rations to uprooted persons staying with relatives.

The advantages of self-settlement include the limited administrative support required, the low-cost, the self-help and independence that it fosters and the degree of self-determination that it permits. Disadvantages include overburdening existing resources and infrastructure, and inadequate support and protection (Chambers, 1982). Given the existing poverty of many hosting communities and countries as well as the limited resources of emergency populations, self-settlement can be extremely difficult and the entire population may become further impoverished.
Spontaneous settlement may involve shelter exchange. This occurs when two or more communities are forced to flee their homes, usually because of war or civil conflict, and when it is feasible for each abandoned community to become occupied by the population from the other. Such exchange has occurred between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh. In Bosnia-Herzegovina abandoned flats have been occupied by incoming emergency populations. Such occupation provides shelter for needy populations, however, the political implications of such occupation is significant. The incorporation of shelter exchange into organized settlement programs, requires complex political analysis of the implications and long-term consequences of such settlement.

### Camps

Camps may be established to provide protection and assistance for emergency populations near their place of origin, in-country or in settlement areas across international borders. Regional or local integration is a low priority and the relief and protection is usually intended to be short-term and temporary.

**Closed Camps** restrict the movement of refugees or displaced persons to assure security and physical protection in the context of conflict and to restrict integration in the area of settlement.

**Open Camps** allow freedom of movement and generally facilitate integration with the local population and economy. Openness improves the opportunity for development and fosters self-reliance. Open camps are organized emergency settlements which may develop into permanent residential settlements.

### Mass shelter

Generally required by the emergency flow of mass movements of uprooted persons and considered short-term, mass shelter provides refuge in pre-existing facilities – warehouses, barracks, gymnasiums, schools – which often were never intended to be residential facilities. The central concerns include overcrowding, inadequate privacy, sanitation and provision of services. The impact on the facility used for shelter can also be a major concern. In 1992, after the worst floods for 200 years in China, schools were used as shelters. Families wrecked the chairs, desks and other furnishings, resulting in a new policy requiring a specific room into which *all* furniture is placed before the headmaster hands the school over to the Civil Defense Office.

When longer-term alternatives for temporary settlement are not available, issues related to such concerns are exacerbated and dependency is likely to result. In addition, the occupation of public facilities for housing may obstruct the capacity to provide the public services for which the buildings are normally utilized.

### Smallholder Settlements

Smallholder settlements are organized settlements where refugees are provided with a place of residence and a means of livelihood. Most are agricultural and aim to establish economic viability for the settled population. Arguments against smallholder settlement have focused on the institutional nature of some settlements, the high failure rate of settlements that have required continual subsidies and support, or the failure of those which were established on insufficient land with inadequate resources and accessibility. In addition, the costs of such settlement have also been prohibitive, particularly when land had to be purchased. There are, however, cases where smallholder settlement has been successful and uprooted persons have been able to establish themselves in a self-reliant manner, with familiar livelihoods, contributing to both the economy and social infrastructure of the host community. (Chambers, 1982).

Lessons learned from the mistakes of some of the first emergency settlements include recognition of the importance of freedom of movement, the failure of collective agricultural production and the importance of qualified staff selection and training (Chambers, 1982). Confining agricultural settlers within a limited area reduces their ability to learn from area agriculturists, supplement their incomes and food supplies through other employment or trade, and integrate within the social and economic context of the host community. Such isolation inhibits self-reliance and induces dependency, rather than encouraging an investment of time and energy in community development.

Collective agricultural production has seldom been successful, but smallholder production based on household economic units have been successful and are preferred by settlers. The management of agricultural settlements requires a willingness and ability to listen to, understand and communicate with the uprooted population, rather than an authoritative top-down management approach. Agricultural and administrative competence and an ability to work with the local population, administration, and governing
structures is also critical. A participatory and flexible approach to smallholder settlement is more likely to develop appropriate support systems and respond to the needs of the emergency population. The resources available for such responses and the increasing numbers of uprooted persons, will limit the viability of smallholder settlements in many contexts, however, they may be the best solution in some circumstances.

**Duration of Emergency Settlements and Long–Term Solutions**

- **Temporary**
  
  Temporary settlements are interim arrangements intended to be of limited duration until safe return or resettlement is possible. An emergency that is short–term is generally caused by natural or technological disasters for which recovery can be achieved without intervening political upheaval or conflict.

- **Indeterminate**
  
  Though intended to be temporary, the duration of many settlements is not readily apparent, as resolution of protracted causal factors is difficult to predict and implementation of recovery programs may languish. Increasingly, host governments and communities are unable, reluctant, or unwilling to integrate emergency populations and emergency settlement is considered temporary. Though permanent legal status may not be granted, in situations where the conditions causing flight are protracted and return is impossible, the development of self–sufficient settlements is preferred to indeterminate camp status.

Decisions made in the initial emergency phase of an influx – such as placement of wells or patterns of housing or choice of fuel supply – are often made in the heat of the moment, but come back to haunt camp administrators. In Zaire thousands of Rwandans who were dying because of lack of food and medical treatment, self–settled in an area without water. When the immediate emergency had passed, aid providers were faced with the choice of moving large numbers of people to an area where there was sufficient water, or providing water by truck to camps, an expensive response requiring enormous energy and logistical support. The consequences of compromising on the availability of essential resources in the initial settlement crisis period are far–reaching. Guidelines have been developed for emergency settlement, although they are sometimes not utilized, to ensure that longer–term implications are considered at the very beginning.

In contrast, self–sufficient settlements with an adequate base of resources that have received initial support for both the emergency population and the local hosts may have beneficial impacts on the local socio–economic structure and systems. They may also provide opportunities for improving the lives of refugees and displaced persons that can be beneficial in their eventual place of permanent settlement. Given the increasingly protracted nature of forces which create emergency populations, a development approach to emergency settlement, which recognizes the diverse needs and abilities of the host and emergency populations and facilitates opportunities to address those needs and build upon those strengths, is essential.

- **Long–Term – “Durable” – Solutions**
  
  Historically three long–term solutions have been applied to uprooted populations: third country resettlement, integration into host communities, and voluntary repatriation or return to place of origin. Third country resettlement is a durable solution for less than one percent of today’s emergency population. Because many host communities and countries are impoverished and lacking socio–economic and political stability as well as resources to sustain their own populations, local integration is not an option for most refugees and displaced persons. Repatriation and return have become the preferred durable solution and it is fully discussed in topic paper 11.

- **Reconstruction**
  
  Reconstruction is often required before uprooted persons can return to their place of origin or reestablish their lives when they have been emergency populations in–situ. When the forces of displacement have involved natural or environmental disasters or warfare, substantial reconstruction may be required before it is safe for people to return or possible to re–establish self–sufficiency.

**Summary**

As the number of uprooted persons in the world increases, the size and frequency of emergency operations have increased and they are more complex. The crises are intertwined with a variety of political, military, economic, social and legal interests which involve complex historical origins and contemporary issues.
However, the funds available for emergency protection and assistance are limited and there is an increasing tendency to limit assistance to life-sustaining relief items. Less funding is available for programs which support education, economic self-sufficiency, preventive health care, counseling and other services. Support for development planning, strategies and assistance which could address the root causes of disasters are being eclipsed by emergency relief and humanitarian assistance. While those who are providing humanitarian assistance cannot bring development or peace, international institutions and organizations can offer aid in a way that avoids reinforcing the problems that underlie emergencies and maximize opportunities to address and correct these problems (Anderson, 1993). Careful contextual analysis and strategic implementation of assistance is essential if the plight of the world’s uprooted peoples is to be alleviated.

References


**Topic 2 – Planning for Preparedness: Early Warning, Contingencies, and Operations**

*This paper was prepared by Pat Reed and Jim Good. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, significant contributions were provided by:*
Planning – the act of thinking before doing is deceptively simple to describe yet difficult to do well in practical application. This short paper looks at a basic set of planning principles which can be applied to a wide variety of emergency settlement situations and relates them to best practices in carrying out some of the planning functions typically required in relation to emergency response. The paper draws heavily on materials developed for the UNHCR Emergency Management Training Programme and other sources related to a wider range of disaster responses.

Principles

1. Planning for emergency settlements before they occur is essential to the rapid response and protection of the affected communities.

Planning is a vital component of emergency response. Emergencies can be better managed if responders have thought them through before they happen. Planning, in the most fundamental sense, involves the idea of readiness or preparedness for future actions, including both scheduled events, as in operations planning, as well as hypothetical events, as in contingency planning. “Preparedness involves forecasting and taking precautionary measures prior to an imminent threat when advance warnings are possible. Preparedness planning improves the response to the effects of a disaster by organizing the delivery of timely and effective rescue, relief and assistance” (DMTP, 1992, p. 1).

2. The scope of planning for emergency settlement includes all likely management tasks, (technical, social, legal and administrative) for the emergency response.

Good planning should lead to an environment in which the affected people – refugees, displaced, de–stabilized, and besieged can meet their own needs quicker and better during an emergency. This includes their physical, psychological, political, social, and economic needs – whether managed locally or internationally. This planning must be both comprehensive and integrated to be useful.

Planning should be comprehensive to the degree that psycho–social needs, for example, are anticipated and addressed as well as physical needs. The planning should be integrated to the extent that assistance–sectors and their mutual linkages are assessed and programmed.

3. Planning for emergency settlements must include the stages of preparedness, early warning, contingency planning, operations planning, and the eventual phase–out of assistance.

Being prepared for an emergency includes establishing and maintaining early warning systems, continually assessing the pre– and early–emergency context and planning for contingencies, mobilizing resources, and preparing structures and systems. All of these aspects will necessarily be based on a continual cycle of assessment – of targeting problems and possible solutions. The larger picture, the vision of a community transcending the effects of emergency and becoming more productive and less vulnerable to future setbacks must be kept in mind, and planned for from the beginning.

4. The responsibility for anticipating, through early warning, and contingency planning for populations likely to be caught in emergencies is shared by government and humanitarian assistance agencies.

Early warning is “the identification, interpretation, and recognition of events that would indicate a potential emergency” (Cuny, 1988). Early warning involves collecting information from numerous sources, interpreting that information, and identifying signs that warn of a developing crisis. Scenarios concerning the potential flow of displaced people need to be developed. As the emergency starts to escalate, operating partners should be notified and information exchanged so that planning for the response can begin. In the case of internally displaced people and refugees the local offices in the areas of origin and destination must be responsible for establishing early warning systems, monitoring events, and taking proactive action.
5. Responsibility for preparedness/planning for emergency settlement is useless without the actual capacity to carry out these activities.

Despite the many calls to develop an effective early warning system for both natural and human–made disasters, no such system is well established and respected today. Instead of an early warning system, there is a collection of people and institutions that pay some attention to early warning signs. Early warning systems for refugee and other related emergencies have long been considered a weak part of the international response system (Clark, 1989).

Donors have shown little interest in responding to impending events, even when emergency outcomes are extremely likely. As Reed Brody (1993) the executive director of the International Human Rights Law Group has said: “Early warning is not enough, however, without the political will and the institutional ability to respond effectively to such warnings”. In other words, early warning is meaningless without early action. Both Bosnia and Rwanda are clear examples of situations that the international community was not willing to respond to until they became fully–developed disasters.

6. Preparedness, including all levels of planning for emergency settlement must be “owned” by those who will be involved in the actual response.

Adequate planning will not happen solely on the grounds of mandated responsibility. Even adequate capacity in addition to mandate will not be enough to propel planning forward if motivation is lacking. Planning must be conducted from the inside of those agencies, ministries, and other bodies which will actually carry out the humanitarian response to emergency settlements. “UNICEF has found, and disaster research also confirms, that preparedness, like emergency response, is not an activity to be initiated as an extraneous effort or outside initiative. It must be actively carried out by whomever will have a role in providing emergency services and it must be integrated into on–going services and programmes” (UNICEF, 1995 p. 2).

Best Practices

Preparedness for response to situations of emergency settlement can only be derived from a vital ongoing process, not from any plan, isolated stage, phase, or time–limited series of actions. The limits to preparedness are determined by the resources available and the political will to invest them in this process. The principal result of a good preparedness process is not a plan, but rather an improved physical, psychological, political, social, and economic environment for response. This environment will facilitate the humanitarian response to situations of emergency settlement.

Preparedness can include establishment and operation of early warning systems, continual assessment, and various levels of planning activities as well as more intensive resource mobilization, including staff selection and development, and preparation of administrative systems and structures. Even after an emergency situation has developed, preparedness activities should continue (for example contingency planning) in preparation for greater or changing needs. As early warning, assessment and planning are all integral elements of preparedness, they are all part of this ongoing process as well.

Preparedness planning

Emergency preparedness includes “the actions taken by individuals and organizations to prepare for an emergency” (Cuny, 1988). It includes developing contingency plans, generating organizational systems, stockpiling supplies, training people, and working with staff to monitor and recognize the signs of an impending crisis.

Preparedness includes a variety of activities:

- Setting emergency policy
- Setting up an emergency system, including staffing
- Making a contingency plan
- Training people in emergency management
- Setting up a protection plan (specifically for refugees) or other sectoral plans
- Delegating emergency responsibilities
- Developing standard operational procedures (for convoy movements, transit and reception center operations, and communications)
- Identifying supply sources
- Stockpiling and pre-positioning supplies and equipment (UNHCR 1990)

According to the WFP handbook *Food Aid In Emergencies* many of the natural hazards which can lead to situations of emergency settlement are foreseeable, and therefore should be prepared for.

“Many of the natural phenomena which cause natural disasters are not unforeseeable even if the timing of their impact may not be predictable much in advance, if at all. It is therefore possible for communities, government services, and assistance agencies to plan ahead for threats to which particular areas are known to be exposed – to be ‘prepared’ to respond when need arises.

There are a number of distinct aspects to preparedness:

(a) Awareness of vulnerability
(b) Public warning systems
(c) Response capability – information and organization

This understanding of preparedness is based on the assumption that it is better to make decisions about emergency response before the emergency starts, when a thoughtful analysis of a situation is possible, than it is to react later, when information is still incomplete and confusing, but the time constraints are much greater. Preparedness should take those aspects of decision making which are not situation-specific out of the crisis–mentality prevalent during emergencies and pro-actively move it into the more manageable planning stage. It gives an organization time to mobilize its resources and lets it respond rapidly to unique situations as they develop.

International preparedness for emergencies which are by their nature international (refugee flows for example) and those which quickly surpass the ability of the National government to manage alone should be based within those organizations most likely to respond, and the donor community. Combined with this preparedness should be a working coordinating mechanism for the efficient deployment of resources in situations where there is not a clear “lead agency” or organization. In such cases, the key to disaster preparedness and response is flexibility. Plans, structures and the people involved ought to be adaptable to changing situations, needs, and resources.

National preparedness for situations of emergency settlement should be community-based and community-driven. It is a continuous process, not an isolated stage, nor a limited series of actions. The resources available and the political will to invest them in this process will determine the limits of local preparedness. When an emergency occurs, this process continues. To compartmentalize aspects of preparedness may be counterproductive and may give the impression that preparedness is no more than a set of steps to be followed in order, rather than a continual integrated process.

Community preparedness can also be carried out through societal measures. These non agency-specific measures are typically awareness raising exercises that serve to expose community members to the hazards likely to occur and prepare them for individual and community response. This may be done through regular awareness campaigns or through more specific awareness events. “In some countries, the anniversary of a major disaster is remembered as Disaster Awareness Day – 1 September in Japan, 20 September in Mexico, and the month of April in California, USA. On this day drills are performed, ceremonies and activities held to promote disaster mitigation. The United Nations General Assembly in its adoption of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (Resolution 44/236, 22 December 1989) designated the second Wednesday in October as an International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction which may be an opportunity for many other countries to carry out disaster awareness activities (Coburn et al, 1991, p.25).”

■ Sustaining preparedness
As the **preparation process must be sustained** if it is to be useful, an understanding of its day to day effects on those conducting the work is essential. One principal aspect of all preparedness planning is the implicit statement that the possibility of disaster is real. This simple declaration will involve serious political implications. In many cases, the suggestion of the probability of disaster (especially human-made disaster) is frequently seen as beckoning it. In some cases, this acknowledgment amounts to assigning responsibility for the situation, and further recognizing that someone (generally those in positions of power or authority) should either reduce risks, or prepare for alleviating the consequences. Therefore, in many situations, planning for preparedness is seen as a political threat.

While the political situation described above is common and understandable, the idea of preparedness as a non-threatening task must be actively promoted. Tact and understanding in the furthering of this approach are essential. An awareness of local, national, and international sensitivities is a requirement for anyone actively advocating for preparedness.

### Planning approaches

The overall approach to preparedness through planning for response in situations of emergency settlement will naturally depend on the nature of the organization or agency responding. The approach may be technical and highly quantifiable, or may be more general with many intangible aspects to the situation taken into consideration. Common approaches tend to be either relief-oriented (saving lives) or development-oriented (promoting better life situations). The following three approaches reflect different basic approaches for response to emergency settlements which form a spectrum from short-term survival issues to longer-term development issues.

#### Needs and resources approach

This word pairing of **needs** and **resources** represents an approach that is highly quantifiable, practical, and immediately operational in its basic structure. **Needs** are requirements for human existence such as food, water, and shelter which may be quantified in some useful way, and thereby compared to **resources**, which are the available material reserves from which needs may be satisfied. This “balance sheet” approach is most appropriately used by immediate action planners, logisticians, site and shelter experts and others involved in the efficient provision of material goods and services to those in need. Needs which are unmet usually represent **problems** for planners as described in the approach below.

#### Problems and solutions approach

This pair of words represents a different approach from the one above as it adds a more deeply analytical perspective to planning. A **problem** represents a state of being which does not agree with the organization’s or individual’s **vision** (see the annex of planning terms at the end of this paper). Problems are similar to needs as expressed in the approach above, but the term is more widely defined. When paired with **solutions** it describes a planning approach which is not necessarily constrained by the definition of **needs**. This approach is considered to be more creative and less narrow in scope than the practitioner’s use of the terms **needs** and **resources**.

#### Vulnerabilities and capacities approach

This pair of terms comes from a more developmental perspective in planning. While similar in usage to the problem and solution approach just described, it is more truly developmental since the problems and solutions are presented from the viewpoint of the affected individuals or communities rather than from the viewpoint of the outside responder. **Vulnerability** is the degree or likelihood to sustain damage due to lack of ability to control one’s own situation. **Capacity** is the degree of strength or ability to resist damage and to succeed in achieving a situation in accordance with one’s own vision.

One aspect of this approach that must be considered is that it is not instant. “The danger of speed is that, in a rush, an agency will focus entirely on victims and their needs, problems, and suffering and fail to note capacities. Capacities—building requires consultation and involvement; this does not take vast amounts of time, but it does necessitate an approach which assumes that local people, not outsiders, are “in charge.”

When compulsion for speed means that an NGO assumes all responsibility for the management and logistics of relief, this is apt to override existing local capacities” (Anderson, p. 50, 1989).

### Formulating plans

In planning for emergency response, humanitarian workers must rely on the affected community in many ways. For example, the affected community provides much of the information in the assessment and can help identify available resources. One of the most important elements in any successful program is the affected
population’s participation in decision making, particularly in determining objectives, allocating resources to achieve the objectives, and implementing programs.

To be successful, a process must be based on the people it is meant to serve: the communities potentially affected by the disaster or emergency. Local people must run the process, even though external support will often be needed. The fact that the disaster has not yet occurred does not lessen the need to involve the community. Even the analysis of what areas are most at risk should involve the communities. The structure of the society involved and its intricacies must be understood and tapped by whoever is promoting preparedness.

The need for specialized, sometimes external, resources such as program expertise can also be important. Although external experts may use information, techniques, and equipment not available to locals, the analysis of their results should be community based. Outside assistance – on such areas as disaster risk analysis – may also be required. Which outside resources will be needed will depend on the community, likely situations causing emergency settlement and its access to such resources.

Emergency planners should keep in mind that the standard international response is often different from local responses. Internationals might send dry food, such as flour, maize, and food parcels, but local responses might include baked bread and vegetables. The international shelter response is frequently tents, but local communities provide existing structures: public or religious buildings, and, in some cases, their own homes. If preparedness is possible, local responses ought to be considered.

### Formulating objectives

**Planning cannot be done without incorporating objectives of the outcomes with the plan.** Considering the preceding discussion of the importance of the process over the plan, it is necessary to return to focus on the planning document itself. The written plan does have tremendous value if well written and followed. The writing of the plan – and subsequent redrafting when required – crystallizes the planning into snapshots of the process at the time of the preparation. While not reflecting the whole range of planning activities or the idea of the evolution of the plan over time, these snapshots are necessary to communicate the idea to others as well as to clarify the thoughts and plans of the authors through its preparation and review of its objectives.

“Objectives should have four basic characteristics:

1. they should be expressed in writing;
2. they should be measurable;
3. they should be specific as to time;
4. they should be challenging but attainable. Placing the goals in written form increases understanding and commitment. Confusion as to what the goals actually are is less likely to occur when they are written” (Monty et al, 1988, p. 89).

### Early warning

The concept of early warning has been integrated into preparedness planning for a broad range of circumstances, including natural disasters, refugee influxes, and populations caught in civil conflicts. The implementation of permanent “early warning systems”, however, have been established much more firmly in relation to natural disasters than for political and military upheavals. For example, well established storm and tsunami warning systems are installed across the globe, are well established and function properly. There is also an extensive network of earthquake and tremor monitoring equipment which has proven beneficial in providing early warnings of destructive earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in many instances.

Disaster managers have long felt a need to incorporate this vision of and regularized early warning to the more variable world of human events in order to establish early warning systems for refugee flows and other human–made humanitarian emergencies. The difficult political aspects of this vision have been difficult to overcome. In addition, governments of regions producing forced migrations may see active early warning systems as an interference in their internal affairs. National governments may doubt the humanitarian intent of the early warning systems and may also fear that early warning which leads to preparations to receive migrants might constitute a “pull factor” that could intensify the tendency to flee.
Humanitarian responders to refugee emergencies need to think through several questions as they describe the main influx scenarios:

(1) What are the likely emergency situations in the country of origin?
(2) What determines who among the emergency-affected population will leave?
(3) What specific trigger events might lead to an emergency refugee flow?

To answer these questions, several factors should be collected and analysed:

- **Push factors** – Push factors are events that may force people to leave their country. They can be divided into two categories:
  
  ? **Root causes** – Often, root causes have existed for a number of years. Racial or religious conflicts, long-standing border disputes, and ecological conditions such as desertification are examples. Root cause information is not specific, and therefore it may be difficult to use it to predict how many people will leave at a given time. Root causes affect different people in different ways: some may flee, while others choose to stay and fight; still others face the situation without resistance.

  ? **Proximate events** – Proximate events are “the specific ways that root causes produce suffering.” For example, racism, the root cause, may be expressed through a new law that prohibits certain ethnic groups from living in a particular part of the country. This is the proximate event. To estimate whether the movement will be small, medium, or large, one needs to determine who these people are, where they live, and their approximate numbers.

- **Constraints and alternatives** – For the purpose of early warning, it is may be good to ask, “Why did some people remain in the country of origin?” Internationally displaced refugees are a minority in many refugee situations. These constraints and alternatives can be as powerful as the push factors in determining who will flee his/her country, in what numbers, in what condition, and when. Among the intervening factors are:

  ? Alternatives
  - Internal displacement
  - Official migration
  - Hiding
  - Joining resistance movements
  - Staying at home and accepting the situation

  ? Constraints
  - Seasonal weather
  - Crop or planting season or cycle
  - Military or police control of exit routes
  - Poor health
  - Difficulty of terrain
  - Lack of transport
  - Lack of knowledge of the routes
  - Lack of resources
  - Bandits, troops, mines, et cetera along the route

- **Triggering events** – Early warning information should lead to closer monitoring of the situation to detect possible triggering events, “those final critical occurrences that may convince significant numbers of people to leave their country.” Among them are:

  ? Crop failure
  ? Economic failure
  ? Outbreak of war
  ? Passage of oppressive legislation
Seasonal changes such as the end of the rainy season

The most useful factors for early warning are those that can be fairly accurately predicted by society or nature. For example, farmers will probably migrate if rains fail to arrive by a certain time of the year.

It may be difficult to get good information about events inside the country of origin. Therefore, there are some situations where it will be difficult, or impossible, to make early warnings. But identifying patterns for large influxes may be easier than it appears. Most of the larger influxes take several months, possibly longer, to develop. Small influxes may occur before they become large enough to qualify as a mass influx.

This means that there is time and relevant data to develop an early warning analysis. The most critical early warnings may take place after a flow has started. Therefore, one must avoid spending all one’s time dealing with the immediate emergency or the warning signs will go unheeded.

There is at least one major problem with early warning systems – no one pays much attention to them. The international community knew, for example, that Rwanda was likely to be a problem for months before the crisis occurred, yet few organizations did much to keep the killings from taking place after the president’s plane was shot down.

People and governments tend to not get interested in a potential emergency until it becomes a real one, until thousands of people have died or are headed for a border.

**Early warning systems are useless without corresponding early action.** Early warnings for any emergency scenario, whether natural, or human--made can provide invaluable time for planning. This information can be used:

- To avoid or lessen detrimental effects
- To provide better relief assistance in a more timely manner

For emergencies involving refugees and other displaced people, there are two points that must be remembered:

- Early warning analyses should include a range of scenarios
- Mass influxes are the most important scenario

Several sources can provide information for early warning of emergency displacement. Among them are:

- Religious leaders from the community
- Other community leaders
- Insurgent or guerrilla forces
- Relatives of potential migrants who have already fled or who have otherwise been forced to move
- Government liaison offices
- International media
- Local media
- Nongovernmental organizations operating in the area
- Students
- Local and international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Africa Watch, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and the Center for Human Rights

Contingency planning
In general management terms, contingency planning is “the development of different plans to be placed in effect if certain events occur” (Monty et. al., 1988, p. 728). The more typical usage among humanitarian aid providers concerned with emergency settlement relates more specifically to emergencies. Contingency planning is comprised of “the actions taken to prepare for an impending emergency” (Cuny, 1988). It covers food, health, water, sanitation, logistics, and physical planning. Typically contingency planning is used to:

- identify scenarios
- set priorities and goals
- identify activities and tasks
- allocate resources
- develop procedures
- Ensure access to technical inputs
- allocate responsibilities

for the general areas of:

- Protection (especially for refugees)
- Assistance sectors (water, food, shelter, etc.)
- Program management, coordination, and administrative support (UNHCR 1995)

Contingency planning begins when the displaced or threatened population crosses certain thresholds, such as moving to an area near a likely crossing place or exhibits other signs of imminent mass migration. At that point, steps should be taken to activate the organization and its partners to begin preparing for the emergency.

Based on the contingency plan, emergency response managers must determine the most useful functional and geographical areas in which to operate in preparation for their response. The place where refugees are most likely to enter a neighboring country, or where internally displaced might resettle may be identified from topographical features, social and cultural ties, previously used transportation routes, and natural barriers such as rivers and mountains. Communities at risk of becoming emergency settlements in situ may also be identified due to assessment of various risk factors. Then, based on these scenarios, potential operational theaters can be identified. Within those operational theaters, settlement sites, logistics bases, etc., can be identified. In most cases, these areas should be surveyed to verify whether they are suitable. Data on roads, railways, airports, and river transport facilities should also be collected.

In many developing countries food may need to be imported from other places. In some locations, this could take as many as ninety days, perhaps longer, from the time the food is ordered until it arrives. That means the window for decision making is limited. Food must be ordered when it appears likely large numbers of people will cross the border. Failure to do this early means one of two things will happen:

1. Large numbers of people may not receive adequate food.
2. The relief agency must take extraordinary measures to get food to the area.

If the people are malnourished, a high mortality rate can be expected. Failure to make an early decision means that the range of choices is limited. Rather than shipping food at a relatively cheap cost by sea or land, the agency will have to transport it by air. The costs will therefore increase tenfold. The longer a decision is delayed, the more likely it will be a least–worst–choice option (Cuny, 1988b).

Even in light of the above discussion, there are several reasons why contingency planning may be ignored. Agencies or ministries may be too busy with the emergency to look at the plans; or the people may believe that planning is less important than action. But other reasons may be equally important:

- The organization may think it is too small to divide its time and resources between ongoing operations and newly developing ones.
- The organization may have a mandate or philosophy that restricts action until after the emergency presents itself.
- The issues involved may be too complex politically to allow the organization to act.
- The organization may fear becoming involved in another lengthy or difficult operation (UNHCR, 1994a).
However, such arguments mask long-term problems in dealing with potential emergencies. Most organizations want to relieve human suffering as their goal. Therefore, a delay in responding to an emergency is bad tactics as well as bad ethics. If it is not ignored or misused, early warning information can lead to quicker responses, better coordination, and more efficient humanitarian assistance. However, if the staff can no longer handle the day to day crises, they may resist diverting their scarce resources to what may be a false alarm. Political reasons for not addressing an emergency may also exist. Some people may find preparing contingency plans for emergencies difficult to defend. But this resistance can be overcome only by normalizing contingency planning. The risk of diverting resources from ongoing work must be balanced against the risk of not being prepared should an emergency occur (UNHCR, 1994a).

Organizations should always stress that the planning exercise is a valuable option in its own right, whether or not the emergency materializes. Planning for an emergency is always a risk, since the emergency may not happen. But the plan must be recognized as valuable. If planners plan for an emergency that does not happen, they are not wrong. Planning is an end in itself. Planning can strengthen the organization’s future operations. It also can strengthen inter-organizational efforts, even when the emergency does not occur.

### Operations planning

An operations plan differs from a contingency plan, since the emergency being planned for is now a reality—a refugee or displaced persons situation exists. The emergency response workers will want to define the best actions they can take (UNHCR, 1994a).

In putting together an operations plan, the first question the emergency response workers want to ask is: is there an agreed contingency plan? If there is, they need to compare it with reality. How close is it? They will then adapt the plan, based on how it differs from the scenario that has materialized. The locations, numbers, profiles, and other relevant aspects of the affected population must be assessed to determine who will take what action, where and when it will be taken. The workers need to specify their objectives—and the standards to judge their success in achieving them (UNHCR, 1994a).

“Although there are no hard and fast rules for developing a Plan of Action (Operations Plan), the planning process itself is straightforward. In a sense planning is a structured problem-solving approach based on a rational assessment of needs and resources. It includes these steps:

1. Prioritize needs
2. Assess material and financial resources, as well as local capabilities and limitations
3. Identify a vision of the goals of the operation, what and how much assistance is required, and what it might cost
4. Define a set of realistic objectives, the accomplishment of which will ensure that the goals can be met.
5. Generate a range of alternative methods and tasks to accomplish the objectives
6. Choose the most effective and efficient methods and tasks
7. Identify who is responsible for implementing the chosen methods and tasks
8. Devise means to monitor and evaluate plan implementation
9. Establish procedures to adjust the Plan of Action based on implementation experience, changing circumstances, and new information and constraints
10. Identify government liaison and secure government approval to proceed” (IOM, 1994, p.70).

To respond quickly and effectively, two sets of activities need to be carried out:

1. Assessment – Emergency assessment is the survey and information-collection activities carried out to determine the status of an emergency, the condition of the affected people, the adequacy of the services being provided, and the conditions of their settlement (Cuny, 1988).
At this stage, the affected population is the main source of information. Techniques for evaluating operations should be used to reevaluate the situation, to monitor various systems, and to adjust program management. An important aspect of the initial assessment is the provision of sufficient information for planning and adjusting the emergency response. Research must be thorough but rapid. (See the Emergency Settlement paper “Needs and Resources Assessment” for a more thorough discussion.)

Initial interventions – The response to an emergency should assume some problems will be present until an assessment proves otherwise. Actions are built on an epidemiological understanding of what causes morbidity and mortality: malnutrition, communicable disease, diarrhea, and dehydration. The priority activities – food, immunization, and clean water – can be conducted without highly trained technicians. Although the host government is responsible for the initial response, few governments are capable of meeting these needs. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations, and local Red Cross/Red Crescent societies are often brought in.

Priorities that require early decisions are:

- Ordering and pre-positioning food
- Identifying disease threats
- Ordering vaccines for immunization
- Establishing a cold chain for medicines
- Finding a supply of clean drinking water and protecting it
- Providing decent sanitation
- Making sure that logistics are adequate (Cuny, 1988).

Standards

Widely agreed standards on planning for emergencies are not known to exist. The Emergency Settlement Project will explore the value and viability of establishing such standards through the conference discussions as well as in subsequent activities.

Annex

The following short glossary is intended as a guide to the planning terminology used in this paper, and their definitions are presented below.

**Activity** – An activity is a discreet action which leads to the completion or attainment of an objective.

**Goal** – A goal is the central and overriding aim of an organization which is summarized in its mandate or charter. The goal is the state of things as they should be according to the vision of the organization or its founders.

**Objective** – An objective is a quantifiable step or concrete action which can be used to measure progress in a strategy.

**Strategy** – A strategy is the method or approach which is implemented to achieve a goal – a plan of action. As opposed to a state of being (a goal to be attained), a strategy is a methodology by which a goal is achieved.

**Vision** – A vision is the mental image of how things should be. This may be applied to the personal, group or organizational level, and represents the top of the planning hierarchy under which the supporting levels of goals, strategies, objectives, and activities fall.

References


**Topic 3 – Needs and Resources Assessment**

*This paper was prepared by James Good of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:*

- **Arturo M. Pesigan, MD** – is an assistant professor in the College of Public Health, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the University of the Philippines Manila.

- **John Telford** – formerly with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the founder of EMMA, Ltd. an Irish company offering humanitarian emergency management consultancy services.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

**Principles**

1. **Assistance to an emergency settlement population must be based on sound initial assessments of the population’s immediate needs and of the resources available to that population.**

   This “sound assessment” must include information about the emergency settlement population’s immediate needs, the existing community resources and the outside resources that may be made available to that population. The application of this principle elevates the initial situation assessment to the highest priority in the initiation of emergency response, since all other actions are dependent on the assessment information.

   As the title of this paper suggests, emergency assessment goes beyond consideration of critical needs. Agencies performing assessments must also assess which resources are locally available to meet the needs, so that only those resources not readily available are supplied from the outside. To this end, agencies involved in emergency response should be prepared, through contingency planning and stock-taking exercises, to immediately catalogue locally available resources.

2. **Emergency needs and resources assessment is generally a phased process which should, over time, generate an increasingly profound understanding of the needs of the emergency settlement population and the impact of the response—to-date.**

   Information is a critical need in emergency response. In emergencies some information is better than none at all, more is better than some, and so on. Therefore it is critical to establish a phased approach which quickly provides information (even if incomplete) and rapidly builds on the initial information to provide a complete assessment.

   Assessment is a continuous activity that informs decision-making at all stages and levels of an emergency including the period before the emergency event if there is any warning. The ongoing assessment consists of three phases: Preliminary Inquiry, Initial Rapid Assessment, and Ongoing Detailed Assessment, which includes monitoring and evaluation — the subject of another topic in this series of papers.

3. **The initial rapid assessment should produce a plan of action which establishes a framework for assistance, clearly defined objectives, and priorities for immediate action.**

   The initial rapid assessment is similar to an emergency medical triage procedure. The primary objective is to identify those things which can be done with the means at hand to prevent the greatest amount of excess morbidity and mortality of the population. “The disaster assessment team must prioritize the focus of their emergency evaluation in a manner that benefits the largest group of imperiled individuals affected by the most correctable problems” (Lillibridge, Noji & Burkle, 1993, p. 74).

   The amount of aid available from the international community for an emergency settlement population is often not known. While field–hospital triage protocols operate under the assumption that no additional help will arrive, the initial assessment must serve two purposes, to conduct the initial triage–like prioritization, and to
identify the extent of outside aid required to save life and reduce suffering.

4. An initial rapid assessment should be carried out as quickly as possible to enable immediate action. The initial rapid assessment should not be delayed because of lack of desired expertise.

The initial assessment team should report quickly, not necessarily perfectly or completely. It is more important to initiate assessment through available field assessors than it is to locate more experienced assessors at the cost of slower response. This in no way implies that assessments should be undertaken by the unprepared or disinterested. While speed is critical in the initial assessment, accurate information, even if incomplete, is essential so that emergency responders can act quickly to save lives.

5. The emergency needs assessment should consider the needs and available resources of communities living near the emergency settlement as well as those of the emergency settlement population.

Emergency settlements are never completely isolated from the surrounding communities. There will always be communication, commerce, and trade between communities. Therefore it is imperative to consider the situation of the immediate area as well as the emergency settlement. Just as the presence of local, active military forces are considered to have a large influence on the implementation of emergency assistance, the effects of extreme poverty, ethnic affiliations and tensions, and the political climate should also be considered with regard to the delivery of assistance and the appropriateness of development-orientated rehabilitation schemes.

Needs must be seen in the context of the needs of the local non-emergency community as well. This may mean that if the national health care structure is unable to sustain treatment of tuberculosis in rural areas, the provision of adequate coverage for the displaced population (and the local community) could be a problematic issue requiring careful consideration.

6. When multiple agencies are involved in assessments they should coordinate their efforts to achieve the highest overall efficiency of response.

In emergencies it is critical to move quickly and efficiently to provide the greatest assistance to the most people in an equitable manner. Coordination between agencies providing such assistance will further this efficiency by eliminating basic programming errors, inter-agency disputes, and extreme overlaps and gaps in services. "As the emergency response community moves from ad hoc disaster relief actions to more effective disaster prevention and mitigation activities, cooperation generated among relief organizations, governments, and academic institutions on the basis of commonly accepted assessment methods will prove critical" (Lillibridge, Noji and Burkle, 1993, p. 76).

For assessments to be useful, they must be both accurate and accepted. Agreed assessment results gained through coordinated field assessment can be detrimental if the assessment is poorly done. The possibility of a system of checks and balances may be lost if all agencies have coordinated their efforts to produce an inaccurate assessment. If agencies act in a coordinated way to produce a consolidated assessment report, there is extreme responsibility on the team members to make as thorough and professional an assessment as possible, since there may not be additional verifying assessments to correct errors.

7. To be valid, qualitative assessments must involve the emergency settlement community.

Many different methods and approaches exist for rapid assessment. Some of these are more rigorous and scientific than others, yet each can be defended as superior in certain situations. The real measure of an assessment’s usefulness is its accuracy in understanding the needs and resources of the community involved. Nobody understands a community or a situation better than those who are living in it. While assessments should be facilitated by those with skills and training in information collection and management, they must primarily involve the community members. Assessment findings should be presented to the emergency settlement community as well as the international community for validation and feedback.

8. All emergency settlement communities are made up of groups with varying needs and resources and every group is composed of other smaller groups of individuals for whom the general assessment may not apply.

For planning purposes it is often important to know as much as possible about the groups and sub-groups in the community. To address the diverse needs of the emergency settlement community, assessors need to be
able to combine and coordinate a large number of perspectives, dimensions and viewpoints in order to carefully weigh priorities among the assessed needs while remaining responsive to variations in need from one location to another or between groups in the community.

9. Assessments should be carried out in a professional way, using standardized techniques and methods for providing reasonably accurate and objective reports as soon as possible.

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), sampling techniques, and technological analytical methods, such as aerial photography and analysis, are all useful in some areas of assessment. The professional assessment team must understand the application of each of these techniques and be prepared to use those best suited (and readily available) for the particular assessment mission at hand, as illustrated below.

“Recently, CDC and state health officers, working simultaneously in Florida and Louisiana in response to Hurricane Andrew, used standardized disaster assessment methods to rapidly identify emergency public health needs of the affected populations. Specifically their purpose was to rapidly acquire information for the relief officials on the need for medical care, water, food, and other basic services among survivors of the disaster. In both states, the populations in the most devastated areas were surveyed using a field technique originally developed to assess smallpox vaccination coverage in less developed countries. To obtain information from a representative sample of residents, assessment teams randomly chose and surveyed 30 clusters of seven households. Using a standardized questionnaire, the team interviewed an adult member of each household. Within hours, data collected by assessment teams were summarized in a report to emergency relief decision makers. In the first days after Hurricane Andrew, these assessments were one of the few objective measures of the disaster’s impact on the population that disaster managers could use to prioritize their options for effective action” (Lillibridge, Noji & Burkle, 1993, p. 76).

Best Practices

Assessment approaches

Best practices in assessment are based primarily on “best general approaches” and secondarily on the particular techniques used to gather the information. The discussion which follows describes some of the basic approaches to assessment and briefly discusses situations in which each would be a “best approach.”

Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches were developed largely as a reaction to the difficulty often associated with large “sophisticated” sample surveying schemes. The keystone idea is flexibility on the part of the assessors to react to the assessment as it develops in a pro–active and creative way. “So with formal, highly structured methods at one extreme and intuitive somewhat haphazard information collection at the other, practitioners of Rapid Rural Appraisal have tried to find a middle ground which combines at least some of the strong points of each. RRA recognizes that a certain amount of rigor is essential in order to have confidence in the results of a field study and to persuade people of their validity, but that intuition and a certain informality and flexibility are essential to obtaining quality information from the field. Thus RRA offers methodological guidelines intended to improve the quality of information gathered, but it also insists that there can be no ‘cookbook’ guide to its use. Such a crutch would dangerously inhibit the flexibility and creativity which are pillars of the method” (Schoonmaker Freudenberger and Gueye, 1990, p. 2).

Although there are specific tools used in RRA techniques such as maps, various kinds of diagramming, and ranking exercises, there is still a notion that no pre–selected tool can be expected to work in all situations. The approach is founded on the following ideas:

• Indigenous knowledge – The researcher tries to assess the situation from the informant’s point of view rather than his/her own outside perspective.

• Iteration – Find out a little, ask a better question, find out a little bit more, ask a better question.

• Flexibility – Although a clear goal of what is to be accomplished is needed, flexibility in attaining that end is indispensable.

• Innovation – New situations will require new tools and new techniques.
• Interaction – The process promotes interaction and participation.

• Multidisciplinary and exploratory – RRA techniques take into account that most situations are by nature multidisciplinary due to their inherent complexity and that the most useful results are often the unexpected ones.

• Rapid – Results must be written-up quickly if decision-makers are to use the information in their decision-making process (Schoonmaker Freudenberger and Gueye, 1990).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) takes the same approach as RRA but moves beyond assessment in considering the participative method itself an empowering response. “The term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act. PRA flows from and owes much to activist participatory research, agro-ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, and rapid rural appraisal (RRA). In RRA information is more elicited and extracted by outsiders, in PRA it is more shared and owned by local people. The behavior and attitudes of outsider facilitators are crucial, including relaxing, not rushing, showing respect, ‘handing over the stick’, and being self-critically aware…. There is then, a distinction between ‘an RRA’ and ‘a PRA’. An RRA is intended for learning by outsiders. A PRA is intended to enable local people to conduct their own analysis, and often to plan and take action” (Chambers, 1992, intro).

Although both RRA and PRA are basically development-oriented rather than emergency-oriented, their exhortation to react to what is found during the assessment rather than follow pre-set guidelines, which may be inappropriate for the situation being assessed, is useful. These approaches are useful for assessing the local population’s understanding of their situation in preparation for participative program design and for implementation of longer-term development projects.

People Oriented Planning (POP) – This approach to assessment of emergency settlement populations has recently been developed by UNHCR to accommodate the distinct needs and resources of subgroups within refugee groups, (and is useful for others in emergency settlement as well), and to serve as a prompt to consider traditional and changing roles as they differ between gender and age groups. When it is known who is in the refugee population (refugee profile), which roles different groups perform (activities analysis and culture), and which resources they already possess that can be used (resources analysis); it will be possible to identify which resources and services need to be provided, who needs them, and where, how and when to provide them in order to reach the right people. This will improve program efficiency and effectiveness (Anderson, 1994).

This approach is largely based on the assumption that a thorough understanding of the demographic structure of the emergency settlement population and the specific roles and resources of each group will facilitate efficient emergency response in a way which enables rather than inhibits development. The approach is based on answering the following questions which are considered to be the three steps of the process:

• Step 1 – Refugee profile and context. Who are the refugees? What is the demographic structure of the group and what factors influence the refugee situation?

• Step 2 – Activities analysis. Who did (does) what activities? (This activities analysis identifies traditional and changing roles (especially along gender lines) of the people in the community.) Where and when did they do it? Are certain activities time sensitive or traditionally carried out at certain times of day or during certain seasons?

• Step 3 – Resources analysis. Who has what resources? Who in the community controls what resources? (This analysis identifies issues of land tenure among the population as well as control of other resources such as family property, money, direction of children, etc.) What resources must be provided to the refugees?

If answers can be found to these questions, primarily through interviews, then response programs can be best targeted to supporting existing community structures rather than ignoring them, or worse, actively working against them.

For emergency settlement populations this approach is useful for the long-term as well as the immediate emergency response. In both cases the approach highlights those issues affecting the day-to-day activities and relationships of the emergency settlement population. For example, although a POP approach is not
necessary to determine how many liters of water are required to sustain a population of 50,000 during the first weeks of an emergency, such a study may be required to assure that the water, once provided, can actually be accessed by everyone in the community. “The UNHCR response in every refugee situation should be directed toward the achievement of a humane durable solution. Decisions made at the beginning of a refugee emergency either lead to and support – or undermine and make more difficult – the achievement of a developmentally sound durable solution” (Anderson, 1994, p. 35). In addition to an ongoing POP training program, extensive materials exist on this approach and are available in several languages from UNHCR.

**Justifying or substantiating** – This approach is a conservative one in which the primary idea is to gather “evidence” which can be used to sway the opinions of responders. Typically this results in a highly quantified assessment report supported by an in–depth study. In this approach almost every question posed by the assessors is followed by the question “how can this be proven?”

Especially in situations where there may not be political will to respond to the emergency settlement population, this approach may be required to eliminate unanswered questions which may be delaying response. This approach is also used for following up earlier assessments that have been called into question by one or more of the responders. The approach is based on the idea that assessment without adequate persuasion to lead to action is not valuable.

** Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (C/V Analysis)** – This approach is closely related to the POP approach described above and is primarily development–oriented. The primary assumption is that all people, groups, and societies have both strengths and capacities for development as well as vulnerabilities. The general idea is to determine ways to increase capacity and reduce vulnerability. The approach is based on the completion of the matrix which appears below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Capacities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Material (What productive resources, skills, and hazards exist?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Organizational (What are the relations and organization among people?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational/Attitudinal (How does the community view its ability to create change?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the matrix is typically subdivided by gender to indicate where there are differences in the vulnerabilities and capacities of men and women in the group. An interesting aspect of this approach is its attention to areas beyond immediate physical needs.

**Quantitative planning** – The quantitative approach is primarily an emergency assistance logistical approach. The primary questions in this approach are how many? how much? and how soon? This approach is typically taken by military, civil defense, and other logistically experienced organizations that see their role primarily as moving required commodities to the emergency area.

An understanding and familiarity with previous emergency situations and logistical systems and a good, working knowledge of field realities underpins this approach. General planning skills, a working level of numeracy, and knowledge of “rule of thumb” standards and guidelines relating to physical capacities and requirements for running a complete logistics system (such as two liters of water per person per day or two tonnes of bulk food per person per month) are the primary skills necessary for implementing this approach.

Especially in the immediate emergency phase, this approach is useful since it leads to immediate action. The estimated tonnage of goods needed, length and difficulty of routes and other such practical “how to” and “how much” information is gathered. In emergency settlement situations where a large amount of outside support is needed quickly, this approach can very efficient in the short term.

**Mandate–limited/User–based** – This approach aims to maximize the efficiency of a given organization’s response by focusing its assessment in those specific areas in which it is are equipped and/or mandated to assist. “In operational terms, for any particular organization, this approach is very useful. The diagram below represents the targeted area for agency–specific assessments in the overall emergency situation. The intent is to locate the organization’s services or actions within the area where the organization’s mandate (or charter) and available resources overlap the needs of the emergency settlement community” (UNHCR/InterWorks, 1995, p. 20).
Although expedient for the organization carrying out the assessment, this approach is inherently biased towards those areas or concerns which the organization can address. The overall picture of the emergency settlement and a ranking or prioritization of needs may be missed when using this approach. As such, the approach is most useful for single agency assessments or as a component of joint assessments – if there is a mechanism in the coordinated effort to relate each user-based assessment to the larger group.

**Comprehensive** – Using this approach the assessor tries to address actual need regardless of the assessor’s ability to respond. This may result in a perceived need to coordinate with other organizations with varying mandates in order to meet the overall requirements of moving the population out of the definition of emergency settlement. The approach is comprehensive both in terms of issues or elements assessed, as well as in representation on the assessment team (that is, all responding agencies should be represented as well as members of the emergency settlement population.)

This approach is useful in coordinated assessment missions and in initial assessments as a way of identifying particular areas which may need more in-depth analysis. Because of its attempt to get the “big picture,” it is more likely to be carried out by generalists than specialists.

**The Best Approach** – The best assessment approach will likely be a balance of some, if not all, of the previously discussed approaches. Particular instances will naturally lead the assessment team to adopt one of these as a guiding approach. The extreme, or rigid, use of any of these approaches will be too limiting to be useful. The table below presents each of the approaches discussed above and reviews typical situations for which each application is best suited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment approach</th>
<th>Likely assessors</th>
<th>Best practice applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RRA/PRA</td>
<td>Social scientists, agronomists, community workers, multidisciplinary teams</td>
<td>Longer−term development oriented programs, any program dependent on local societal norms for its success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POP</td>
<td>UNHCR staff, social scientists, community services, multidisciplinary teams</td>
<td>Longer−term development oriented programs, any program dependent on local societal norms for its success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying/Substantiating</td>
<td>Logisticians, medical doctors, epidemiologists, physical planners, human rights observers</td>
<td>Short− or long−term programs where the primary implementation constraint is lack of confidence in requests for aid and in situations where growing problems may be hidden from view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/V Analysis</td>
<td>Social scientists, agronomists, community workers, multidisciplinary teams</td>
<td>Longer−term development oriented programs in which the primary goals are to strengthen local capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Planning</td>
<td>Physical planners, logisticians, medical doctors, nutritionists, water and sanitation engineers</td>
<td>Immediate emergency response which requires rapid delivery of significant outside resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User−based</td>
<td>Agency representatives</td>
<td>Limited emergencies requiring services of only one agency, situations where coordination has broken down or is constrained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Assessment techniques

Guided by the basic approaches discussed above, the following techniques can be used to collect information needed by those responding to the needs of emergency settlement populations. As with the approaches, these techniques can be well or poorly applied depending both on the assessors and on the situation being assessed. What follows is a short description of the various techniques along with identified best practices for the use of each technique.

**Remote/technical** – Remote assessment techniques are used for damage assessment after storms and earthquakes to determine overall numbers of damaged dwellings and other infrastructural and physical damage. Aerial photography is valuable for mapping the extent of flood damage. Because these remote techniques provide quick, gross estimates of numbers affected, they are useful for the purpose of initiating emergency response. The use of these techniques is constrained by the technical support required to conduct the assessment, permission for fly-overs in some instances, and the weather. As important as the photography in this technique is the analysis of the photographs, which often also requires expert personnel and considerable time.

**On-site visual assessment and photography** – On-site visual inspection and photography (where allowed and appropriate) can be extremely useful in the documentation of emergency conditions. Photos and video footage are valuable for substantiating the physical situation of the emergency settlement area.

Visual inspection is a critical part of assessment since it provides a reference point by which to judge information collected through interviews, surveys, and other measurements. Assessors should look for patterns in what they see. It is important for the assessors to note what people are doing, which people are doing which different tasks, and importantly, why they are doing it. How do other sources of information compare with what is seen? Assessors should keep looking when there seem to be discrepancies between various sources of information.

**Expert testing and analysis** – This technique applies to water quality testing, epidemiological surveys and surveillance, food testing and nutritional analysis and other areas where detailed technical knowledge is required. In some situations leading to emergency settlement, other expertise such as analysis of flood stage, radiation or other toxic material levels may also be required.

This assessment technique also includes nutritional surveys that require weighing or measuring children for malnutrition and/or other micronutrient deficiencies. Although much of this type of testing and analysis can be done by locally hired staff or volunteers, some training and direction must be provided by experts in the field.

**Interviews** – In virtually every assessment, interviews are a primary information collecting technique. It is often difficult in emergency situations for assessors to distance themselves from the response operation enough to carry out their assessment efficiently.

The assessors’ presence in the household may lead to more questions being asked of them concerning the emergency response than they are able to ask about the needs and resources of the community. Assessors will often need to distinguish themselves as assessors rather than as aid providers in order to carry out their task. If any interviewee is not interested in talking to the assessor, their wishes must be respected. Furthermore, the assessors’ time will be used as effectively as possible by interviewing those who are willing to provide information.

The principal best practices in interviews are:

1. Interviewers should assume that they will not get another chance to interview a particular person, and that the time for each interview will be short. Therefore, interviewers must be complete and concise.

2. Interviewers should ask questions which can be answered by a statement of fact rather than an opinion, where possible.

3. Interviewers must speak the language of the emergency settlement population.
4. Interviewers should use caution when taking notes. If interviewees are more willing to talk without note-taking, interviewers should talk first and write notes later. Similarly, interviewers should pay attention to the way in which interviewees respond to particular actions. In some cases tape recorders would be very efficient and useful; in many cases, however, the idea of a recorder is threatening and may curtail responses.

5. In situations or cultures where women may resist talking with men from outside their family or community, women interviewers should be used.

6. Interviewers should remember that their primary task is to get information so that others may respond quickly, not to guarantee any kind of assistance.

7. Interviewers should listen and be empathetic to what people are saying, but follow-up on surprising or irregular answers or statements in an open, non-threatening way. They should try to understand the viewpoint of the interviewee.

Interviews may be used in many different situations:

- With key informants – to ascertain special or deep knowledge about the people, place, or organization of the emergency settlement.

- With formal leadership structures – to gather information about community structures and to encourage participation in response planning.

- With groups – to sort out complex issues of perception within the group in a short time. Group interviews, however, may be biased towards the perception of leaders and may tend to hide problems or issues of subgroups within the community.

- With focus groups – to target specific subgroups likely to have different needs or resources from those promoted by the entire community. For example, interviews with women, minority groups or the elderly may provide insight to their situation which might otherwise be screened or filtered by the majority or controlling element of the population.

- With households – to determine distribution schemes and shelter programs. These interviews should form the basis for much of the POP analytical approach and should generate deeper understanding of how individual households operate.

- With individuals – to support information gained through other methods or as a simple survey technique.

Surveys – Surveys usually involve the use of a sampling technique which can be more or less “scientific” depending on the rigor with which it is administered. Probability sampling is used to establish the accuracy of survey findings.

There are two primary tasks in setting up a probability sample – identifying the sample frame, and establishing the number of people to sample within that frame. The survey frame is the definable pool from which subjects can be randomly selected. This is made easier when some system of organization of the population is already in place, for example in urban situations from telephone books, or property records and maps. Establishing a sample frame may be extremely difficult in situations of mass movement when people’s locations and even their total number is unknown.

The second task – selecting the number of interviewees – is dependent on the science of probability and statistics. The assessor has several options in selecting an appropriate sample size: using prepared guidelines and selecting the recommended number, statistically determining the number, or practically determining the number (i.e. how many people can be surveyed within the time allowed). In all of these instances it is important to know that the sample size will not be dependent on the total population, but rather there will be a gross number which will result in a relatively accurate sample, regardless of the population size. This number is typically between 100 to 200 persons (or other sampling unit, families for example) for the simplest type of survey method. Most social researchers would recommend a sample size of at least 100 for statistical analysis.
There are several sampling methods which may be applied in emergency settlement situations. The basic types are:

- **Simple random sampling** – in which every member of the target population is equally likely to be selected and where the selection of a particular member of the target population has no effect on other selections.

- **Systematic random sampling** – in which every fifth, or tenth member, for example, on a numbered list is selected. This may be wildly inaccurate if the list is incomplete or structured in a non-random way.

- **Stratified random sampling** – where the population is divided into categories (or strata) such as gender, age groups, profession, or other social or demographic grouping; then members are selected from each category by simple or systematic random sampling.

- **Cluster sampling** – where the sample is restricted to a limited number of natural groupings, such as geographic areas, known as “clusters.” For each of the selected clusters, either all sampling units within each cluster or a sample of the units from each cluster are selected.

**RRA and PRA techniques** – The practitioners of RRA and PRA have developed a collection of useful tools for carrying out assessments using their general approach. These are typically very interactive, low-technology approaches which draw on readily available materials. Some examples are:

- **Ranking** – In this exercise participants are asked to rank various elements, skills, or organizations, for example, by symbolizing them with large and small stones or short and long sticks for example. This method gains insight into the communities perceptions about what is important, rather than quantitative measurement of any particular phenomenon.

- **Diagramming** – Various kinds of simple mapping and relationship diagramming is also used to try to illicit a greater understanding of the systems at play in the community. These include transect diagrams and simple plans of communities and locales.

- **Discussing** – Simply discussing issues with individuals and groups can be an effective way to gain information and to learn if there are new areas which should be investigated.

### Estimation of numbers

Estimation of numbers is an important assessment activity. This can be done through various methods which are discussed below. The critical idea in assessment of numbers is the need to cross reference or triangulate assessment methods in order to achieve a level of confidence in the estimate. Assessors should always try to combine and analyze information from a number of sources without giving absolute authority to any single source. The following techniques may all be used:

1. **Standard village, town, or district records**, if available can be a reasonably reliable and economical means of estimating numbers in the first months of an emergency situation, especially in the case of natural hazard induced emergency settlement situations such as earthquakes, floods, storms, and famine, where populations may not have moved from their home communities. If these records are the main source of information on population size, the system will be rapidly abused and will very quickly become a liability if there is no training, monitoring, verification or improvement of the records during the initial response period. Quality can be improved by arranging for records to be kept by educated and responsible persons, and by providing them with materials, coaching and other forms of support.

2. **Actual head counts** at food or other distributions can help indicate whether village records are no longer accurate, especially if there is a discernible ethnic or language difference between the host and emergency populations. Staff from the host or displaced population who can easily distinguish one group from the other need to be involved in this process. This should be seen as contributing to greater accuracy in a joint process of estimation, rather than the instrument by which one agency discredits the statistics or planning figures of another.
3. **Dwelling counts** can also help corroborate numbers, especially where there is a clear need to question the reliability of existing records. In rural settings, displaced persons may be constructing their own houses. This method is more difficult in urban settings.

4. **Mapping of dwellings** may be useful where there is a need or opportunity for greater accuracy and detail, or in preparation for a full census. Simple mapping can be done by teachers or other educated persons in the village. In urban areas, town planning maps and suitably skilled persons from either the community or non−emergency host community can usually be found to facilitate the task.

5. **Spot checks on all of the above**, demonstration of concern about the accuracy of records, joint checks with authorities, appointment of inspection staff, agreement on standards and methods, etc. all help to keep the disparity between methods to a minimum (Mayne, 1995).

### Implementation

In emergency settlement situations, it is likely that the assessment approaches and techniques that are used will vary depending on the stage of the emergency.

#### Preliminary inquiry phase

During the earliest post−emergency assessment phase (from onset of emergency−2 days), the emergency assessment team, just before traveling to the affected area, gathers preliminary information about the emergency to enable an immediate response. The initial rapid assessment is prepared, preliminary data is gathered, and the assessment team is assembled.

The steps to be taken are:

1. confirm the displacement/incident
2. gather information on the circumstances of the situation, nature of the incident, date/time, where, why, etc.
3. gather demographic information on the emergency settlement population
4. prepare terms of reference for the assessment team and other instruments for the assessment
5. establish contact with government officials, experts on the area, informal and formal leaders and line agency officials
6. prepare a list of priority logistics information needs
7. produce a flexible schedule of activities

Skills needed for this type of assessment are:

- basic disaster epidemiology
- computing skills, familiarity with basic programs
- personal relations skills
- management skills
- research skills

#### Initial rapid assessment phase

During this phase (the first 1−7 days of the emergency), the assessment team travels to the affected area, determines the immediate needs of the affected population, and formulates a short−term plan of action. The team focuses on two primary areas: **what has happened** (the situation assessment) and **what is needed** (the needs/resource assessment.)

Technical and social skills needed are:
disaster epidemiology
public health/environmental hygiene aspects
computing skills (especially the use of statistical analysis software)
community development/organizing
logistical analysis
system analysis of the overall emergency needs and responses
language skills
listening skills

If the skills needed are not available at the outset of the emergency, do not delay while waiting for these specialists. What is important is to collect basic data quickly to form the basis for the action plan.

Types of data required:

- validation and enrichment of previously collected information
- information on settlement site(s) or possible alternate sites
- types of community structures traditionally found in the settlement community
- source(s) of potable water
- waste management for human, household, and medical wastes
- source(s) of food
- nutritional status of population, especially of vulnerable groups
- available logistics support
- medical/health supplies
- suppliers
- demographic information
- health status
- significant socio-cultural factors affecting the way assistance should be distributed

For this type of assessment, the team may concentrate on gathering data from key informants. Techniques such as focus group discussions may also be utilized. At this stage, time is critical so detailed surveys and other survey options may be too time consuming to complete in a scientifically useful way. A sample format for the initial assessment plan is available in the EMTP Assessment paper (UNHCR/InterWorks, 1995). However, legitimate sampling techniques have been used in some post-disaster assessments with very positive outcomes as in the Hurricane Andrew example cited earlier in this paper. If there is adequate logistics support, aerial surveys and on-site visual inspection will also be helpful.

Critical areas in the assessment are:

- number of persons requiring emergency assistance
- shelter
- water
- food
- sanitation
- psycho-social needs

Key informants are likely to be:

- political leaders
- informal leaders
- line-agency officials
- church groups or other socio-civic organizations in the community

In all cases the assessment team should have a spot map or general map to be able to see the general layout of the area. The collection of data may be facilitated by determination of clusters to ensure that representative geographical areas are sampled. This will help to mitigate survey bias against areas which are more difficult to access.

The plan of action should include the following:

- brief situation report and analysis
- priority activities
- persons responsible for each activity
• budget required and sources of additional support
• mechanisms for participatory evaluation

Ongoing detailed assessment

Ongoing needs and resources assessment is generally required as the status of the emergency settlement evolves. Greater depth of information gathering and analysis is called for as emergency needs are monitored, the impact of the response—to—date is assessed, and longer—term plans are formulated.

This stage of the ongoing assessment process focuses on individual needs and other non—emergency needs. Special programs and projects may be designed to reflect more detailed information gained through the assessment process.

The ongoing detailed assessment should focus on:

• continuation of baseline data collection especially regarding any change of status of the population
• immunization for communicable diseases
• infirmary services
• primary healthcare programs
• nutritional programs for vulnerable groups
• waste management programs
• health education
• social/community service activities

Survey techniques to be used:

• key informant interviews
• focus group discussions
• community information system – spot maps, pictographs
• questionnaires
• participant observation

Some of the useful indicators in conducting the assessment are:

• health status indicators such as morbidity and mortality rates and frequencies
• extent of community participation in decision—making and day—to—day administration of ongoing programs
• reports of health services provided (number of cases treated, referred, etc.)
• utilization of services (including satisfaction with services by the users)

Reporting assessment information

The reporting of information collected during assessment missions should be concise, and well organized for the most efficient use by the readers. Especially when reporting to UN agencies and other coordinating bodies the report should be:

• A consensus. It should contain multi—sectoral findings and response strategies that have been agreed upon by local and national authorities, the donor community and operational agencies.
• Accurate. All information should be cross—checked.
• **Concise.** It should contain only that information which is essential to understanding the condition of the displaced persons.

• **Useful.** The analysis of the assessment should pinpoint areas of concern that need to be addressed.

• **Pro-active.** It should offer recommendations for actions addressing specific concerns.

• **Widely disseminated.** The information obtained should be distributed to as wide an audience as possible to offer as complete an understanding to the international community as possible (Cuny, 1993).

**Resources**

“Within the UN system, a number of specialized agencies have the responsibility and/or capability for detailed sectoral assessment of needs in accordance with their mandate and operational experience... The sectors covered by individual agencies are indicated (below)” (UNDAC Field Handbook, 1994, p. 13).

**Involvement of UN Agencies in Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Competent UN Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>WHO, UNICEF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Nutrition</td>
<td>WFP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplementary Feeding</td>
<td>UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>UNICEF, UNHCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanitation and Environmental Services</td>
<td>UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Planning</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>FAO</td>
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(adapted from the UNDAC Field Handbook.)

The specific recommendations for expertise along sectoral lines for assessment are described in the topic papers relating to those sectors in this series of papers. The following guidelines and handbooks cover several areas to be assessed in the context of emergency settlement, and are presented as generalist’s, rather than specialist’s guides.

**Guidelines and field handbooks covering multidisciplinary aspects of emergency settlement assessments:**


This booklet is easy to take along due to its small size and durable construction and covers many aspects of emergency settlement assessment which have been compiled from various sources. There are special instructions and guidelines included for the US Disaster Assessment Response Teams (DARTs).


These two books are the field guides for WFP staff and counterparts dealing with the provision of food in emergency situations. Of special use are the “Rolling Assessment Approach” guidelines and various nutritional and logistical assessment guidelines.

**Assisting in Emergencies – A resource handbook for UNICEF and field staff,** prepared for UNICEF by Ron Ockwell, 1986.

This handbook, although somewhat dated, covers a wide range of topics and provides assessment guidelines in a comprehensive way – particularly Part 2 “Assessment and Programmes” which discusses assessment of many aspects of emergency settlement.

As the title suggests, this handbook is development oriented and provides information well beyond the scope of emergency settlements. Nevertheless the book gives insight into many areas of concern to assessment specialists. In particular Part Eight – Disaster Guidelines provides assessment guidelines on several areas of concern.


Although now outdated in some areas, this small handbook provides a comprehensive multi-sectoral overview of assessment and program issues related to refugee emergency situations. This handbook is presented in two Parts: Part One – Field Operations provides information of value to anyone responding to refugee emergencies, Part Two – Management Administration and Procedures, largely addresses internal procedures for UNHCR Administrative Staff.


This loose-leaf notebook guide is a compilation of various assessment guidelines for situations requiring international disaster relief assistance.

Guidelines and Standards

Standard Format for Assessing Mortality Rates

The following is taken from the Assessment Manual for Refugee Emergencies prepared for the Bureau for Refugee Programs, Dept. of State, Washington DC in 1985 by INTERJECT.

Background:

Mortality rate (death rate) is the single most important indicator of serious stress (illness/malnutrition, etc.) in a population. Knowing the causes of death is crucial since it helps set priorities for appropriate relief intervention. In addition, deaths are indicators/events of obvious interest and concern to refugees, relief administrators and the media. In refugee populations served by well-run relief efforts, overall mortality rates should not exceed 1.5 times those of the host population. An elevated mortality rate is a sign of some ongoing problem and should serve as a stimulus for a basic investigation of the situation. In general, even initially high mortality rates should fall to or below one per 10,000 per day within 4–6 weeks of beginning an adequate basic support program (sufficient food and water, simple healthcare, etc.) for a population. Rates which stay above that level should be a cause for concern.

Analysis Procedure:

Death Rate = (Number of Deaths × 10,000)/(Number of days × population) = Deaths per 10,000 per day.

Example – If 21 deaths have occurred over a 7–day period in a refugee population of 5,000 people, the death rate would be calculated as follows:

\[
\text{Death Rate} = \frac{(21 \times 10,000)}{(7 \times 5,000)} = \frac{210,000}{35,000} = 6
\]

which is expressed as 6.0 deaths per 10,000 per day.

(To convert to deaths per 1,000, which is the preferred method of some public health personnel and epidemiologists, divide the above rate by 10. For example, 6 divided by 10 equals 0.6 deaths per 1,000 per day.)

STANDARD:

Death rates exceeding 2.0 deaths per 10,000 per day indicate a serious situation; immediate action should be taken. Ideally one should seek to achieve rates below 1.0 deaths per 10,000 per day.
Because the number of deaths changes from day to day, it is important that rates be calculated over a period of days. The usual periods are one week or one month. For example, take the number of deaths occurring each day over a 7-day period and average the total; the resulting average daily number is used in analyses.

References


Topic 4 − Information Management and Communications

This paper was prepared by Jeffrey S. Klenk for InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:
Peter Anderson – formerly of the Centre for International Research on Communication and Information Technologies in Australia, is currently Assistant Professor at the School of Communications and the Associate Director at the Center for Policy Research on Science & Technology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Maxx Dilley – is currently the Famine Mitigation Science Advisor at the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the United States Agency for International Development in Washington, DC.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

With the spread of complex emergencies worldwide and the almost instantaneous response of the international media, emergency managers are routinely expected today to respond with immediacy and with appropriately–designed programs which address the short, medium, and long–term needs of emergency settlements.

As a result of this public and donor demand for immediacy and efficacy of response, the importance of good information management and communications has increased exponentially. Key decisions are often made thousands of miles from the emergency site by managers trying to respond simultaneously to the needs of governments, private donors, boards of directors, headquarters and field staff, the media and a myriad of other respondents – not to mention the actual needs of the affected population itself. Good information management has become essential to this decision–making process. In its absence, the emergency response is slowed, or worse, bad decisions with life–threatening consequences are taken.

Emergency response agencies have, as a result of this need for quick information, committed tremendous resources to develop sophisticated, “high–tech” information management systems consisting of worldwide computer networks and data transmission infrastructure. Agency decisions to make such commitments – while often justifiable given the increased capacity to speed information to managers – should always consider that information management entails not only high–tech solutions to information needs. Information systems necessarily include such “low–tech” components as local staff experience, maps on the wall, the telephone numbers of indigenous NGOs, and the large black ledgers found in commodity warehouses throughout the world.

Too often, the desire to be “on the cutting edge of technology” means that these other, less esoteric forms of information systems are not viewed as worthy of the emergency manager’s time or interest. The enthusiasm for learning to manipulate new software systems quickly overshadows the need for the manager to sit down with the shipping clerk, the monitor, and the warehouseman to ensure that the ledgers and stock cards and waybill systems are solid, and that local staff are fully trained in their use.

A successful emergency intervention demands that emergency managers comprehend all aspects of the information management system defined as the policies, procedures, and resources (human, material, and technological) used to (1) collect and analyze data and (2) produce, disseminate, and store information arising from those data. Likewise, emergency managers must understand the available systems of communications; defined as the policies procedures, and resources used to send messages, orders, requests, and other types of information.

Principles

1. The goal of information management in an emergency is to provide information in the right form to the right person at the right time to facilitate decision–making.

Despite astounding improvements in the speed of communications technology, the issue of getting the right information at the right time to the right person continues to be a concern. Although communications tools today can instantaneously transmit volumes of data around the world, these tools are often not in the right place when disaster threatens or strikes. Even more problematic is assuring the organizational capacity to turn these volumes of data into good, meaningful information and then to disseminate this information to the appropriate authority so that required and timely actions can be taken.
2. Information systems should be designed to fulfill first and foremost the needs of those decision-makers who are most directly responsible for managing the emergency response in the field and for coordinating that response with other emergency agencies.

These decision-makers are generally closer to the actual emergency settlement area than are their headquarters superiors. Nevertheless, many information systems continue to be designed with the headquarters operation in mind – at the expense of these field decision-makers. As a result, field staff end up spending a great deal of their time and energy responding to the demands imposed by this headquarters-oriented information system – to the detriment of field staff and the population affected by the emergency.

3. The design of management information systems must consider user skills, the resources available for training, and the potential for ongoing system support. The close involvement of users is essential throughout the design phase.

Designers must consider the organization's capacity to use new techniques and new information. In this sense, users must be represented in all phases of information systems development. Given the organizational interdependencies of a well-functioning information system, it is critical that all likely users of the system define and express their needs to the designers/technicians. Hesitant users or, worse those who have been neglected during the design stages can, despite executive mandates or appeals to reason, easily impede the free flow of information within the organization. Bringing all users “on-board” is, therefore, always time well spent.

4. Information sharing depends on the adoption of commons standards by those organizations providing similar assistance within the emergency settlement.

Health, nutrition, security – these are all emergency response sectors for which like-minded agencies should conceivably adopt common standards to enable meaningful measurements of program impact. A willingness to adopt standards and measure progress implies as well a willingness to share information concerning beneficiary status, techniques of intervention, and agency strengths and weaknesses.

5. Information and the systems to manage that information should be regarded as strategic resources which assist the emergency response agency to deliver assistance in a timely, effective manner.

Telecommunications and information policies should not be instituted in a vacuum; they should help an organization to fulfill its long-term goals. Their appropriate use should assist emergency respondents to plan and respond on a more timely and effective basis.

6. The establishment of new communications systems is always a costly endeavor. In an emergency settlement, existing communications channels should be used – assuming they are still functioning.

“Functioning” implies that the channels are sufficient for the timely and effective implementation of the planned emergency response. In the absence of a functioning system, a new communications system should be considered as the greater transmission speed and efficacy are likely to serve the emergency response well.

7. The policies and procedures of emergency response agencies should be configured so as to expedite the flow of information on the emergency settlement through the organization to the appropriate decision-makers.

Information on the emergency should be given highest priority by emergency response organizations. Emergency procedures should include a system for prioritizing both incoming and outgoing information.

8. Emergency response agencies should view the media as a potentially effective communications channel for information on the emergency settlement. Agencies should develop formal and informal ties with media representatives to facilitate use of this channel.

Under cooperative agreements, media representatives can facilitate links between field officers in emergency settlements and their headquarters. In exchange, disaster specialists might provide emergency management training or other assistance to journalists prior to and during crises. Such cooperation benefits affected populations though the increase in understanding of a better-informed general public.
Determining user needs

The design of the information system must be carefully targeted towards enhancing the job performance of the end-users: e.g., the affected population, emergency settlement field staff, top management, host governments, donors, and the public. It is essential throughout the design stages to involve all likely end-users of the information management system through regular meetings, informal interviews, and questionnaires to ensure that the system can in fact meet their information needs. Efforts to satisfy additional reporting requests after the system is already up and running are likely either to fail outright or succeed only at great additional cost. Some of the information needs which should be considered from the outset follow.

**Field staff:** Information needs of field staff will necessarily include detailed information on:

- cause and numbers of casualties, magnitude of damage
- actual and expected security conditions for field staff, program resources, and beneficiaries, and any other factors in the emergency settlement which can create stressful conditions (or burnout) for field staff
- immediate vs. medium/long-term beneficiary needs
- planned numbers and actual locations of beneficiaries
- other planned responses, responses to-date
- quantities, types, and locations (local, regional, international) of resources needed
- expected duration of the emergency response (and the indicators on which the estimate of duration is based)
- likely logistical bottlenecks or other types of obstacles to project implementation (e.g., lack of effective coordination structure)
- counterpart capacity to implement the planned operation (including basic management functions: account for expenses, submit clearly-written reports)
- history of the counterpart’s relations with the beneficiaries, host government, other emergency actors
- previous emergency experience (i.e., actual performance as opposed to simple job titles) of newly-hired field staff
- listing of all entities (government, UN, NGOs, etc.) active in the emergency-affected country/zone complete with contact names and numbers, prior experience in disaster response, and likely, available human and material resources
- post-emergency response plans.

Also of great usefulness for field staff are any lessons learned from previous interventions – including the reasons why certain decisions or actions were taken or not taken. This implies an organizational capacity to make use of institutional memory, either written or oral. (“Oral” institutional memory implies a significant period of overlap between former and current field management staff.)

**Top management:** Despite the current trend – real or “on paper” – at many agencies towards “decentralization”, the information needs of top managers of agencies which operate in zones of emergency settlements appear unlikely to decrease. Indeed, it may be precisely because of this trend that information requirements at headquarters tend to increase. As more and more decision-making authority is granted to field staff, top management may require additional information to assure boards of directors and CEOs that the decentralization process is in reality a positive step for the agency.

Top management reporting needs will generally include summarized information (i.e., by emergency response by country) on the specific information items noted above in the section on Field Staff to enable longer-term
strategic planning. Of particular importance for top management is information which can assist the overall allocation of agency resources by region or function. This would include good estimates of program duration, actual or planned responses by other agencies, and the field staff’s assessment of longer−term, recovery needs.

Donor needs: A capacity to respond to the many needs of the intervention’s various donors is one of the signs of highly effective information management by the emergency agency. Such a capacity implies being able to provide regular situation and financial reports on a periodic or as−needed basis and in a format acceptable to each donor. Such a level of responsiveness has proved problematic for many emergency respondents whose information systems are often organized around internal agency needs.

Some emergency response agencies long used to programming resources with little or no outside input are increasingly faced with donor demands for more reporting precision. As resources decline relative to global need, donors want to know exactly how their specific contributions have been programmed by the emergency response agency. More and more, the donors’ definition of “usage” includes not only the type of the program (e.g., “maternal/child health” or “food−for−work”) but more precisely, the exact location and target population of the emergency response. As civil strife displaces more and more populations, often mixing victims with the actual perpetrators of that strife, donors want to be able to assure their own constituencies that emergency responses are well−targeted.

Reporting difficulties posed by these trends can be minimized as long as respondents – before accepting resources – discuss with the donor that donor’s particular information needs. The rule of thumb is: before any transfer of funds occurs, both parties should be very clear as to the reporting requirements that will be expected on the emergency response agency. Generally such requirements can be worked out in advance of a crisis so that valuable time is not wasted negotiating agreements at the time of need.

Beneficiaries: Unfortunately, the affected population is sometimes regarded by emergency managers simply as “source data” for the information system; it is often overlooked as an actual user of the system. In reality, the affected population is involved in the development of the information system from the outset: as the chief provider of information, as the most interested party in the system’s development, and as an end−user of the system’s output. Beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries need and deserve information on the response agency’s plans and implementation schedules, resource arrival times, distribution methodologies, philosophical orientation (i.e., participatory or paternalistic), i.e., information on the agency’s targeting and methods of delivering assistance.

Emergency managers must ensure that assessment, monitoring, and evaluation teams not only glean information from the affected population but, as well, respond to the requests for information from that population. Field staff must in meetings and interviews clarify their agencies’ intentions for the affected population; to leave the victims of emergency with the mistaken notion that assistance is forthcoming when a response is not yet approved or funded is more than unethical it is cruel.

Host governments: The information needs of host governments will vary greatly, but all will require disclosure of any resources imported, purchased, and/or programmed by emergency respondents, the program’s location, and the population served, particularly if the emergency settlement is in a politically sensitive zone. The same rule of thumb applies here as in the case of donor information management: Emergency response agencies with a permanent presence in−country should try to work out government reporting requirements in advance of the crisis if at all possible. Agencies arriving in−country at the outbreak of an emergency would do well to meet early on with the host government authorities responsible for emergency response to understand the government’s information requirements. Agencies which choose not to do so risk disruptions in service delivery later on the response when host government officials begin to demand information.

The public: Emergency response agencies ultimately depend upon the public’s perception of their actions. Information management includes consideration of the public’s need – and right – to understand how and why resources are programmed in an emergency settlement. Agencies which are responsive to that public need are more likely to benefit from public largesse over time. Public needs – in addition to those listed in the section on Field Staff – include clear information on the agency’s administrative/overhead costs and the percentages of donations which in fact are programmed directly in the emergency settlement area.

Confidentiality and information
As a “Best Practice”, every effort should be made to make information freely available. In humanitarian emergencies, open access to information promotes vital information-sharing. Restrictions on the free flow of information limit debate and informed action. Traditionally, any attempts to secure information have served largely to erect organizational barriers which impede information flow and inhibit needed decision-making and action. As a rule of thumb, the issue of confidentiality should be raised only when the dissemination of information poses security risks for emergency response staff, program resources, or the affected population.

Other information concerns include:

- **Confidentiality of registration information**: Where security of the emergency settlement is in fact a concern, registration plans must first and foremost consider whether or not registration poses any danger to the settlement’s population. If so, the emergency manager has two options: to discontinue plans to register until such time as security is no longer a concern; or establish a confidential system for production and maintenance of the registration information. In the latter case, the field staff responsible for the registration must be able to convey effectively to the affected population that the information will not be made public. Otherwise, the cooperation of the affected population in the registration is unlikely.

- **Confidentiality and the media**: Clarity in information management policies and procedures is key. Where staff or beneficiary security may be a concern, top management must convey to all staff what the limits are on the permissible dissemination of information concerning the emergency settlement and the agency’s intervention – to the media.

Field staff who are likely to encounter media on the site must be well-informed – i.e., trained – concerning the type of information they are permitted to speak about. They must be trained to understand any potential security threats posed by openness in formal or informal interviews.

**Communications security concerns**:

The communications equipment must be regarded as a critical component of the overall response. In areas affected by emergencies, efforts must be taken to ensure that equipment is well-protected from haphazard electrical problems (via generators and power stabilizers) and from theft, vandalism, or neglect (via secured premises and the designation of approved, trained operators.) All emergency response organizations should ensure that field staff are well-trained in the use and maintenance of the communications system.

**“Appropriate” information systems technology**

Too often enthusiasm for establishing information systems – particularly expensive systems using sophisticated hardware and software – displaces the more fundamental management decisions concerning the meaning and appropriateness of the information content: a high-tech version of the adage “form over content.”

While computerized systems do facilitate the production, analysis, and storage of information, manual, paper systems may in some cases be adequate. Manual systems – e.g., warehouse and office ledgers, handwritten waybills, etc. – may in fact be more appropriate in situations where the objectives of the response include involvement of the affected population in the response and familiarity with sophisticated technology is lacking.

In short, decisions concerning the “appropriateness” of the information systems technology should be made in the context of (1) the overall emergency program goals and objectives and (2) available skills.

Where the decision has been taken to use more sophisticated technology, emergency managers must be concerned with costs of hardware purchase and installation, software purchase or development and installation, staff training, and system maintenance. Even a temporary loss of any of these assets – hardware, software, data, or staff – can bring the information management system to a grinding halt and – depending upon the degree of integration of these systems – cripple the emergency manager’s capacity to analyze project impact or provide an acceptable level of accountability to top management.

Assuming conditions under which sophisticated technologies can be operated with some degree of reliability, emergency managers can benefit from a variety of high speed data transmission technologies which are increasingly becoming indispensable to many operations. Satcoms are at the more expensive end of this market; Fidonet and packet high-frequency radio transmitted through modems are less expensive options. Direct Internet access, despite difficulty of usage and current high cost, will increasingly become available to
many agencies as e-mail can be used to send messages, financial reports, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data, or other files to and from field offices. Again, the “downside” of these technologies is the frequent need for technical specialists to help with installation and implementation, especially when the technology is first introduced.

It is, then, important to let the needs and local conditions drive the decision concerning which technology to select and not to start with preconceived notions of what is appropriate. Some of the more sophisticated systems currently in use by emergency managers include:

- **GIS**: Geographical Information Systems are computer software packages designed to map and track changes in topography, political and economic land use, demographic concentrations and numerous other characteristics of land use patterns. Such computerized mapping is of interest to the emergency planner primarily from the point of view of resource management and changes in land use patterns from large displacements.

  Emergency managers must consider the high costs of the equipment (computers and GIS software, digitizing equipment, scanners, high resolution printers, etc.) and the long-term maintenance and training needs that such a system requires. Communications systems must be in place, or be put in place, for data transfer, and baseline maps prepared. Still more extensive training is required if Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are to be used for data collection.

  Emergency planners may not need the degree of accuracy offered by computerized GIS systems. For purposes of disease control, provision of essential services, registration information and planning, field staff may find sketch maps tacked to the wall to be as useful and far more cost-efficient. Emergency planners should begin their discussions of the potential use of GIS with questions concerning problem definition, data sources, and intended users of the information, rather than focusing right away on hardware and software. Planners should also ascertain ongoing government commitment to support the system on a long-term basis before scarce resources are programmed for the effort.

- **Emergency operations logistics software**: Numerous computerized logistics systems have been developed by UN specialized agencies, NGOs and government aid agencies responsible for tracking in-kind contributions. To date, however, generic commercial software easily adaptable to emergency logistics needs has yet to be offered. Within the emergency response community, several custom software packages have been developed. These include:

  - SUMA: A medical supply tracking package developed by the Pan American Health Organization which tracks supplies consigned to emergency response agencies.
  
  - CTS: A Commodity Tracking System software package developed by UNHCR
  
  - INTERFAIS: A food commodity tracking software package developed by the World Food Program
  
  - DALIS: A commodity tracking software package developed by the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the U.S. Department of Defense, designed to track relief items received and programmed by aid agencies.

  - UN and NGO Systems: A number of UN agencies and NGOs, including World Food Programme, CARE, and Catholic Relief Services, have developed commodity tracking software packages. Such packages are designed in accordance with each agency’s specific needs and require internal, systematic changes to fit another’s particular situation.

### Data collection

Constraints on the data collection process fall mainly into two categories: logistical (time, funding, team formation, transport, etc.) and definitional. The latter – which involves ensuring that the questions asked and
data collected do in fact define and respond to the right problem – require as much advance planning as the former. Lack of sufficient problem definition and/or failure to communicate the problem to those responsible for collecting the data often results in the wrong questions being asked, the right data and opinions being ignored, and a generally confused set of results.

1 UNDP/DMTP definitions of “data” and “information” are used: Data are simply units of information including perceptions, numbers, observations, facts or figures...Data sometimes conflict with one another, for example, when two individuals report widely differing perceptions of the same event. Information, on the other hand, is “useful data”. Data become information when they are meaningful, relevant and understandable to particular people at particular times and places, for particular purposes.

Managers should ensure from the outset that team members are well–briefed in the actual objectives of the data collection. In rapidly changing situations, even with a determined focus on problem definition, data can quickly become dated and, therefore, misleading or irrelevant. Managers must stay abreast of these changing conditions, assess alternatives for action, and ensure that data collection teams are well–briefed. Other managerial concerns include:

• Speed vs. accuracy in assessment: One “rule of thumb” to use in planning to collect data via an “initial rapid assessment” (carried out two to seven days after notification of emergency conditions) calls for a data collection methodology that permits the assessment team to “get the whole picture − half right.” In other words, a quick albeit rough approximation of the entire scene may be more valuable to decision–makers at the outset than is an exact picture of the situation. An exaggerated concern for precision may use up critical time and produce results far too complex to be summarized and used as a basis for quick decision–making.

• Monitoring the program: The collection of data via an ongoing monitoring process – i.e., after the initial rapid assessment is complete – should be focused upon a few key indicators that are relatively simple to collect, compile, and present to decision–makers: e.g., malnutrition rates, mortality rates, arrival/departure rates. Expert assistance is not always needed; a modicum of field staff training can make the difference between a successful, well–organized effort and a rushed, confused operation.

• Quantitative vs. qualitative data: Field officers can be trained to use random sampling techniques to measure changes in the status (e.g., nutritional) of the emergency population. Spatial sampling or other sampling designs can obviate the need for a full census but still provide decision–makers with rigorous estimates in a relatively short time. Random sampling techniques used to estimate, for example, malnutrition in an emergency population can effectively be carried out in two to four days time, depending upon the skills of the data collectors. Calculations of mortality and arrival/departure rates take nothing more than interest, time and energy.

Even with the application of simple, useful quantitative methods, emergency managers will have to – and should – continue to make use of qualitative data to obtain a full picture of the emergency. Rapid rural appraisal techniques of focused interviews and open–ended questions administered by interdisciplinary data collection teams are useful ways to ensure that the differing perspectives on the emergency situation – which inevitably exist – are gathered.

■ Data processing: analysis and interpretation

In the rush to respond to the emergency, the team may hurry to send to the decision–making authority volumes of apparently vital data – vital chiefly because their source is the location of the emergency settlement itself. This apparent vitality can, however, without necessary and sufficient processing, rapidly diminish as data from many sources flood the office of the decision–maker. Confronted with volumes of unfiltered data, the decision–maker may end up reacting more from personal experience than from any useful insights obtained from field staff. This reaction may at times be acceptable, given sufficient experience and familiarity with the emergency site on the part of the decision–maker. More likely, however, is a process of “second–guessing” as higher authorities, far removed from the field and under a myriad of pressures to act, react to particular, subjectively selected bits of data.
Data processing – the turning of bits of data into information on which optimally–rational decisions can be made and actions taken – generally receives a large proportion of the information system resources (computers, software, and highly skilled human resources.) This essential link in the information management system, however, continues to plague many emergency operations. The proclivity to focus on form over content becomes a real danger as technicians massage data into state–of–the–art forms of presentation, into sophisticated databases or GIS maps when what may really be needed is an experienced eye, the ability to read between the lines, to sift through competing sets of data and identify the consistencies. Those responsible for “sifting through the data” should always bear in mind the following:

- **Cross–checking:** Interpretation of data cannot be done “in a vacuum.” Staff responsible for data analysis must quickly – but systematically – collate and cross–check data received from initial rapid assessment or monitoring teams against reports from other agencies.

- **Bias:** Attempts to make sense of assessment data require more than technical expertise; an understanding of the particular biases of the assessment team members and of the key informants/interviewees is also essential. Bias can result from language, gender, age, mandate and specialty (a sanitation expert looks for sanitation problems), the time of day when and the specific locales that the program monitors visit, etc. An assessment team member of similar ethnicity to one group of displaced in the emergency settlement is more likely – in the absence of proper training – to migrate towards that group simply because the data gathering is made easier by that similarity. Without a clear understanding of bias, men are more likely to interview men, women more likely to seek out women. These human realities must be factored into the data–processing equation.

- **Baseline data:** An understanding of the baseline or background conditions which existed for the affected population – and for the local population already resident in the emergency settlement area – before the current emergency began is always useful. Baseline data – e.g., population, demographic, economic, and social data – are needed to provide points of reference for assessment, monitoring and summary evaluation team efforts aimed at understanding the changes brought about by the disaster and the emergency interventions and to signal improvement or deterioration in the magnitude of need.

2 A note of caution is needed here. Many disaster response manuals call for the assessment team to distinguish between “emergency” and “long–standing, chronic” needs, that is to differentiate between what is occurring as a result of the disaster and what is “normal” for the population or area. However, if “normal” conditions, (eg, malnutrition rates) can be “confused” with emergency conditions, then a good argument can be made for an immediate response whether or not the situation has been formally labeled an emergency (ie, “acute malnutrition” is “acute malnutrition” whether or not the conditions causing it are officially “an emergency.”)

In its simplest form, an information system provides baseline data in table form by geographic or administrative area in a form easily usable by those responsible for making programmatic decisions concerning the emergency settlement intervention.

- **Use of standard terminology:** Where standards exist, figures gathered by the assessment team should be presented according to accepted conventions. Whenever possible, data should be presented as proportions or percentages. To report that “100 people died” tells the decision–maker little. A report that “3 out of 10,000 people are dying daily” signals an emergency of great magnitude. It also establishes a benchmark against which later changes in emergency conditions can be compared.

### Information dissemination

The dissemination of information to the critical decision–makers and media representatives who are in a position to set the wheels of the emergency response in motion should, as with all other aspects of the information management system, be planned from the outset. The gathering and processing of data to produce information which does not reach the essential decision–makers are an unfortunate waste of scarce resources. Policies and procedures specific to emergency information dissemination should be established at every agency. “Normal” channels are generally inadequate to engender a quick, effective response. In establishing those policies and procedures, the geographical, political, and organizational location of
decision-makers to whom information is to be disseminated must be taken into account.

Once again, strategies for information dissemination should be set in the context of the overall emergency response goals and objectives of the agency. For example, an agency seeking to maintain a low profile in an emergency zone for reasons of politics or security is likely to decide against a policy of wide-open information dissemination, whereas one whose very security actually depends upon openness and close, worldwide scrutiny would clearly opt for the opposite.

- **Compiling the list of end-users:** The dissemination of emergency information, as in all aspects of information management, requires advance planning – to identify all of the various recipients of information and their particular needs. Overlooking one key user can, in some bureaucracies, slow particular aspects of the response to a crawl. The time needed to identify and update on a regular basis (because if the information is good, the list will grow) the list of end-users is time well spent. Given the capacity of contemporary information processing technology, shaping the information to each end-user's particular needs should not, with some foresight and planning, be problematic.

- **Regularity of reporting/information dissemination:** Many headquarters and field staff, in establishing their individual response priorities, often accord low status to their reporting functions. “I'll get to it when I have time” is often the response to a request for information. Emergency managers should establish early on in the response regular and systematic information dissemination procedures. Field staff should be trained in these procedures and encouraged to understand that “getting the information out” is a critical part of their functions.

- **Informing the affected population:** Emergency information systems should not forget to include the actual emergency-affected and/or their leaders when compiling the list of information recipients. High priority should always be given to informing the affected about the assessment team's findings, any actions taken to-date or planned, and what others – agencies and affected alike – are doing to mitigate the affects of the emergency. Language and illiteracy constraints should be considered; verbal reports via translators may be required.

- **Use of the media:** The media throughout the world play a key role in informing the public about emergencies: issuing warnings of coming hazards, collecting and transmitted information about affected areas, and alerting emergency respondents to particular needs of the affected. Indeed, the quickest means of getting the international community to recognize the outbreak of emergency conditions is clearly via the media.

Often, however, attempts to disseminate “information” through the media can backfire on field staff determined to make use of this valuable channel. Instead of being used to report what the field staff considers useful information, the media interview can be turned into a vehicle for the journalist to tell a story which may have little or nothing to do with the information that the emergency response agency wants to disseminate. Too often, the images presented are of the horrors of the emergency with too little focus on the achievements of the intervenors. The end-result of such a media show is momentary interest on the part of the public generally followed by a longer period of “compassion-fatigue” as efforts are viewed in the light of such negative images as futile.

To pre-empt such possibilities, it behooves the emergency manager to establish in advance – and maintain – relationships with specific journalists who are likely to take a professional interest in the agency’s emergency response programs. Of importance particularly to headquarters units is the opportunity to develop relationships with the news wire editors – those who determine much of what actually get disseminated in the media. Equally important is training for field staff in “Media Management” skills. Field staff who can act as effective spokespersons, trained to get their point of view across, are an increasingly essential asset of any emergency response agency which is dependent upon the good will of the public for its operating funds and material resources.

### Aspects of communications technology

Sophisticated communications technologies are used throughout emergency operations today: in disaster mitigation, satellites and GIS mapping efforts are used to assist production of vulnerability maps; in disaster preparedness efforts, satellites are employed in early warning systems; and in disaster relief operations, aid
workers transmit data on needs, resources and security assessments, monitor the progress of logistical
operations, or provide fundraising departments with immediate updates on program and beneficiary status via
satellite communications.

Fax, voice and data communications (computer to computer) continue to be the most widely-available and
used technologies. In remote emergency settlement operations where local infrastructures can no longer
support these communications needs, relief workers today increasingly transmit via satcoms – small, portable
communications systems which make use of the International Maritime Satellite or INMARSAT facilities.
(INMARSAT is an internationally-owned cooperative with over 75 member countries. Established in 1979, it is
the only global provider of mobile satellite communications for emergency operations.)

- **Satcoms**: Satcoms generally provide almost worldwide communications for voice, data, and
  fax using a system of satellites. Satcoms are especially valuable when a country’s regular
telemorcommunications lines are disrupted by the disaster; using mobile satcoms and GPS,
emergency response agencies are able to monitor the progress and location of equipped
staff, regardless of the state of local infrastructure.

  Portable INMARSAT satcoms have proved extremely valuable for initial rapid needs
  assessments. INMARSAT–M satcoms are briefcase-sized and provide voice, fax, and data
  transmission capability. While equipment costs remain high for small response agencies, they
  are decreasing. When linked with High Frequency radios or other cellular technology,
satcoms can provide international communications for an entire network of users.

  Terrain generally poses no constraints on satellite communications systems as long as the
  radio antenna is unobstructed and has a clear view of the sky (in the direction of the satellite.)
  Heavy rains can obstruct the signal. Satcom communications planners should take into
  account the relatively high (although decreasing) equipment costs, compatibility of peripherals
  (fax, cables, fuses, spare parts), and operations procedures (e.g., fixed periods each day to
  limit reception times and conserve batteries). Electrical power supplies are always a concern
  (Lithium batteries are lighter but must be fully discharged before recharging. Car batteries
  provide a steady supply of power without fluctuations. Small generators – whose power
  supply fluctuates with fuel quality or altitude – are best used to power a battery which in turn
  powers the satcom directly.)

- **Radios**: Hand-held radios continue to be the most cost-effective communications devices
  for field staff within many emergency settlements. HF or “high-frequency” radio is available
  for long distance (up to 500 kms) voice communications, is not dependent upon unobstructed
  line of sight conditions, and can be operated anywhere in the world. Some emergency
  response organizations have used HF radio to transmit data, albeit at a relatively slow (i.e.,
  1200 baud) speed. HF systems are generally more difficult to set up and coordinate.

  VHF (“very high frequency”) or UHF (“ultra-high frequency”) radios are available for voice
  communications and can be adapted for data communications. VHF/UHF usage is for
  communications limited to a one to three kilometer range with a clear, unobstructed line of
  sight. Range can be extended through the use of repeaters and higher transmitter output
  power. The major difficulties in setting up VHF/UHF systems are posed by potential lack of
  host government cooperation.

- **Airlifts and cost concerns**: Agencies implementing high-tech emergency communications
  systems should bear in mind the high costs of procuring, transporting, installing and training
  staff in their use. Where there is immediate need to establish communications links to the
  emergency settlement in order to obtain needs assessment or other information on
  conditions, an airlift and/or airdrop of radio equipment by the relief agency to field staff may
  well be justified (i.e., low volume, high value cargo.)

**Maintenance of “institutional memory”**

The compilation and use of “institutional memory” – i.e., the recording and programmatic feedback of
lessons-learned from an agency’s emergency response efforts – is perhaps the most oft-cited yet
under-served information management need. Ideally, staff should be able to draw on the prior experience of
their colleagues with information easily accessed from their organization’s bank of institutional memory
whenever needed. Nonetheless, this goal remains elusive for almost all organizations: reinvented wheels are
What is needed is for organizations active in emergency response to designate one or more core staff to record the agency’s experience and developing the systems for relatively easy storage and retrieval of this information on an as-needed basis. Interviews and correspondence with experienced emergency managers, past and present, are the simplest way to developing this potentially valuable resource. That same staff person should be charged with designing and implementing a system for disseminating those experiences to field staff on an as-needed basis.

The institutional memory bank would maintain details on all responses, successful or otherwise. In addition to compiling information on what actually was done in response to a particular emergency, the memory bank would ideally provide information as to why particular decisions or responses were not taken; often the decisions not taken are as useful as those actually carried out.

Standards

Standards in Information Management and Communications have been proposed on a number of occasions by many agencies. Attempts to agree on common standards have been problematic, however, due primarily to the varied mandates, interests, and information needs of different emergency response agencies. A few such attempts – as well as areas in need of further discussion – are noted below:

- **Emergency situation reporting**
  
  Most emergency response agencies have developed in–house formats for situation reporting (i.e., “sitreps”). UNHCR, WFP, and other agencies have relatively comprehensive formats which correspond to their individual information needs. Sitreps should always be numbered.

- **Emergency donations reporting**
  
  While, to–date, there is no commonly accepted standard for emergency reporting, the UN/Department of Humanitarian of Affairs has developed a “14 point report format” which that agency is encouraging donors to follow to facilitate compilation and analysis of emergency commitments. Standard formats would facilitate comparisons of program monetary values.

- **Data transmission/sharing**
  
  As information systems technology continues to evolve, differences in system “architecture” are inevitable. Emergency information systems planners should, however, attempt to adopt “open” architecture in their data presentation formats to ensure the capacity to use and share data. If, on the other hand, proprietary (i.e., private) formats are used, agencies may be unable to use the data or share the data with others.

- **Communications equipment**
  
  Generally, INMARSAT satellite communications are increasingly used for international emergency communications; high frequency radio is used for long distance communications (usually up to 500 kms); and VHF or UHF radio is used for short distance communications (one to three kms).

- **Communications procedures**
  
  The standard code system should always be used (e.g.: A = alpha, B = bravo, C = charlie, etc.) for radio communications.

- **Generally accepted commodity accounting principles (GACAP)**
  
  A number of American NGOs involved in programming U.S. Government concessionary food assistance have worked as a consortium (Food Aid Management) to produce the “GACAP” standards for food commodity programming. GACAP is a body of principles which, if followed, assure the donor (in this case, the U.S. Government) that the commodities will be programmed with a minimum level of accountability. NGOs which decide to follow the GACAP principles are, in effect, establishing an agreed standard against which they may be audited.
by the U.S. Government.

**Information systems design**

Commonly agreed standards (or “guidelines”) of information systems design include an end–user focus, modular design, the development of procedures libraries, normalization of linked data tables, and, most importantly, clear and comprehensive documentation for users and technicians.

**Other areas in need of standards**

- International Terms and Symbols
- Communications Hardware
- Data Collection Techniques
- Data Processing Techniques
- Assessment Report Formats
- Evaluation Report Formats
- Transmission to Other Agencies

**Key Resources for Information Management and Communications**


Cate, Fred H. (ed.), *Harnessing the Power of Communications to Avert Disasters and Save Lives*, The Annenberg Washington Program, Northwestern University.


The Annenberg Washington Program International Disaster Communications Project. *The Tampere Declaration on Disaster Communications*. Northwestern University.


World Health Organization. 1985. *How to Improve Communication; Following Instruction; Giving Instruction; Working Together; How to Motivate a Group*. (Booklet 13), Geneva.
**Other Resources**

International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT), London.

Volunteers in Technical Assistance, Washington, DC.

**Topic 5 – Interagency Coordination During Emergencies**

This paper was prepared by Charles Dufresne and Paul Thompson of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following persons provided significant contributions:

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

**Introduction**

Interagency coordination is critical to successful preparation for and response to emergencies affecting people all over the world today. As emergencies become more complex, and as humanitarian agencies become more interdependent, the need for effective interagency coordination increases. Coordination can serve many useful purposes that go beyond basic information sharing. At its best, coordination can eliminate gaps and duplication in services, determine an appropriate division of responsibility and establish a framework for joint planning and strategic decision–making on issues of common concern. This topic explores the various activities in which organizations engage for coordination, as well as the preconditions, facilitation techniques and barriers to successful interagency coordination. By better understanding the determinants, evolving nature and contexts of interagency coordination, practitioners and policy makers will be better prepared to enter and sustain coordination.

**Scope and Objectives**

This paper provides an introduction to the principles, activities and practices which can guide effective interagency coordination during emergencies. More specifically, the paper aims to identify:

- Basic principles of interagency coordination
- Preconditions for interagency coordination
- Facilitators and barriers of interagency coordination
- Types of coordination activities
- Typologies of interagency coordination during emergencies

The following terms are herein defined as they will be used throughout the paper:

- **Coordination** is the most harmonious functioning of parts for most effective results. To coordinate means to act together in a smooth concerted way.

- **Coordination agency** refers to those agencies and their staff which play leadership and facilitation roles aimed at improving, strengthening and/or supporting interagency coordination.

- **Coordination body** refers to the formal or informal organization of all of the participants in the coordination effort.
Participants, participating agencies, member agencies refers to those agencies and their staff which participate in specific interagency coordination efforts or coordination bodies.

Lead agency refers within the UN to a UN humanitarian agency which, in a particular emergency (or area within it), provides the great majority of UN assistance and is therefore delegated the UN humanitarian coordination functions for that emergency or area.

Principles

1. The primary objective of interagency coordination is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian response so that the response meets the needs of the affected population to the maximum extent possible.

Ultimately, interagency coordination seeks to facilitate efforts, harmonize actions and optimize the use of resources (time, money and personnel) in order to maximize the positive impact for the affected population. Successful interagency coordination leads to improved and more frequent communication and information exchange among participating agencies. This in turn can lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness by

- identifying gaps and duplication in service and overlapping mandates
- agreeing on comparative advantage and division of labor among agencies
- establishing common and consistent policies, standards and codes of conduct
- developing areas and sectors where agencies work together

2. Participating agencies in general, and coordination agencies in particular, should understand the factors, facilitators, barriers and dynamics which affect interagency coordination.

There are preconditions, practices and contextual factors which affect interagency coordination. For example, interagency coordination requires effective negotiation; consensus-building; orchestration of functional roles and responsibilities; resource allocation; information sharing and strategic planning. Coordination bodies, in particular, need to understand clearly the essential aims, principles, and goals of interagency coordination. They also need to understand and know how to circumvent obstacles to coordination.

3. Coordination mechanisms and roles must remain flexible and responsive to the changing contexts of each emergency.

All emergencies go through stages, from early warning to initial crisis to a stable condition to resolution. Emergencies also vary greatly in size and needs of the affected population. The need for, participation in and type of coordination vary with each stage and type of emergency. Therefore, coordination mechanisms and the roles of those participating in coordination efforts will evolve over time. This requires flexibility on the part of participating agencies to shift their activities and roles in order to implement the principal objectives of coordination.

4. Participation and consensus are the basis of a model for decision making, agenda setting and strategic planning for interagency coordination.

The complexity of today’s emergencies and the nature of humanitarian agencies require a model of coordination which stresses participatory decision making over autocratic decision making, discipline and responsibility over rules and regulations, shared leadership over central leadership, flat organizational structure over hierarchical structure, and open communication over top–down communication.

Participation in this model increases the chances that agencies will benefit from the arrangement and maintain the standards that have been set. Agencies will not voluntarily enter into interagency coordination if they can not perceive a benefit. If they feel coerced to participate, and are not involved in setting policy or procedures, they may consciously or unconsciously undermine the efforts and plans.

5. When emergency situations require outside agencies to provide critical assistance, the provision of this assistance should always be facilitated through interagency coordination.

As emergencies become more complex, as more and different types of organizations become involved in providing humanitarian assistance, and as these organizations become more interdependent, interagency coordination has become a critical and necessary mechanism to ensure an effective and efficient systemwide response. The international humanitarian system can ill afford not to cooperate and coordinate its multifaceted
and interdependent goals and activities. Interagency coordination has the greatest chance of success when the first four principles outlined in this section are followed. When any of the first four principles are violated, or when coordination is used as an opportunity for manipulation by host government or lead agencies, the legitimacy of this principle is weakened.

6. As early as possible, interagency coordination should plan and implement strategies and programs which build on and strengthen existing local institutions, develop local capacity and incorporate phase–out of assistance.

Coordination facilitated by foreign entities is an interim measure until the time when host governments, communities or local NGOs can assume that role. Host governments are the first priority for coordinating international humanitarian relief efforts, unless it is evident that they repress their own people (Iraq), manipulate aid to achieve nefarious political ends (Sudan) or are non–existent (Somalia). The coordination model should be based on the principle of local control or include a mechanism to evolve to local control as soon as feasible.

Best Practices

This section describes the preconditions for achieving successful interagency coordination and the techniques (best practices) of implementing coordination activities. Barriers to coordination are also identified. By linking an understanding of the preconditions and the techniques of coordination, the practitioner should be able to anticipate and overcome those barriers.

Preconditions to coordination

The following is a checklist of general preconditions that, when met, will enhance the chances of achieving effective and successful coordination.

Perceived need and desirability for coordination

Humanitarian organizations will be more pre–disposed to engage in coordination when they perceive that there is a need for it and that this coordination will add “value” to their own activities. Participating agencies must believe that they are interdependent with their fellow organizations and must view coordination as the most efficient and effective means of responding to the emergency situation. Organizations will commit to coordination when the coordination goals, objectives and activities help promote their individual organizational interests and missions.

An organization’s perceptions will also be positively influenced if it has a mandate to support coordination. By incorporating coordination mandates into their organizational mission statements and policies, agencies empower their representatives to seek a coordination role.

Negotiating coordination parameters, leadership and activities

Since players often join a coordinating body with different ideologies, mandates and expectations, inter–organizational coordination depends on all these players negotiating, discussing, clarifying and agreeing on the coordination parameters, activities, and conflict resolution methodologies. All member agencies need to participate in deciding the policies, procedures, strategies and plans which will affect them. In addition, member agencies will be more supportive and responsive to interagency coordination when they have participated in selecting and/or approving the agency which will serve as the lead or main coordination agency.

For coordination to work, attitudes of cooperation, peer support and self–discipline must prevail over attitudes of competition, autonomy and control. Even with these positive attitudes, conflicts over procedures, roles or actions will invariably arise. Coordinators must be skilled in effective negotiation, mediation and/or conflict resolution techniques if they are to turn a conflict into constructive and mutually acceptable action.

Understanding

All organizations need to understand each others mandate as well as the organizational culture that each brings to an operation. Stereotypes and misconceptions need to be removed before a cooperative spirit can work. Understanding also depends on agencies making a long–term commitment, sharing a vision and possessing similar levels of training, experience and skills.
Staff, resources, and leadership

Each organization participating in the coordination effort must commit staff, time and often money to help manage the process as well as provide their overall services to the other participating organizations. When a coordination agency exists, it must have staff dedicated to coordination, an office, and equipment in order to provide real service to other participating organizations. Agencies should have stand–by arrangements for staffing and equipment to help mobilize coordinating bodies.

Organizational authority in decision making

Organizations must decentralize decision making to the field to the greatest extent feasible. Especially for coordination purposes, organization representatives must have the authority to decide and make commitments on behalf of their respective agencies. Organizations need to participate in coordination activities ready to share information, decide action and commit resources with minimal delays from headquarters.

Trust and credibility

In the end, effective coordination can happen when the participating organizations trust each other and the coordinating agency leadership. Each agency needs to develop its own credibility and engage in coordination activities with a positive attitude and expectations that it can and will work.

Techniques which facilitate coordination

Achieving successful coordination requires concerted effort, an attitude which values coordination, and an appreciation of its benefits. There are also general management techniques which facilitate successful coordination, including:

- facilitation skills
- identifying common needs
- creating consensus
- using memoranda of understanding
- identifying each organization’s comparative strengths in order to establish a division of labor
- maintaining the “communications loop”
- taking difficult decisions in plenary meetings
- knowing who to include in the process
- avoiding delays, especially during the emergency phase
- follow–up and follow–through on coordination decisions
- personnel incentives to coordination
- managing the media

Facilitation skills

The essence of coordination is working together. Later in this section we identify barriers to coordination which inhibit individuals and organizations from working together. The leadership of a coordination body as well as all other participants will benefit from the specialized skills of group facilitation, conflict resolution, and meeting management. Many of the following techniques are also a part of this range of skills.

Identifying common needs

Humanitarian organizations will engage in and support coordination mechanisms when they perceive that this mechanism is meeting their needs and providing services which add value to or enhance their own activities. Coordinating agencies should continually monitor the emergency and identify the service needs of member agencies. Periodic member agency needs assessments can help uncover changing needs and new opportunities for coordination activities and services.

Creating consensus

Achieving consensus among organizations on policy, program, and resource issues is a form of coordination. Organizations must meet, discuss and negotiate mutually acceptable agreements on each of the organizations’
1. geographical area of operation
2. individual services or contribution to a consortium of services
3. population or set of clients each will work with
4. standards of assistance and methods of delivery

Part of the process of creating a consensus is participatory decision making. Participating organizations will be most committed to those decisions, plans and programs in which they have had a voice and which meet their own interests.

Creating consensus may be especially difficult, however. When the number of humanitarian actors is great and highly diverse, and the more complex the emergency, consensus is usually reduced to the least controversial and least ambitious issues or objectives. Rather than settle for this “lowest-common-denominator approach,” Minear suggests that

[people in life-threatening situations will be better served by a highest-common-denominator approach: that is, by one that seeks agreement among a narrower range of like-minded agencies (Minear and Weiss, 1993, p. 5).]

Thus, a coordinating body should carefully select its members so that meaningful and timely consensus can be reached.

Using memoranda of understanding

The results of the consensus, which include the preparedness plan and plan of operation, must be documented as memoranda of understanding (or letter of agreement) among the organizations. These memoranda can mitigate potential conflict by clarifying interagency objectives, expectations, roles, responsibilities and commitments.

In agreeing to a memoranda of understanding, the process is as important as the product. During the process, organizations develop relationships and become more knowledgeable about each other. When the document is finished and signed, it can serve as a point of reference for solving disputes and orienting participating member staff in case of turnover. Memoranda of understanding may need to be periodically reviewed and/or updated when the players and/or the context has changed.

Prototype memoranda of understanding, which can be adapted to new situations, should be developed to avoid having to identify and negotiate details during an emergency crisis – when organizations’ efforts should be focused on life-saving measures (Minear et al, 1992). Examples of prototype memoranda exist between UNHCR and WFP regarding provision of food aid as a function of the size of the emergency population.

Establishing a division of labor based on each organization’s comparative strength

Coordination is more effective when it establishes a division of labor among organizations based on the comparative strength of each organization in meeting the needs of the emergency. The comparative strength of an organization depends on an organization’s actual expertise, capacities and resources on the ground. (Comparative strength should not be confused with an organization’s mandate, which is their internal policy that identifies their mission and guides their action. Mandates, however, do not govern an organization’s overall capability or adequacy of resources.)

An inter-organizational needs and resources assessment is essential to identify the resources, capacities and comparative strengths of the organizations involved in an emergency. For example, a small NGO may lack staff, funding and status, but may be the only agency with experience in a certain region or with a certain population.

UNHCR has often had the comparative advantage in negotiating with host governments to gain access to refugee populations in need. During emergencies, however, UNHCR may not be able to play this role when host governments and/or warring parties perceive them as politically biased or motivated. This occurred in Ethiopia in the mid-1980s when NGOs had to form their own coordinating body to negotiate access with government Addis Ababa and the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (Minear and Weiss, 1993, p. 59).

Maintaining the “communications loop”
All organizations in a coordination body need to take responsibility for staying in touch with the body and for sharing pertinent information in a timely manner. Protocols for communication need to be developed and subscribed to by all in the body.

**Taking difficult decisions in plenary meetings**

Inevitably, difficult and potentially divisive issues arise in a crisis. When it is obvious that a “floor fight” may occur at a coordination meeting, the parties responsible for the differences of opinion and the coordination leadership need to resolve these differences away from the plenary forum. Otherwise a divisive spirit may fester and lead to a breakdown of the coordination effort.

**Knowing who to include in the process**

Appropriate membership in the coordination body is vital to its success. Small organizations with little resources to offer an emergency, or organizations whose mandate and values are at odds with the coordination body’s objectives, will impede successful coordination.

**Avoiding delays, especially during the emergency phase**

Coordination should not be the cause or the excuse for delays in responding to an emergency. To avoid delays, participating organizations need to agree on arrangements established before the emergency. Their preparedness planning needs to include stocks, staff, and other resources that are ready–to–go in order to plug into an operation as it begins.

**Follow–up and follow–through on coordination decisions**

The coordination agency needs to have adequate staff and commitment to follow–up and follow–through on decisions taken by the body. Coordination will flounder and dissipate without determined follow–up, weakening the response. A secretariat is essential and one with standing assignments to document decisions, communicate them and monitor their implementation.

**Personnel incentives to coordination**

As noted above, organizations need to value coordination as a prerequisite to participating in a coordination effort. This value must also permeate the organizations’ personnel policies as well. Successful participation in coordination by staff must result in rewards in the personnel system, not penalties.

**Managing the media**

The issue of media management in the context of coordination for an emergency is that of “who speaks for the operation?” Organizations may tend to compete for media coverage. However, the media need to get access to a coherent message. Therefore, when the media is looking for information about an emergency, the coordination body should have an agreement on who will be the official spokesperson. There also needs to be an understanding on the ground rules for each organization’s engagement with the media. Coordination will obviously be enhanced when there is a spirit of collaboration, instead of competition, that gets communicated by the media. Achieving that will require agreements among all agencies on how to portray themselves and the overall operation.

### Barriers to inter–organizational coordination

Recognizing and identifying barriers to inter–organizational coordination is the first step to overcoming them. By employing many of the facilitators of coordination already discussed, the barriers can be addressed.

In the table below, several barriers to coordination are identified and examples are given of how each of these barriers may be manifested, (adapted from a similar list developed by Hamilton, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to Coordination</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Threat to autonomy (real or perceived)</td>
<td>Members of organizations fear that coordination will reduce freedom to make decisions and run their programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professional staff fears</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Professionals fear loss of freedom, that is, the coordination agreements may require ways of working that are different from the staff preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Disagreement among resource providers</th>
<th>Persons or groups providing resources disagree about needs to be met, services to be provided, and programming approaches.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Multiple local government, private sector and non-governmental organizations</td>
<td>Coordination is complicated by the presence of too many actors, slowing the process and losing focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Absence of consensus among participants</td>
<td>Disagreements among organizations regarding: 1. the right of one or more organizations to be involved 2. which organization should function in which geographic area 3. which organization should provide which services 4. which affected populations are to be served by each organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Different expectations of different levels of the government hierarchy</td>
<td>Different expectations about which population should be provided with which services and this complicated by differing and/or changing political interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Coordination viewed as low priority</td>
<td>Members of some organizations think that coordination is not really necessary and do not follow through with commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Costs and benefits are viewed as unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Staff of organizations think the costs of coordination or the programme costs will be higher than the benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Resources not available</td>
<td>Some organizations which may want to participate in a coordinated effort have inadequate resources to contribute to the effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Diffusion of “credit”</td>
<td>In a coordinated effort, “credit” for or acknowledgment of the individual contributions of member organizations may get lost or diffused. Sometimes recognition is the only form of personal reward members of organizations receive and, in a coordinated effort, this form of reward may be lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Lack of trust</td>
<td>Participating agencies may have a history of poor relations with each other leading them to see each other as threats, competitors and/or untrustworthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Fragmentation</td>
<td>The diversity of mandates, policies and procedures as well as ideologies, values and vested interests among all of the international organizations leads to a fragmentation within the “humanitarian response system”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Highly centralized bureaucratic organizations</td>
<td>Coordination will be hindered by agencies which must generally seek approval from their headquarters prior to approving inter-organizational goals or making commitments of time and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Lack of coordination skills, knowledge and experience</td>
<td>Organizations which do not understand the preconditions and dynamic nature of coordination, or which field representatives without the proper training or skills will frustrate and be frustrated by coordination efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Staff turnover</td>
<td>Frequent staff turnover threatens policy continuity, coordination agreements and institutional memory. Trust often depends on increasing levels of familiarity and contact among parties, which is lost with high turnover rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Unilateral donor actions</td>
<td>When donors act unilaterally, politicize aid, or earmark funds for specific populations, they may undermine the efforts of established international coordinating mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Ineffectual or inappropriate coordination leadership</td>
<td>Participation in coordination may break down if the leadership is autocratic, imposing their decisions and agenda on the body. Lack of leadership skills or resources will diminish the value and quality of the coordination effort.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Coordination activities

The preceding part of this paper is essentially the background, theory and rationale of promoting coordination among organizations in emergencies. This part of the paper will identify and describe a range of specific tasks and activities of organizations engaged in coordination.
The vast majority of coordination activities are synonymous with general management practices applicable to any individual organization. The difference is that the principles of management are applied to several organizations working in tandem in an ambiguous and shifting environment. Therefore, this section will identify those activities and only highlight the aspects that are affected by the unique condition of coordination of several organizations.

It is not desirable or possible to coordinate all aspects of all program components, but rather focus on those areas for which there are overlaps and competing interests. Similarly, different components may be coordinated at different management levels. For example, joint decisions about resource sharing, particularly financial resources, may be made by high level personnel, while decisions about coordination of programme activities may be most effectively achieved at the field level (Hamilton, 1995).

Although achieving each coordination activity is useful, a humanitarian assistance community that values coordination and believes in its goals will aspire to the highest manifestation of coordination; that is, agencies working together so that each one is more effective at serving humanitarian objectives. The following spectrum illustrates the categories of coordination activities ranging from those which are elementary, relatively easy and common, to ones that are increasingly sophisticated, demanding and much less common.

### Spectrum of Coordination Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sharing</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Joint Strategic Planning and Programming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least Difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>Most Difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following discussion of the specific activities within each of these three categories (information sharing, collaboration and joint strategic planning and programming) is arranged loosely in ascending level of sophistication. Achieving each activity contributes to laying the foundation for the successive ones. But the sequential aspect should not be taken too literally, many activities are done simultaneously and sometimes less difficult activities are bypassed in favor of higher priority ones.

#### Information Sharing

**a) Share, manage, and communicate information**

The most central and basic activity of coordination is information sharing. Shared information includes the general roles and responsibilities of each organization and the specific resources they bring to the current emergency, the size and capabilities of their staff, type and quantity of assistance, geographical areas of operation, equipment and facilities available, description of the organizations’ projects, and any other information that defines the parameters of the contributions of each organization.

The management of coordination information is critical to its usefulness and may require staff and equipment dedicated to that task. The techniques of information management and communication are beyond the scope of this module, but the basics include:

1. Using various communication avenues and methods (telephone, meetings, Email, situation reports).

2. Establishing points of contact between officials with complementary roles so that these officials can share information and learn from each other’s experience. For example, when the military is involved in humanitarian operations the military public information officer should be paired with the humanitarian coordinator’s public information officer.

3. Using and sharing compatible communications equipment with shared frequencies is critical to coordination in the field, especially during the early stages of an operation. A single contact point should be responsible for the allocation of frequencies.

4. Communicating and cooperating during the pre-emergency and preparedness phases will greatly decrease misunderstandings, miscommunication and delays during actual emergencies.

5. During emergencies, the establishment of civil–military operations centers within military
headquarters can facilitate civilian agencies' request for military assistance. Also, the geographic proximity of organizations can increase the likelihood of interaction, communication and coordination (Wright and Wolfson, 1994).

More important than the “hardware” and protocols of communication is the content of the communication. Organizations must share their objectives, mutual interests, strengths and limitations, constraints, perceived opportunities, concerns and their overall vision as a prerequisite to good communications.


b) Identify gaps and overlaps in humanitarian assistance

A sub-activity of developing a strategic plan, but one worth highlighting separately, is the identification of gaps and overlaps in humanitarian assistance. It is inevitable that in a large emergency gaps in assistance provision will occur. This is especially problematic when some of the distribution systems are inaccessible to the affected population, where the population is out of favor with the authorities, or where the population is difficult to locate as in families and individuals dispersed throughout an urban environment.

The “Gap Identification Checklist” is an example of a tool that can be created for each emergency, describing the required actions on one coordinate of a matrix and identifying which organization is responsible for that action on the other coordinate. Of course, this simple tool does not guarantee the capability of the organizations who have claimed responsibility over certain activities. That must be verified through an assessment of organizational capability.

The identification of duplication or overlaps of assistance will also result from this exercise. Not only is duplication an obvious waste of resources, but there is a lost potential of utilizing the resources for alternative priorities.

Resources: Gap identification worksheet

c) Set up and maintain early warning systems

Integral to, but distinct from, preparedness and contingency planning are early warning systems. Over a decade of organizational efforts to establish and maintain early warning systems have lead to many lessons learned and a mature perspective on what is achievable. One such lesson is that individual organizations are generally unable to sustain large and complex early warning systems because the resource requirements are too great and the activity is not central enough to daily operations. However, if the activity is assigned instead to the consortium of organizations coordinating their resources, then it becomes significantly more achievable.


Collaboration

a) Identify the affected population and jointly assess their local capacity and needs

Needs and resource assessments is one of the activities that stands to benefit the most from coordination. The first value is coming to an agreed identification of the affected population. By conducting joint assessments, organizations can execute the assessment process only once (during each phase of the emergency), instead of each organization individually replicating a similar exercise. The affected population becomes justifiably annoyed when repeatedly subjected to questionnaires (often with the same questions) and quickly suffer from “assessment fatigue.” A consolidated effort should be able to execute assessments with far fewer people and be able to develop a more complete picture of the emergency. This holistic picture will then fit more tightly with the holistic strategic plan for the assistance operations. Indeed, generic assessment forms and methodologies need to be developed in the preparedness phase and follow the same organizational structure as the strategic plan.

Potential problems of joint assessments are that the process of agreeing on the assessment objectives and implementation of it may take longer than they would if implemented by any single organization. Some organizations would also fear that a general assessment will not develop the level of detail that a specialized
agency may require to design their response project. More attention during the preparedness phase will need to be devoted to address these concerns.


**b) Agree on standards of assistance and services**

A universal agreement on standards of assistance and services among all humanitarian organizations would be very helpful to avoid the pitfalls of inconsistent, or the absence, of standards. However, in all likelihood, each emergency will bring together a unique set of organizations, each with its own set of standards. Similarly, each situation bears reexamining existing standards to verify their continuing appropriateness. The coordination forum, therefore, must be utilized for harmonizing organization’s standards for each emergency.

_Resources:_ Disaster Management Center. 1996. _Principles and Best Practices of Emergency Settlement_, this document includes a catalogue of many generally accepted standards applicable to emergencies.

**c) Collaborate with the Consolidated Appeal Process or other joint resource mobilization**

Resource mobilization is central to any humanitarian assistance operation. Donors are demanding rational and harmonized appeals for their limited resources. A coordinated appeal is often a requirement of the donor before consideration of funding the operation.

A related activity to fund raising is grant management. Activities funded through grants, their related records and funding allocations can be supervised and maintained by staff in one location for all participating organizations.

_Resources:_ Consolidated Appeal Process Guidelines (As endorsed by the Inter–Agency Standing Committee on 13 April 1994).

**d) Negotiate access to emergency areas**

Often in complex emergencies, the affected population is in an area inaccessible to outside assistance providers. Gaining access to those emergency areas becomes part of the political strategy for all parties. Organizations operating alone trying to negotiate access to these areas are subject to political abuse and may become part of the conflict’s actors. In order to ensure that access is gained with a minimum of political advantage given to one side of a conflict requires that all organizations negotiate with a concerted voice.

_Resources:_ ??

**e) Build capacity for local institutions/organizations**

During emergencies, local institutions, organizations and leadership, which also respond to emergencies, may be severely overburdened and under–resourced. Furthermore, and especially in complex emergencies, they may also be among the casualties of the conflict. The task of supporting and rebuilding these institutions is often among the highest priorities, but often falls outside of the mandate of assistance agencies. The coordinating body may also pool their resources to focus on the capacity building of these institutions as a prerequisite to the full recovery of the community.

_Resources:_ ??

**f) Joint training**

The implementation of emergency response operations requires a diverse set of skills and expertise that are often in short supply when they are needed most. Very few people have formal training in the subjects of emergency management and previous field experience is often unstructured and a repetition of past mistakes. Before, during and after emergency operations are good times to structure the management experience and expand the knowledge and skill base of the field practitioners. Joint training, organized and managed jointly by the coordination body could go a long way to capacitate the participating organizations in the skills required to implement all of the above mentioned activities.
Resources: The UN Disaster Management Training Programme, UNHCR’s and UNICEF’s Emergency Management Training Programme, WFP’s Emergency Operations Training Programme, IOM’s training programme.

Joint strategic planning and programming

a) Develop joint preparedness and contingency plans

One of the tenets of emergency management for humanitarian assistance is that each organization should engage in preparedness and contingency planning. The group process of harmonizing these plans within the coordination forum will increase the total usefulness of these exercises. This process would, therefore, benefit from an agreement on emergency scenarios for which contingency responses would be prepared.

By including preparedness and contingency planning in the coordination forum:

1. the efficiency of harmonized use of resources is applied to an entire operation
2. all organizations can benefit from the planning skills and experience of the most talented members of the team, a resource base significantly larger than afforded by individual organizations
3. the team work enhanced by working through preparedness plans strengthens the ability to work with one another in the emergency situations.

Resources: UNHCR. Emergency Management Training Programme

b) Co-funding of projects

Organization administrators could agree to jointly fund a project, to combine budgets or to purchase services or material from a common source.

c) Share personnel

For some organizations, responding to emergencies may require additional personnel and the expertise of technical specialists. If it is necessary to bring in expatriate staff or experts, the cost can be a major component of the assistance budget. This cost can be defrayed if organizations agree to share the services of these individuals.

Expertise often needed in emergencies include: medical professionals, public health workers, nutritionists, physical planners, logisticians. Much of their contribution to an operation transcends individual organizational objectives and can, typically, be utilized by many organizations.

Resources: ??

d) Share operations support resources

The high cost of running organizations causes many to recognize that it may be in their benefit to pool resources in order to stretch their assistance budget further. Many resources for operations support are, in effect, inter-changeable with other organizations, and can be used by most or all other organizations.

An example of the potential for sharing operations support resources was among the organizations located in Bosaso, Somalia, in 1995. UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and WHO each maintained large compounds, costing a total of $10,000/month in rent alone. Each agency had their own fleet of vehicles, crew of security guards, guest houses, offices, communication equipment and administrative support staff. A consolidation of these facilities into one large common compound with shared usage of each of the support resources would have amounted to a significant savings.

The following is a checklist of potential resources that could be shared by two or more organizations:

- security system including guards
- common facilities: offices, guest house
- communications facilities and equipment
e) **Develop joint strategic plans**

The most important result of assessments, information sharing and management is the conversion of this information into a plan of action, utilizing a strategic planning approach. Through this plan will most of the objectives of coordination be realized. The difference between a strategic plan developed for an individual organization and one developed for several organizations is one of focus. The plan for strategic coordination will identify, from a broader perspective, which organization will be performing which task and in which geographic location. The strategic plan would identify a plan of action that maximizes cost–effectiveness and speed of response. It would also include the mechanisms for sharing operations support resources among the organizations.

**Elements of a strategic plan for coordination**

- The emergency’s needs and resources assessment
- The goals and objectives of the operation
- Identification of organizational roles and resources
- Identification of organizations’ comparative advantages
- Identification of potential gaps in provision of assistance and a plan on how to fill the gaps
- Implementation schedule
- Identification of monitory and non–monitory resources necessary for plan implementation
- Identification of actions to be taken, by whom, ensuring no unnecessary duplication of services
- Identify operational support coordination activities, e.g., shared facilities and other resources
- Plan for monitoring and evaluation of the coordinated operations

**Resources:** 1. Disaster Management Training Programme materials, 2. UNHCR Emergency Management Training Programme materials

f) **Joint programming and implementation of rapid response (operations) plan**

Coordination of operations implementation is the true test of a coordination mechanism. There are several models of a mechanism to coordinate implementation. On one end of the coordination spectrum, operations are planned and implemented through a hierarchical, military coordination model which depends on central command and control and discipline within the ranks. This would ensure the greatest likelihood of organizations working in concert to maximize cost–efficiency, speed of delivery, etc. However, few organizations outside of the military will submit to this model of coordination.

At the other end of the spectrum, operations implementation happens through a “looser and flatter” coordination model that depends on shared leadership, consensus–based decision making, decentralized authority and open communication and shared information. By knowing what all other organizations are doing, each organization decides on their own how to proceed but they are informed about where their resources are best utilized and what other organizations are doing.
The closer the coordination is to the military model, the more benefits of cost-effectiveness and efficiency are likely to be derived, but at the expense of organizational autonomy and a greater reluctance by organizations to participate.

*Resources: ??*

### Coordination Typologies

The preceding parts of this paper have described what can be done in coordination and suggestions on how to do it. This section discusses where coordination happens, the various typologies. This relates to who the coordination agency is, who comprise the coordination body, and what the focus or objectives are of the coordination body.

#### Government-led coordination

In most emergency operations, the main counterpart in-country for international organizations is the government, with the exception being countries where a national government does not exist, such as Somalia or Afghanistan. In most countries, the government will establish a special ministry or other entity charged with overall coordination of government humanitarian assistance, and with interacting with international assistance entities. When such a governmental coordination structure exists, it will be an important counterpart for international humanitarian coordination staff. Governments with a lot of experience in humanitarian emergencies may insist on coordinating all international assistance, other governments delegate this task to the international community.

#### United Nations-led coordination

The coordination mechanisms of UN agencies in-country depends largely on the variable conditions of the emergency. There are several components and options to the structures.

The United Nations General Assembly has mandated that a standing UN Disaster Management Team (UN DMT) be formed in each disaster-prone country, convened and chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator. The composition of the UN DMT is determined by taking into account the types of disaster to which the country is prone and the organizations present, but should normally include a core group consisting of the country−level representatives of FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and, where present, UNHCR. The primary purpose of the UN DMT is to ensure a prompt, effective and concerted response by the UN system at country level in the event of a disaster or emergency.

In large scale complex emergencies a Humanitarian Coordinator is likely to be named by the Head of the Department of Humanitarian Assistance who will be responsible for chairing the body of UN agencies and managing the coordination activities within its domain. A Field Coordination Unit is likely to be established under the Humanitarian Coordinator that provides the logistical support and services to the coordination body.

In many natural disasters, and some complex emergencies, DHA will field the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team (UNDAC). The role of UNDAC is to assist the government of the affected country and the UNDP/DHA Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in identifying the needs for international disaster relief assistance and to facilitate the timely and appropriate response of the international community.

If the emergency is sector specific, such as a mass refugee influx or a health epidemic, then the UN agency whose mandate covers that sector will become the lead agency in coordinating other UN (and often NGO) participation.

#### NGO-led coordination

NGOs have often organized themselves through NGO coordination bodies to increase their effectiveness in emergencies. These bodies have taken the form of umbrella organizations, consortia, councils, federations, unions and networks. Their activities range from informal information exchange, to coordinating operational activities in the field. NGO coordinating bodies give the NGO community a higher political profile than they can achieve individually and often serve as focal points for communication and negotiations with host governments and the UN.

#### Coordination of the military
The coordination of the military aspects of peacekeeping operations within an emergency is beyond the scope of this paper. However, given the differing cultures of the humanitarian agencies and military forces, and the inherent tensions resulting from their often different objectives, responsibilities, and operating styles, an important coordination role is to build bridges and resolve misunderstandings between those two groups. This is often accomplished through the creation of a Civil–Military Operations Center (CMOC). The CMOC is staffed with military and civilian personnel, and works in support of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator.

**Sectoral working groups**

Some of the most effective coordination in emergency operations is organized around sectors. Ad hoc coordinating bodies composed of government, UN agencies and NGOs that are engaged in programming in the same sector will meet to share information and coordinate their projects in other ways. Leadership varies considerably and usually emerges as a function of historical leadership, degree of organizational strength, or force of personality of a highly motivated individual.

**Donor coordinating bodies**

In some emergencies donors have formed coordination bodies for their mutual benefit. These bodies are more likely to be created in the height of an emergency when there is the greatest need for quick access to information and when individual donors do not have the resources to get it on their own. In one case, the Somalia Aid Coordination Body, was created during the crisis in 1994 but it continued to operate well past the emergency because its members were committed to its continuation and it had the benefit of a secretariat housed within UNDP.

**Integrated operations center**

The final mechanism for coordination is one that is intended to “bring it all together.” Where government, international organizations and NGOs share a common view of the value of coordination, there exists the possibility to establish an Integrated Operations Center (IOC). The IOC model is the meeting ground of the heads of coordination bodies that would include the government lead agency, UN DMT or Coordinating Unit, NGO consortia, the donor’s body and, where present, the military force.

**Standards**

Developing and agreeing on standards is easier for objective aspects of emergency management such as water, sanitation and nutrition. Standards are more amorphous, and perhaps more controversial, for subjective activities such as coordination. For the sake of exploring their validity regarding coordination, this paper will propose draft standards for discussion.

1. When more than three organizations respond to an emergency, a coordination body should be formed and a chair agreed.

2. The chair should use a guideline, such as the “Terms of Reference for the UN DHA Humanitarian Coordinator” as a basis to determine the scope of the coordination body’s agenda and activities.

3. For large scale operations, the chair of the coordination body must be competent at facilitation, consensus building, conflict resolution, and problem identification.

4. Agencies which participate in a coordinating body should draft, approve and agree to abide by a Memorandum of Understanding. This Memorandum will need to be periodically reviewed and updated.

5. Each member agency should provide resources to the coordinating body. This may be in the form of paying a sliding scale membership fee, seconding staff to work for the coordinating body, and/or providing the office, meeting space and supplies required by the coordinating body.

**References**


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**Topic 6 – Systemwide Institutional Response to Emergencies**

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts, comments and reviews of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

While humanitarian operations have been relatively successful in El Salvador, Cambodia, Haiti and Mozambique, the relief system, as a whole, has disappointed many. Nowhere has this disappointment been greater than in complex emergencies, where countless relief efforts, millions of dollars and goodwill have failed to alleviate long-term suffering, mitigate against future emergencies, reduce civil strife and contribute to durable solutions. Increasingly, emergency relief practitioners and scholars alike are re-examining ways to improve systemwide response and individual institutional and organizational performance, as well as debating the compatibility of the military in humanitarian operations.

The international relief system is made up of a wide range of institutions and agencies which provide relief, humanitarian assistance and/or protection during emergencies. To mitigate against systemwide responses which are ad hoc, inefficient and ineffective, an improved systemwide response will use and build on the strength of each institutional player, while recognizing the distinct nature and limitations of each. By gaining a better understanding of the role and capabilities of other players in the system, each institution or agency can better prepare, plan for, coordinate and implement their emergency response.

While the names and numbers of institutional players are endless, in this paper, they are grouped according to general institutional families. These families are as follows: host government agencies; United Nations agencies; the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC); local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and military forces sanctioned by international or regional authorities.

More specifically, this paper aims to identify:

- Characteristics, strengths and limitations of each major family of institutions
- Critical issues, practices and improvements which can guide and enhance systemwide response and institutional performance
- Factors which influence the nature and evolution of a systemwide institutional response
- Resources and case studies on systemwide and institutional response

Institutional Families

- Host Government

Description
In most emergency operations, the main counterpart in-country for international organizations is the government, with the exceptions being in countries like Somalia where a national government does not exist. In most countries, the government will establish a special ministry or other entity charged with overall coordination of government humanitarian assistance, and with interacting with international assistance entities. When such a government coordination structure exists, this will be an important counterpart for international humanitarian coordination staff. Host government coordination mechanisms may take different shapes, and in some cases, primary responsibility may rest within the Prime Minister’s office, another line ministry or with a Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.1

| 1 For an overview of different HOST GOVERNMENT disaster management models see UNDP/DHAs Disaster Management Training Programme, Research Paper No. 3, “Disaster Management Models: Seven Country Case Studies,” prepared by Yasemin Aysan, Andrew Clayton and Ian Davis. Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies, OCDS, UK. |

Host government leadership depends on its governing capacity, resources, professional and bureaucratic competence, and control over its territory. Thus, in Cyprus an extremely capable and well trained cadre of civil servants and professionals ensured effective management capability during the Greek–Cypriot refugee crisis in 1974 resulting from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. (Zetter, 1992). In Malawi, by the time assistance was internationalized in 1987, the government had a well defined operational framework in place which ensured that international agencies would work through this framework and channel their assistance through appropriate ministries (Zetter, 1995).

In other cases, however, the host government may be non-existent, such as in Somalia, or lack the administrative mechanisms and resources to regulate or coordinate them. For example, between August and September, 1994, when more than 130 NGOs arrived in Kigali, Rwanda, the government was totally incapable of receiving them. In the absence of such regulation, many NGOs effectively ignored the government and continued to do so even after the government regained a degree of control months later. In 1995 the Rwandese government issued a series of detailed regulations and procedures for NGOs based on models used in Uganda and Kenya. They were deemed “Draconian” by many NGOs. (See section on pages 10–11, Host Government control and regulation of NGOs)

Strengths

Host government leadership and involvement in assistance efforts can build national pride, strengthen civil institutions, lend credibility to international efforts, ensure long-term sustainability and reduce national fears related to loss of government autonomy. According to Minear (March, 1996) host government leadership can also enhance the likelihood of the appropriateness of the assistance provided. When the host government plays a lead coordinating role, it can also secure the cooperation of regional and local government agencies in the relief effort. Additionally, a centralized host government structure can reduce duplication and control competing interests among external agencies.

While external agencies focus on immediate relief, the host government generally is more interested in longer term solutions and emergency responses which are aligned with their rehabilitation and development efforts. Host governments are also more likely to ensure that international agencies address host’s needs, as well as refugee needs—e.g., schools, medical support, and infrastructure. In many cases, the host government will have administrative structures which are more familiar and accessible to refugees and host populations alike. Similarly, the host government will generally be more familiar and experienced in working with local leadership structures.

Limitations

Host governments may fail to engage the larger humanitarian community for a variety of reasons. In cases where preserving their autonomy is a prime consideration, host governments may downplay the scale of the emergency or exaggerate their capacity in an effort to ward off external interference in their internal affairs. In many other cases, Minear (1996) notes that few governments are fully familiar with the international resources and institutions available to assist. Consequently, international agencies which could have averted, or mitigated, a major humanitarian emergency, may not respond at all, or respond long after the worst of the emergency has passed.

In developing countries, few governments have the resources required to establish and sustain a structure for leading an international relief effort. Where this is the case, they will also lack adequate monitoring and evaluation capacities. As the scale of the crisis and the numbers of external agencies increase, many host
governments, either by choice or circumstance, end up ceding control of these functions to external authorities. In Malawi, what started out as an innovative host government model, in the later stages, as the emergency intensified and external aid agencies flooded the country, began to resemble a more conventional, externally dominated, relief model (Zetter, 1995).

**Critical issues and practices**

*a) No government (e.g., Somalia) or populations in disputed territory (e.g., Liberia)*

In complex emergencies, host governments may not be viable coordinators, or implementing partners, either because they don’t exist (as in Somalia), or they don’t control or allow access to the areas and populations in need (e.g., Liberia and Sudan). In these situations, humanitarian personnel face increased security risks. In addition, humanitarian assistance is often politically manipulated or forcefully diverted, as witnessed in Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

In these cases external agencies have sought and established alternative arrangements for gaining access and ensuring safety of humanitarian personnel. For example, external agencies have conducted cross-border operations, negotiated access with all parties to the conflict, and lobbied for internationally sanctioned military support (e.g., Somalia).

**Burden sharing**

In most emergencies, host governments and local populations are the first to respond to the humanitarian needs of the affected populations. When the emergency is prolonged and the demand and competition for their resources are great, host governments and their people can grow understandably weary and hostile towards foreign refugees on their soils. Host governments and populations are more likely to support humanitarian assistance when the international community is forthcoming in reimbursing or providing the financial and material resources. During the Gulf Crisis, Jordan initially provided over $55 million in assistance to accommodate over one million evacuees fleeing to Jordan from Iraq (Minear, Chelliah, Crisp, Mackinlay and Weiss, 1992). The international community, however, was not prepared to support or reinforce the lead taken by the Jordanian government.

**United Nations**

**Description**

The United Nations system includes a diversity of departments and agencies that are involved in providing and/or coordinating humanitarian assistance and protection during emergencies. Prominent among them are DHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP. While all are technically under the same UN “roof”, each of these agencies is governed independently, sets its own objectives and is accountable to different constituencies.

When the United Nations responds to an emergency, the UN Secretary-General often designates a UN Resident Coordinator, a Humanitarian Coordinator of the Secretary-General, a UN Special Representative (SRSG), or a UN agency to provide the leadership for all UN operational agencies during an emergency response. The UN role can include direct operations, as well as coordination of other agencies. Usually many of the NGO operations are under agreement with the UN and thereby also subject to this mechanism.

**Strengths**

United Nations leadership and involvement in emergencies can lend legitimacy, attract funds and strengthen fledgling relief efforts. The United Nations is capable of consolidating humanitarian appeals on behalf of host governments, UN agencies and their NGO partners. Host government and NGO emergency warnings and appeals for assistance often capture international attention only after the UN has embraced their cause.

The UN system is unique as an organization with the international political stature, resources and managerial capacity required to mount and coordinate a multi-faceted systemwide international relief effort. For example, in October, 1991, UNHCR was invited by the Secretary General to serve as lead agency in the provision of assistance to Sarajevo, in the former Yugoslavia. After accepting the invitation, UNHCR then played a lead role in coordinating a multinational operation, including an airlift of humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo, in the former Yugoslavia.
In addition to coordination, the UN is often regarded as the institution most able to negotiate ceasefires and ensure safe access. The successfully UN brokered agreement between the Sudanese Government and the insurgents in the South of Sudan, for example, resulted in UN agencies and NGOs alike gaining access to needy populations on both sides.

Limitations

The UN response often is inadequate in the face of complex emergencies where the state breaks down, as in Somalia, or where significant territories are contested, as in the former Yugoslavia. One reason, of course, is that the UN is a membership of nation states, thus biasing it towards working solely with internationally recognized governments. For example, in Mozambique during the 1980s, the UN channeled assistance to government held territories, while failing to provide for similar needs in RENAMO rebel-held territories, even though RENAMO controlled up to 50% of the country (Bennett, 1995, p 71).

When the UN engages in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations, its humanitarian operations are often infiltrated by political and military considerations. When this happens, foreign policy priorities of member states often take priority over “principles of equity” and the rights and needs of the affected populations. Sanctions imposed during the Gulf Crisis by the Security Council on Jordan and Iraq harmed both their people and the economies, as well as restricted the UN humanitarian operations (Minear et al, 1992). When the UN politicizes the context of humanitarian relief, cooperation with NGOs may also suffer as NGOs seek to distance themselves from the UN.

Critical issues and practices

a) Improved coordination within the United Nations and DHA’s role

UN critics, western donors and NGOs have long called on the UN to increase its early warning and preparedness capacity, improve coordination among its many humanitarian agencies and develop clear system-wide operational strategies and accountability procedures. To address these needs, the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 established the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). Many UN experts and critics, however, feel that this Resolution did not go far enough. Dewey (1993), for example, argues that DHA’s mission has been stunted by a lack of resources, staff, authority and UN system-wide support.

Since DHA’s authority over other UN humanitarian agencies is limited, Donini and Niland, (1994) propose that it must coordinate by consensus and identify coordinating roles, responsibilities and services which will add value to and improve the effectiveness of other UN system agencies. Some of these value-added services might include:

• Facilitating joint strategic planning sessions where humanitarian agencies can establish common visions, goals, priorities and comparative advantage.

• Organizing and facilitating periodic coordination and information meetings, especially at the outset of an emergency. Part of this role includes reminding all players of the larger environment and long-term consequences of their work.

• Negotiating safe access with government and rebel authorities

• Consolidating and leading funding appeals on behalf of other UN agencies and NGOs

• Compiling and providing information, situation reports on emergency conditions and overall humanitarian response.

• Setting up and staffing a central information, resource and communication center for agencies to use.

• Organizing and facilitating inter-agency meetings, information exchanges, conferences and trainings which serve to develop networks and improve communication, cooperation and coordination among the various humanitarian actors.

• Lobbying at the UN on behalf of humanitarian agencies to overcome political obstacles which hinder or prevent these agencies from mounting a timely and effective response.
• Coordinating the development of policies and procedures for the UN system as a whole which ensures more consistency and humanitarian linkage with human rights, rehabilitation and development efforts.

**b) Expand humanitarian advocacy within the Security Council, Secretary General and others within UN system in charge of political and peacekeeping affairs.**

With the Security Council increasingly passing resolutions for humanitarian intervention, it is critical that a forum be established, (whether the DHA plays this role or not) “where experts from the humanitarian community can give testimony to the Security Council on matters of humanitarian concern” (Mohonk Criteria, 1994, p 2). Not only should they give testimony, but they should also challenge the inconsistent and selective use of humanitarian intervention—especially as humanitarian principles are subsumed and undermined by political and military objectives. In short, there must be improved coordination of UN humanitarian, political and military operations in complex emergencies.

### Non-Governmental Organizations

**Description**

In the last two decades, there has been a great proliferation of NGOs involved in providing humanitarian assistance. Generalizing about NGOs is made difficult as they vary widely in structure, resources and mission. Some are small church and solidarity based organizations providing food and shelter to refugees in only one particular area of the world. Others, are large international organizations with hundreds of professional staff, multi–million dollar budgets, and operations in several countries at once. (Ferns, 1993). This diversity means that larger global NGOs, such as Save the Children, or CARE International, with large numbers of staffs and programs in several countries, have more in common with UN specialized agencies, than they do with smaller NGOs, such as Project Minnesota–Leon, governed by a volunteer Steering Committee in Minnesota, and directed by one–to–two staff persons in Leon, Nicaragua.

**Strengths**

The independent and flexible nature of NGOs allows them often to act when other international agencies and host governments cannot. NGOs must rely on donor governments for access, funds and protection, the better they are able to raise public awareness on humanitarian, human rights and other politically charged issues. Moreover, NGOs are often among the first to recognize impending disasters and emergencies, and the first to warn the international community of them.

NGOs are often lauded for their low–overhead costs, flexibility, creativity and innovation. While overhead costs for government and international organizations can range between 20 and 30% of their budget, one study cited in Ferris (1993) estimates these costs for NGOs to be around 5–6%. Ferris (1993) states that NGOs are quick to respond to emergencies because “[t]hey generally have smaller bureaucracies and less cumbersome decision–making procedures” (p. 45). NGOs complement the efforts of larger multilateral agencies by reaching populations and territory not under those agencies’ mandates. Being less constrained politically and administratively than the UN or donor agencies, NGOs have found effective ways to provide relief to insurgent held territories, as evidenced by their cross–border operations in Tigray, Eritrea, Liberia and Sudan.

**Limitations**

Even though NGOs may be the first to acknowledge the severity of a humanitarian crisis, they often lack the international political stature required for engaging multilateral and bilateral mechanisms on behalf of the afflicted populations. This was the case in both Somalia and Sudan, where NGO early warnings went unheeded for years by the larger donor community.

Many NGOs must rely on host governments, and bilateral and multilateral government mechanisms for access, funds and protection. With U.S. and Western interest in Afghanistan waning, NGOs with more than sufficient funds in previous years, struggled to remain open in 1994 (Bennett, 1995). The relative dearth of NGOs in Bosnia and Somalia, and their ineffectiveness in Angola and Kurdistan, point to their inadequacy in settings where governments break–down and security is lacking (Duffield, Macrae and Zwi, 1994). The few exceptions to this have been larger NGOs, such as Médecins Sans Frontières, Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children, which have the capacity and experience to mount their own operations.
NGO critics believe that increased donor reliance on international NGOs over host government institutions, in many cases, has resulted in these NGOs competing with, weakening and supplanting host government institutions and local NGOs. Furthermore, NGO neutrality and impartiality is compromised when the NGO partnership with donor agencies results in these NGOs being used as instruments of foreign policy (Bennett, 1995).


Critical issues and practices

a) NGO consortia and standards

The increase in NGO numbers and visibility has led to a closer examination of their activities. While NGOs are praised for their flexibility, innovation and dedication, many now also are criticized for their lack of accountability, mutual competitiveness, poor coordination, “crowding out” of government services and inflated claims of successful skill and technology transfer to local populations (Bennett, 1994).

In an effort to respond to these criticisms, improve their effectiveness and strengthen their political clout, NGOs have been forming and participating in a variety of coordinating mechanisms including NGO consortia, sectoral coordinating bodies, networks and councils. Many of these coordination mechanisms, such as the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), establish standards and codes encourage NGOs to participate in coordinating bodies, improve monitoring and evaluation of their programs, develop their management capacities and skills, commit to strengthen local institutions and people, and develop programs and services based on needs assessments which contribute to peace-making and long-term rehabilitation (Barakat and Strand, 1995).


NGO coordination bodies present an opportunity for collective response to an emergency and a sense of NGO community not found elsewhere. Effective NGO coordination bodies serve many functions such as:

1. Facilitating a tripartite division of labour between UN/donors, government and NGOs and in doing so provide a “voice” especially for smaller NGOs.

2. Furthering debate and practice of re-creating a “civil society” by creating a viable, self-defined third sector, especially important where a complex emergency/war has destroyed the fabric of civil structures and, in some cases, continues to threaten freedom of association.

3. Acting as a reference point for indigenous NGOs who often require assistance for access to donors, training, and other support.

4. Assisting government, UN and donors in the identification of suitable NGO partners.

5. Curtailing the excesses of competition between NGOs over resources. In 1991, in Afghanistan, the UNDP made it a precondition of NGOs receiving funds that they must coordinate their action throughout the NGO coordination body, ACBAR. In Ethiopia, throughout the 1980s, the Christian Relief and Development Agency was a channel for money and seeds/tools from the international donor community and was asked to distribute these to its membership according to need. This was useful for donors and also created a “democratic” allocation of resources while bolstering the credibility of CRDA.

NGO coordination requires a policy commitment at the outset of an emergency from the larger international NGOs. When ICVA set up an NGO coordination structure for Rwanda in August 1994, very few financial or resource commitments were forthcoming from NGOs; this, in spite of the fact that less than 12 months later those same NGOs were demanding ever-increasing services from the structure. Interestingly, the various evaluations now being published highlight a common call for “better coordination” in the early days of the emergency. (Bennett, 1996)
NGO coordination bodies are often underfunded because it is an “administrative” mechanism. Funds from members are rarely sufficient to cover the expense of the professional services required to effective support and maintain a coordinating body. In Afghanistan from 1990–92, the collective NGO budget exceeded that of the UN by a factor of 2 to 1, yet the budget for coordination was about 5% that of the UN coordination structures. (Bennett, 1996)

b) Host government regulation and coordination of NGOs

There is a tension between regulation/coordination of NGOs (international as well as national) by host governments and the need for “free association." Yet the examples of host government “negative" reaction to influxes of NGOs increases. In Sri Lanka, the government has attempted to regulate NGOs, resulting in some expulsions; again, in Pakistan and Kenya. (Personal Correspondence with Jon Bennett, February, 1996.)

Bennett (1996) asserts that NGO coordination is best achieved when it appeals to the essential non–governmental, independent nature of NGOs. NGOs and NGO consortia, can take on an advocacy role that neither governments nor UN can.

c) Northern and Southern NGOs

While many Northern, or international NGOs are committed in principle to support and strengthening local institutional counterparts, Ferris (1993) is skeptical about how often this actually happens. She notes that international NGOs have been increasing their staffs and presence in–country in order to better monitor and control the implementation of their projects.

Even when willing, international and local NGO partnerships may be difficult to establish and sustain. Northern NGOs are better resourced and trained than their local counterparts and require professional and trained personnel to administer and direct their programs in country. While Northern NGOs may be willing to work with and through local partners, local NGOs often are either non–existent or lack the administrative capacity, training and accountability to implement their projects, (Finucane, 1993). Ferris also points out that local NGOs may have different values, priorities and objectives than their northern counterparts causing Northern NGOs to worry about their funds being misappropriated or diverted. Finally, Northern NGOs may shy away from working with local NGOs, if they feel that local NGOs are simply extensions of the government or severely controlled and limited by them.

Southern NGOs can be confused and frustrated by the specialized and compartmentalized approach to assistance by their northern counterparts. In El Salvador, Diaconia, a local NGO, saw their role more holistically seeing the interconnectedness of development, refugee assistance, human rights, repatriation, and internal displaced. (Ferris, 1993). Northern NGOs tend to be much more compartmentalized and working with narrower mandates with very specific objectives.

How do humanitarians bridge the dividen between northern and local NGOs. One approach is partnerships, perhaps based on the church model which searches out sister churches. Perhaps, every NGO should attempt to locate, identify and support a local sister organization. As Northern NGOs may be more respected by the host government than local structures, they may bring an element of legitimacy and protection to the local NGO.

International Committee of the Red Cross

Description

ICRC has a special mandate to provide protection and relief to displaced civilians, prisoners of war and victims of both international and internal conflict. In many emergencies, such as in Somalia, they will work closely with national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. ICRC goes to great lengths to negotiate cease fires and humanitarian access with all factions in a conflict.

Strengths

ICRC is often the only organization operating in insurgent held territory and the only agency which is able to mount operations within a country experiencing civil strife. In the early months of 1991, an already destitute social, economic and political situation in Somalia grew worse. At that time, Somalia was characterized by famine, bitter clan warfare, and a paucity of UN and NGO humanitarian agencies. Amidst this anarchy, deprivation, and near total absence of international humanitarians, ICRC and its most significant local partner,
the Somalia Red Crescent Society (SRCS) were able to feed nearly 1.5 million people and flood the country with food (de Waal, 1994, pp. 139−158)

Limitations

While ICRC is able to negotiate on its own behalf, it will only proceed if it gains consent from all parties contesting the territory it must reach. ICRC’s strict adherence to principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence limits its potential as negotiators and coordinators for a wider spectrum of humanitarian agencies (Minear, 1994). Moreover, since the ICRC keeps its distance from the political−military actions of the UN, there are limits on the degree with which it will be associated with other humanitarian actors who are themselves prepared to function under a UN political−military umbrella. (Minear, 1996).

Military Forces in Support of Humanitarian Operations

Description

Since the end of the Cold−War in the late 1980s, use of military force in support of humanitarian operations has been increasing both in number of operations and in their scope of activities. In the absence of an effective host government and in the face of civil conflict, a multi−lateral sanctioned military operation may impose control of strategic links in the assistance logistical chain as well as restores public order. In other cases, their role may be to protect humanitarians, and escort the delivery of relief.

Strengths

The military possesses the resources and organizational capacity to mount and implement an effective emergency response on short notice and can significantly enhance humanitarian emergency responses. In complex emergencies, many humanitarians, politicians and diplomats see internationally sanctioned military intervention as the only way to restore order, establish safe havens for affected populations, ensure the safety of personnel, and secure access for effective and large−scale humanitarian operations.

The military has a logistics capacity that is unequaled in its ability to deliver the supplies and personnel required to mount large−scale relief operations. Gaydos and Luz (1994) recognize that in responding to the displacement of the Kurds and other minority groups during the Gulf Crisis, the military “made many unique contributions to the refugee relief effort, including: rapidly organizing an orderly food and tent distribution system, helping to improve the water and sanitation facilities and providing prevention−oriented, community−based health care” (p. 49).

Limitations

Because the military structure is self contained and most effective when it has clear and narrowly defined objectives, it does not “carve out a niche for itself in the framework of the international humanitarian effort. Inevitably, the military tends to assume full responsibility, substituting a monolithic response for otherwise multifaceted and consequently flexible civilian assistance” (Pan American Health Organization, October 1995, p. 7).

Even when collaboration is attempted, Wolfson and Wright (1994) highlight many of the difficulties that may arise:

“The gamut of humanitarian operations and NGOs−representing a wide spectrum of interests and priorities, being of varying sizes, structures, operational styles and organizational cultures−defies a single definition, and, indeed, can be quite bewildering. Some civilians may be reluctant to cooperate with the international military, being wary of compromising their independence and impartiality. Aid agencies tend to delegate great authority to workers in the field, and may be headed by individuals who are given more responsibility and autonomy at a younger age than their military counterpart, giving rise to the possibility of a ‘generation gap’ between military and civilian players” (p. 23).

There may also arise a “training gap” as military personnel are trained for military and war operations. Military health care personnel trained in surgical procedures appropriate for warfare will lack the experience required to deal with the typical endemic diseases that afflict refugees and displaced populations. In Haiti, for example, the military mobilized “surgical units for mass casualties rather than mobile units for routine essential health care” (Pan American Health Organization, 1995, p. 7).
Military intervention and externally imposed peacekeeping may only temporarily restore order and relieve violence. In some situations, military intervention may make matters worse. In Somalia, Western troops contributed to increased polarization between the warring factions. Furthermore, after the last withdrawal of UN troops from Somalia, Weiss (1995) observed that the factions seemed ready to resume their civil war, only this time they were better armed and rested. In Liberia, the military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States may have prolonged the conflict and caused it to spill over into Sierra Leone by having denied ultimate victory to Charles Taylor and his rebel National Patriotic Front for Liberia—the main rebel faction which controlled most of Liberia outside of Monrovia (Scott, Minear and Weiss, 1995).

Because use of the military engages international and national political structures, the context in which humanitarian aid is provided becomes increasingly politicized. Humanitarian agencies which place themselves under the protective umbrella of the military jeopardize their neutrality and independence. Even those humanitarian agencies which distance themselves from the military may be suspected, denied access and/or threatened by warring factions which fail to distinguish between one type of foreign intervention and another.

Critical issues and practices

a) Appropriate use of the military

In their evaluation and review of the UN’s humanitarian role in the former Yugoslavia, Minear et al (1994b, pp. 83–92) have identified the following valuable contributions that the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) have made to the overall humanitarian relief effort:

1. Provided personnel and expertise:

   • In Zagreb, UNPROFOR personnel provided information to UN humanitarian agencies and others on the changing frontlines, the security incidents, and assessment of risk of conducting humanitarian operations.

   • UNPROFOR lent personnel to UNHCR with expertise in logistics and security.

2. Supported UN operations in the field:

   • Accompanied and escorted UNHCR convoys into insecure areas within Bosnia. This accompaniment “discouraged looting, pillaging, and other harassment of aid operations, random or planned.”

   • Rescued aid workers from their captors.

   • Secured and occupied Sarajevo airport.

3. Logistical, transportation and infrastructure support

   • Flying in over 40 thousand tons of food and providing regular transportation in and out for relief personnel

   • Dutch and Belgian engineering battalions graded and repaired roads. Other Troops were used for minesweeping,

   • Also somewhat directly involved in direct humanitarian activities such as operating feeding programs, administering inoculations, and constructing shelters.

b) Pursue all non–forceful means to gain access

All non–forceful means of gaining access should be pursued prior to using force in support of humanitarian operations. The Mohonk Criteria (1994) describes various strategies for gaining access which do not involve the use of force. Strategies which involve the consent of all parties include:

   • Fact–finding missions
   • Initiatives under the auspices of the UN Secretary General
Diplomatic initiatives of regional organizations and diplomats
Establishing “safe havens” and “relief corridors”
Additional appropriate measures in conformity with Chapter VI of the UN Charter;

Strategies which do not necessarily require the consent of all parties include:

- Diplomatic sanctions
- Economic sanctions
- UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions
- Cross-border humanitarian assistance operations from neighboring states
- Appropriate use of media.

c) Military–humanitarian interface

1. Guidelines for intervention

During the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has increasingly been willing to use military force in support of humanitarian operations within war torn societies. Use of the military has generated intense debate and little consensus among agencies in regards to its appropriateness, contributions and overall effectiveness.

Serious questions are introduced for humanitarian organizations and personnel when military operations become part of the assistance effort. Under what conditions might a provider of humanitarian assistance collaborate with military forces to ensure service delivery to an emergency settlement? What forms might this collaboration take? When should an assistance provider refuse to collaborate with military forces? In each context these questions will have to be answered by those who are committed to relieving the suffering of civilian populations.

In analyzing seven cases of military–humanitarian intervention, Weiss (1995) has distilled the following lessons which can guide the appropriate and effective use of force:

1. When parties to the conflict accept the political objectives of peacekeeping operations, autonomy and impartiality are much easier to achieve (e.g., El Salvador, Namibia). Where peacekeeping, or peacemaking is imposed, as in Liberia, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, tensions will arise between political, military and humanitarian operations and objectives.

2. It is essential that humanitarian agencies maintain their non-political and non-partisan status in all operations and that warring factions also perceive their status as such. When the Security Council approves Chapter VII sanctions, humanitarian agencies should consider distancing themselves from the military as much as possible, or pulling out altogether.

3. When UN security forces are used to protect relief convoys, when soldiers begin to negotiate humanitarian matters, as well as political and military, and when inadequate force is used, military and civilian operations become entangled and freedom of access, impartiality and effectiveness are jeopardized. If belligerents perceive military and humanitarian operations to be linked they may retaliate against civilian humanitarians.

4. Regional military cooperation with the UN, such as in Bosnia and Liberia, highlights many of its shortcomings. Military intervention is successful when it is timely, robust, and backed by the “political strategy and national interests that can sustain the results” (p. 169).

5. Improved coordination and communication is needed at all levels of military, political and humanitarian interface.

2. Guidelines for Cooperation and coordination

During the first year and a half of the UN humanitarian and UNPROFOR response in the former Yugoslavia “there was widespread confusion about the respective roles, authority and accountability of each.” (Minear, 1994b, p. 88) This confusion (coupled with coordination problems within UNPROFOR itself) limited the utility of the humanitarian support role that UNPROFOR could play.
If military and humanitarian operations are to achieve an effective partnership and/or avoid working at cross-purposes they must establish effective coordination mechanisms. Wolfson and Wright (1994) have identified the following ten mechanisms for achieving more effective coordination:

1. Central coordination. A central UN coordinating mechanism is required if the UN’s political, humanitarian and military objectives are to be harmonized, or at least are to avoid working at cross-purposes.

2. Agreement on responsibilities and objectives. If coordination problems are to be avoided in the field, military and their civilian counterparts must discuss and agree on their respective responsibilities and objectives. It is also important for agencies to understand their organizational differences and increase their awareness of each other’s role.

3. Delineation of common geographic areas of responsibility. Generally, the military and UN humanitarian agencies should agree on geographic administrative boundaries.

4. Use of compatible communication equipment with shared frequencies.

5. Collocation of offices or their location in close proximity. This facilitates constant contact and communication.

6. Exchanging liaison officers. This measure ensures quick dissemination of information and increased familiarity between the organizations.

7. Regular inter-agency meetings. This increases communication, and cooperation and can avoid duplication of efforts. Where the military’s role also includes providing security to humanitarian operations, these meetings offer an important forum for exchanging security information, conducting security briefings and organizing security trainings.

8. Routine contact between desk officers with complementary responsibilities.

9. Civil–military operations center. These centers provide another focal point where military and civilian actors have access to each other.

10. Assessment or reconnaissance missions. Usually, the humanitarian agencies are on the ground much earlier than the military, and presumably have gathered valuable information and made important contacts. Humanitarian actors have an opportunity during the military’s pre-deployment missions to suggest achievable mission objectives, share their experience and contacts, and establish the nature of the forthcoming military–civil relationship.

Factors Influencing Models of Institutional Response

Several models of systemwide response can be identified based on the types of institutions which lead or are primarily involved in responding to a particular emergency. In some cases one typology may clearly predominate; while in others, two or more may operate concurrently. Thus in Malawi, there was a time when the host government was nominally managing/coordinating the relief program, although UNHCR was providing much of the logistical support and project co-ordination—giving UNHCR considerable power in practice. Similarly, these models may change due to the dynamics of the emergency over time. In Malawi from 1986 to 1989, the model changed from a host government–led model, to a United Nations–led model, and finally to a much looser structure involving many international NGOs not under UN or government coordination leadership.

While it is understood that models are not preordained by a master plan, their emergence and development can be attributed to the confluence of several influencing factors. The following identifies several of these factors.

- **Size of the influx/displaced populations**

Displaced persons and refugees place significant demands on the resources, administrative structures and services of the host country. The ability of the host government to meet these demands decreases as the numbers and needs of the displaced increase. In these situations, governments which lead and coordinate assistance efforts, may, as was the case in Malawi, eventually cede these responsibilities to an international
agency such as UNHCR, or to NGOs.

- **Influx of international relief agencies**

The host government’s structures, services and resources not only are strained by the displaced population, but also by the influx and number of international agencies. The more international NGOs on the scene, the less control the host government may be able to exercise over them. During the Gulf Crisis, the Iranian government designated the Iranian Red Crescent Society as in-country coordinator for all international assistance. As more and more NGOs arrived, the Iranian Red Crescent Society was overwhelmed which resulted in many NGOs circumventing the IRC in favor of establishing their own direct links with local officials and needy populations (Minear et al, 1992).

- **In-country presence of international organizations**

Those international agencies which have experience working with a particular government or population, or working under similar conditions elsewhere, may emerge as the lead coordinators especially during the initial phases of an emergency response. For example, already having a presence in Georgia, in 1993, Save the Children provided orientation and coordination leadership to many recently arrived international agencies. In the Sudan, based on their experience with insurgents and NGOs, UNICEF was designated the lead agency in Operation Lifeline Sudan by the UN Secretary General.

In Malawi, the relative absence of international organizations initially prevented news about the Mozambican refugee influx from reaching an international audience. This also gave the Malawian government time to establish the relief policies and operational framework which would later guide and direct agencies which did arrive.

- **Geopolitical interests**

Almost always the host country and the country of origin of displaced persons have geopolitical interests which determine the degree and scope of international involvement. Thus, in Malawi, for a period of years its pariah status within the region, its abuse of human rights, its client status vis-à-vis South Africa, and its alleged involvement in supporting RENAMO in Mozambique, underpinned a host government management model which prevented the penetration of external inter-governmental agencies and NGOs. Regional political pressure, combined with the scale of the crisis, eventually prompted the Malawian government to internationalize the response.

Host governments may also thwart an international response if they fear that their power will be threatened and/or their developmental objectives undermined. In Cyprus, after 1974, political dictates ensured a host government model to protect the autonomy of the government, and to ensure that the settlement strategy satisfied long-term social and economic objectives and that the government retained control of the political agenda associated with the mass expulsion of the Greek-Cypriot refugees caused by the Turkish invasion.

- **International relations and politics**

When donor-host government relations become strained, donors may prefer to work with and through NGOs rather than through host government or UN agencies. This was the case in Sudan where goodwill and trust established between UN negotiators and Sudanese government authorities eroded quickly with the ascendance of the militaristic Islamic leaning government. Rather than continue to support the UN-led operation, Western donors decided to channel their funds through more accommodating international NGOs—many of which were reaching the needy in southern Sudan's rebel-held territory (Kelly and Buchanan-Smith, 1994).

- **Security Council Resolutions and Precedent**

Since the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has increasingly set UN humanitarian policy. In Iraq, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, the Security Council has passed resolutions which favor humanitarian intervention over state sovereignty in cases where the state fails to cooperate in meeting humanitarian needs, violates international humanitarian and human rights laws, or has collapsed. These resolutions have authorized the use of armed forces to make peace, restore order and secure safe environments for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

- **International attention/publicity**
Media coverage plays a significant part in swaying public opinion and mobilizing the international political will required to respond to an emergency. de Waal (1994) asserts that the media’s oversimplification of the complex emergency in Somalia was in part directly responsible for the military intervention which followed. Until August 1992, there were few international humanitarian agencies responding to the complex emergency in Somalia, and little political will to address the severe humanitarian needs there. All of this changed rapidly, following U.S. Senator Kassebaum’s highly publicized cross-border visit into Somalia in August. Suddenly, Somalia, became a “news story...The media descended, led by prominent television correspondents who were largely ignorant of Somalia, but acutely aware of the demands of portraying a famine for the domestic audiences in Europe and North America” (de Waal, 1994, p. 153).

Even though the peak of the famine had passed, this high-profile visit and accompanying media blitz contributed directly to the UN sanctioned military intervention which followed.

### Interdependence

UN coordination and/or NGO consortia and networks are established when agencies must achieve common objectives, face similar obstacles and address similar challenges. NGOs whose funding comes from the UN are more likely to be subject to UN coordinating mechanisms than those whose funding sources are independent of the UN.

### Improving Systemwide Institutional Response

The best practices and improvements which follow are applicable to each of the institutional families, and if implemented would lead to significant improvements in the systemwide response.

### Local capacity building

In their haste to respond, humanitarian agencies often mount relief efforts which overlook creative ways of involving and building on local initiatives and capacities. During Operation Lifeline Sudan, UN specialized agencies and northern NGOs alike failed to build on existing Sudanese NGO humanitarian initiatives (Aboum et al, 1990). During the Gulf Crisis, aid agencies brought in foreign doctors even though there were sufficient numbers of unemployed and equally-qualified Jordanian doctors who could have done the job at a fraction of the cost (Minear et al, 1992).

In most cases, host government entities should be involved in leading or coordinating the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected populations within their territories. Where host governments lack the resources to unilaterally match the magnitude of the need, they can play a lead coordinating role in a joint coordinating body made up of host government, NGOs, UN agencies and leaders of the affected communities. Not only must host governments plan and prepare for this role, but international agencies should identify the needs, opportunities and potential for strengthening host government leadership. Where there is clear evidence of government neglect or hostility towards populations in need, or where governments have collapsed, external humanitarian agencies should seek out and directly work with civilian or community-based leadership and structures. ICRC implemented this strategy effectively in Somalia where they worked with and through the Somali Red Cross.

Similarly, humanitarian agencies should seek to support genuine autonomy and the economic viability of emergency settlements. Local leaders of the affected community can assist in programming, procurement and distribution, as well as help determine types of foods and other commodities that are appropriate, provide guidance in terms of logistics of affected areas, and determine vulnerable groups that need special assistance.

Any capacity building effort must be preceded by a sound assessment of local needs, resources and opportunities. (For a more in-depth discussion of needs and resource assessments see Emergency Settlement Paper 3. For a more in-depth discussion of supporting emergency settlement leadership and participation see Emergency Settlement Paper 20).

Humanitarian organizations must be willing to invest and support training of host country nationals in disaster and emergency assessment, prevention, mitigation, information management, and related topics, to enhance their capacity in dealing with emergencies.
Sectoral coordinating bodies and regional governing bodies

When governments break down, for example as in Liberia or Somalia, there is an urgent need for a coordinating body of UN agencies with their respective expertise in managing different sectors. Also, where no state exists, the international community should include and depend on regional governments to help coordinate relief efforts and resolve conflicts. Examples include the important role Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa played in resolving the conflict in Lesotho, and the regional efforts which resulted in signing a peace accord in Mozambique resulting in the successful resettlement of Mozambican refugees. These regional governments can succeed in these roles only if they carry on good relations with each other, and are trusted, respected and welcomed by the various factions of the state in conflict. Regional governments should not use force as it leads inevitably to their real or perceived role of taking sides, as was the case of ECOWAS in their attempts to resolve the conflict in Liberia.

Regional and international early warning, prevention and preparedness mechanisms

Too often international relief and peacemaking efforts are mounted after the worst stages of a disaster have already transpired. Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan all are examples where the international community had ample warning but only acted after the worst of the disaster had already occurred. To date, it seems that the public, politicians, the press, donors, and to some extent the humanitarian agencies themselves, “would rather spend huge sums on peacekeeping operations ... than adequately resource early warning, prevention and rehabilitation measures” (Slim and Penrose, 1994, p. 204). The prohibitive costs of these operations, however, may prompt a reassessment and renewed interest in prevention and preparedness measures. As UNHCR learned from their experience in the former Yugoslavia, the establishment of an effective emergency response capacity is dependent on the establishment of effective early warning systems which are linked to prevention and preparedness systems (UNHCR, 1995).

Being prepared for an emergency includes establishing and maintaining early warning systems, continually assessing the emergency and planning for contingencies, mobilizing resources, and preparing emergency response structures and systems. All of these aspects will necessarily be based on a continual cycle of assessment--of who has or needs what, and how problems are being resolved. The larger picture—the vision--of a community transcending the effects of emergency and becoming more productive and less vulnerable to future setbacks must be kept in mind, and planned for from the beginning. While the DHA has been trying to develop such a system, it is currently not operational for lack of adequate funding, political will and institutional support. (For a more in–depth discussion on “Planning for Early Warning, Preparedness, Contingencies and Operations,” see Emergency Settlement Paper 2).

Integrate humanitarian assistance with human rights, conflict resolution, and peacemaking strategies

Duffield, Macrae and Zwi, 1994, have documented many cases where humanitarian assistance contributes to the establishment and maintenance of war economies—often fueling and exacerbating the conflict at hand. Hostile parties may manipulate assistance providers, withhold relief from needy groups, attack food convoys, extort protection money and raid areas where relief is being distributed. According to Duffield (1994), violence has emerged as a strategy to secure economic and political power and survival under these unstable conditions.

Under these conditions, providing humanitarian assistance can never be considered a neutral act. Humanitarians are divided, however, on the proper political or advocacy role of humanitarian agencies in cases where human rights are being violated.

Those who believe that humanitarians must advocate against human rights abuses, call for strategies and approaches which further the cause of human rights, peace and economic justice. To devise such strategies, humanitarian policy makers and practitioners must understand and address the root causes of conflict and the political–economic dynamics of war and humanitarian assistance.

More in–depth discussion of this and related topics is found in Emergency Settlement Papers 7, “Protection, Security, Civil and Human Rights,” and 8, “Provision of Assistance in Complex Emergencies.” In addition, War and Hunger: Rethinking International Response to Complex Emergencies, edited by Macrae and Zwi (1994) offers a compelling critique of the international relief system, provides evidence of how humanitarian action has abetted the development of war economies, and recommends system–wide and institutional changes which will promote human rights and development, protect civilians caught in conflict, and empower conflict–affected communities to have a voice in preventing, mitigating and resolving structural and political
violence.

Humanitarian response which addresses developmental as well as emergency needs

Humanitarian assistance must never be considered an end in itself. It must be provided within a relief–to–development framework which supports refugee and host autonomy and addresses the poverty and conditions which contribute to their vulnerability.

If the objective is to create a relief system which is more effective in saving lives and livelihoods, then a more critical look needs to be taken at the economic, political and social structures which perpetuate the underdevelopment which make people vulnerable in the first place. These emergencies are not aberrations on the linear path to development. They are predictably endemic. It is a well established fact that disasters afflicting poorer countries wreak more havoc on poor people than those of similar proportions in wealthier countries. Investment and support for economic, agricultural and social development will go a long way in mitigating and preventing the negative consequences of future disasters (Awoonor, 1993). The Emergency Settlement Paper 21 on “Support for Economic, Agricultural and Social Development” offers a more in–depth discussion.

Humanitarian assistance provided in a consistent, equitable and impartial manner

For humanitarian assistance to be provided equitably and consistently, criteria and rules of engagement must be developed and followed. ICRC, for example, has established criteria which help it to respond in a relatively predictable and consistent manner (Borgen and Kraakaas Rasmusson, 1995).

Since the international humanitarian system is an informal arrangement, made–up of individual agencies with diverse approaches and concerns, it would be difficult, and perhaps futile, to establish a system–wide code of conduct or rules of engagement. However, it is both tenable and desirable for institutions and organizations to establish and clarify their own codes and rules. Minear and Weiss (1993) believe “it is important for the credibility of a given agency to apply, and to be seen as applying, consistent guidelines in charting its involvement across a wide range of conflicts” (p. 87).

References


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Theme TWO: Political, Security, Protection, Civil and Human Rights Aspects

Topic 7 – Protection, Security, Civil and Human Rights

This paper was prepared by Sheila Reed of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the issues of protection, security, civil and human rights in emergency settlement. “Emergency settlement” is defined for the purpose of this discussion as individuals or a community of people made vulnerable by the loss of any essential element of settlement requiring emergency assistance from the international community. Although the emergency settlement may be referred to in a physical sense, such as a camp or within a community, protection is based on generalized principles and not necessarily tied to a physical location.

The term “protection” is often defined in different ways by different agencies and individuals. Protection can be viewed as a legal exercise, or as an overriding concept of the safeguarding of human rights, of which humanitarian assistance is a subset or methodology. The concept of protection is useful when interpreted in a wider sense.

“Protection has its origins in a human rights context and is defined with reference to the whole of the range of human rights. What needs to be protected are the human rights of the persons concerned. Those rights are defined in the corpus of international human rights law and may vary from state to state, depending on whether the state of nationality of the person concerned has acceded to one instrument or the other. Along with those rights, the human rights that form part of international customary law, by nature binding, also fall in the range of the rights to be protected” (Deng, 1995, p. 50).

This paper views humanitarian assistance as intrinsically related to protection and attempts to clarify basic principles and practices to help assistance agencies address the protection of human rights in emergency settlement. All assistance agencies support human rights, however, roles and responsibilities in this protective capacity are complex and are sometimes not defined or well understood. Some agencies are specifically mandated to assist governments to provide international protection through monitoring, facilitating legal
procedures and jurisdiction. Other agencies protect the individual by providing safe refuge and basic needs.

One of the basic premises of this paper is that measures to protect human rights should be comprehensive. Concerns about human rights, including physical safety, providing assistance, and monitoring and reporting abuses should be practiced by all agencies assisting persons in emergency settlement. The coverage should extend from awareness to prevention, and from the emergency situation through the return to a normal existence. A comprehensive policy covers all persons in need, regardless of their status and without discrimination. It includes access by the assistance agencies to the affected population and by the affected population to the outside world.

The obligations of international agencies regarding provision of safe refuge and guarantee of rights are also contingent on the diverse circumstances and needs of individuals and groups. Some rights may require immediate recognition, such as the right to life and shelter, family unity, and the right to dignity and integrity of the person. Others may be matters for progressive recognition, such as the right to work and the right of children to education.

Despite the efforts of national and international agencies to safeguard human rights, the system of international law does not always have a mechanism to enforce compliance with the laws. Furthermore, new situations arise which are not covered adequately under existing laws. The many challenges facing the international community in support of these concerns heighten the need for focus on standards to provide protection of human rights and physical security.

Principles

1. Human rights should be respected at all times and under all circumstances including war, natural disasters and other emergencies. The protection of rights should be undertaken without discrimination or partiality.

The protection of human rights for everyone is generally upheld by international human rights legislation. The obligations of national governments are clearly stipulated by international law and customs: governments hold primary responsibility for protection of the rights of individuals within their territory. Assistance by the international community may be required if a State does not or cannot provide the needed protection, particularly to relieve life threatening suffering. International assistance, however, should not be seen as a substitute to protection provided by the government but rather a reinforcement or temporary replacement. Replacing the obligations of government may not be constructive in terms of efforts made to resolve problems within a country.

Assistance should be provided for all persons in need, regardless of their status. International protection of human rights should be determined by need and not categories. Under the rules of international humanitarian law, a displaced person who has abandoned his or her home as a result of armed conflict or unrest should be protected as a “civilian affected by the existence of hostilities”, regardless of whether the conflict is national or international or whether or not a person has crossed an international border. Persons who have ceased to be refugees (e.g. returnees, expellees), have crossed a border but whose status as a refugee has not been formally recognized (asylum seekers), or those who have not crossed an international border (internally displaced) may also be in need of protection. Under refugee law and international humanitarian law, the obligation to protect refugees is not conditional upon a formal recognition of their status.

Persons in need should be given safe refuge. The right of the individual to physical security includes protection against violence and attacks. Physical security encompasses the access to resources necessary to meet basic needs. It also involves safeguarding individuals from family separation and trauma. Programs and policies supporting physical security should be designed and applied in such ways that they do not discriminate because of age, race, ethnic, or gender groups or any other factors.

Refugees should be protected against expulsion or forced return to territories where their life or liberty would be in danger (refoulement). Under the rules of international law, States are obliged to admit to their territory all persons fleeing persecution, generalized violence, massive human rights violations or other circumstances seriously disturbing public order. The State providing asylum may not discriminate against refugees, and must allow them the same rights enjoyed by other legal immigrants. In refugee situations, the international community should work through the government of the country where the refugees are found.

Persons in emergency settlement should receive all necessary humanitarian assistance to satisfy their basic needs. International, intergovernmental or nongovernmental agencies mandated to provide
humanitarian assistance should be allowed unhindered access to populations in need. If essential supplies or funds are lacking, mounting of relief operations should be undertaken which are humanitarian and impartial. Governments and warring parties should not be allowed to use the deprivation of basic material assistance as a method of warfare. For this reason, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols refer assistance measures to “the International Committee of the Red Cross or any other impartial humanitarian organization”.

2. Protection of human rights should be comprehensive. A comprehensive protection policy seeks to prevent the deterioration of situations to the point where people are forced to flee. It should ensure respect for fundamental human rights and promote the resolution of problems during flight, emergency settlement, return or resettlement.

By the time serious and massive human rights violations occur, the chances of averting emergency settlement situations may be small. Safeguarding human rights and ensuring the security of those persons requiring international protection, therefore, are two effective ways to avert conditions resulting in the uprooting of individuals and groups. Activities to promote human rights and humanitarian law should be incorporated in all programs for international assistance, before, during and after emergencies.

The international aspect of protection should be supplementary to the responsibilities of the State, as discussed in Principle One. A comprehensive protection policy necessarily should look beyond the early stages of emergency settlement to a future, stable and continuing situation where flight is no longer required. Therefore, a comprehensive policy should cover such preventative activities as capacity and institution building, and addressing root causes of emergency settlement.

**Assistance providers should anticipate diverse conditions and support individual needs to prevent and reduce risk of human rights abuses.** Measures should be designed and implemented to anticipate, identify and address a variety of needs and varying intensities of need during flight, in emergency settlement, and beyond. While everyone in emergency settlement must be considered at risk, assistance agencies should be aware of possible threats, based on understanding of the root causes of the situation. For example, women and children may be at risk from physical attacks or abandonment. Unaccompanied adolescent girls, women single heads of households, the elderly, and disabled persons may be particularly vulnerable. Men may be at greater risk of losing their lives or forcible recruitment. Those who have crossed a border but whose status has not been determined may be at risk. In conflict situations, psychological and sociological destruction may accompany military measures. Assistance agency staff may also be at risk.

**Assistance agencies should collaborate with each other, with national governments, local communities, and with persons in need to promote enforcement of human rights.** Actions to promote human rights and humanitarian law are needed to back up field activities. Agencies should collaborate with other States and organizations in the international community to highlight State responsibility for uprootedness, and reinforce it where the country of origin or asylum fails to meet the needs of its residents. Human rights abuses should be reported to appropriate enforcement agencies.

Consolidated efforts are required to address the issues of protecting human rights and providing physical security. There are gray areas in international law in regard to protection needs for displaced persons. Enforcement mechanisms require strengthening. Gaps occur in coordination of assistance, addressing cultural aspects, training for assistance staff, and fostering security against violence.

**Best Practices**

- **Agency roles**

Through their presence, observations and actions, assistance agencies have a tremendous potential to meet assistance needs, to prevent and stop human rights abuses and to effect changes needed to promote comprehensive protection activities. Organizations can work together, exercising their particular areas of expertise whether they have predominantly a political agenda, a humanitarian agenda, or a catalytic role. The prevention of the need for international protection of human rights should be the driving force behind agency efforts.

As all assistance agencies in emergencies address human rights in some form, agencies should strengthen their focus on the issues, including more directives in their mandates for protective measures if needed. Those working at the field level need to know critical information about the human rights protection mechanisms in emergency settlement situations and to understand the roles and capabilities of other organizations. Conversely, information regarding the human rights situation in an emergency settlement
should be extended to the international community to encourage support of agencies in the field. Increased efforts for agency collaboration, information dissemination and training may promote prevention.

Determination of need for international protection

How is it determined which persons require international assistance due to a lack of protection by their own government or the State on whose territory they are found? A person’s right to life and safety, in a situation where local assistance is not available or otherwise forthcoming can only be upheld through the action of outside agencies. It is this basic right of the individual which leads to the corresponding responsibility of the international community to intercede in situations of emergency settlement.

It is still doubtful, however, whether laws clearly define protection needs for refugees and others displaced by civil conflict. They do identify certain essential rules, for example, with respect to non-refoulement and the protected status of non-combatants, but considerable uncertainty remains. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees identifies five reasons for persecution which indicate a possible need for international protection. The 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa refers to external causes such as foreign aggression and occupation. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration adds a focus on internal situations of generalized violence as a indication of vulnerability.

The law of non-refoulement alone does not provide complete protection for individuals against the right of a State to send them back. States may argue that in terms of international obligations, non-refoulement is limited to refugees within the meaning of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, that is, to refugees having a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

There has not yet been an agreed determination of whether or not others require international protection, or are not sufficiently protected by their own government. However, violence, human-made and natural disasters, may give rise to needs for assistance, security and the protection of human rights by the international community. This recognition highlights the need for a process for policy and decision-making, capable of dealing with requests from States and initiating action in exceptional circumstances. As learned from recent experiences, some of the elements essential in such a process, might be based on:

- a foundation of accurate, coherent and trustworthy information
- transparency
- clearly limited and defined humanitarian objectives (including protection of human rights)
- open and accountable methods of operation

Protection of uprooted persons at national frontiers

In the event of the denial of admission to territory or access to refugee status determination procedures, agencies with foremost presence at the border or access to decision-makers in the relevant capitals should be informed immediately. UNHCR can coordinate any diplomatic or operational steps taken, given its mandate to protect the right to seek asylum. The logistical, political and military profile of the border in question will determine the best methods for protecting asylum-seekers at the border. Roving patrols on foot or four-wheel drive vehicles or other means of surveillance can be deployed at the border.

Situations where protection may be needed should be documented. In cases of refoulement and rejection at the frontier, information is of central importance. International organizations and NGOs need accurate reports of peoples, places, returns, officials responsible, and consequences. In principle, UNHCR may take action by interceding with the State responsible, but broader-based action should be encouraged. Among the best methods of protecting people from refoulement and rejection at the frontier is ‘being there’. One of the most successful protection activities in recent years was UNHCR’s deployment of ‘roving protection officers’ on the border between Honduras and El Salvador.

Coordination of assistance in insecure situations

International presence in insecure areas is an important form of protection. Key roles may be played by peace-keeping missions dispatched by the UN Secretary-General, regional organizations, human rights missions dispatched by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), or the UN Centre for Human Rights. UNHCR plays a protection role when it monitors the situation of voluntary repatriates to insecure areas to ensure their reintegration.
Organizations should complement each other’s efforts to assist. In conflict situations, for example, the ICRC can monitor application of international humanitarian law, evacuate the wounded, and visit detainees. The UN Secretary-General, the UNHCR, the Centre for Human Rights and NGOs may prepare reports to motivate international public opinion. UNHCR and some NGOs, like Refugees International, have experience with a type of mediation called “grass-roots peace-building”. Through dialogue, the agent finds innovative ways to bring together entities with opposing points of view, such as clan elders who are traditional adversaries. At a higher level, the Office of the UN Secretary-General may bring together the heads of governments and subversive forces.

Eight key principles have been proposed for humanitarian action in the UNDP-DHA “Humanitarian Principles and Operational Dilemmas in War Zones”. Humanitarian action should:

1. Relieve life threatening suffering.
2. Be proportional to need.
3. Be non-partisan.
4. Be able to act independently, assuring access to those in need.
5. Must be fully accountable.
6. Must be appropriate to meet needs.
7. Be seen within the context of the problem.
8. Must take precedence over sovereign concerns.

Determining the best way to help those who may return to or who do not leave dangerous situations, despite the persistence of conditions of insecurity, is a difficult task. However, assistance agencies have significant experience to draw upon. For example, UNHCR/UNDP – sponsored Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), and other longer-term or more comprehensive programs intended to provide subsistence materials, to develop the capacity to establish or rebuild basic infrastructures (particularly community structures, such as schools and markets). The promotion of immediate stability is obviously of central importance (conflict mediation and all it implies), as are longer-term economic development initiatives.

**Practical application of protection**

Through experience in protecting and assisting asylum-seekers, refugees and repatriates, UNHCR has found that it must also provide protection and assistance to other groups. These include family members and neighbors who have yet to cross a border in search of safety, or receiving country communities, who may also be in need. As people move in search of security, the definitions of their circumstances also change. For example, in El Salvador, many families were divided during the ten year civil war there, with one half seeking asylum in Honduras and the other half seeking safety in camps for the internally displaced. As a consequence, many of the refugees actually repatriated individually to these camps. In Sri Lanka, soon after their repatriation to their home country, many former refugees found themselves displaced internally by the ongoing conflict.

There are indeed gaps between principles governing the protection of human rights and assistance and the practical application of these principles. These gaps may indicate the need to review the existing mechanisms and revise them or devise new ways of operating. Among the principles often compromised in practice are the following:

- asylum or safe refuge
- *non-refoulement*
- access to populations in need
- humanitarian assistance (delivery)
- international solidarity
- international cooperation
- burden-sharing with the affected populations

**Advocacy for access to emergency settlement communities**

If arguments used to deny access are military, the ICRC should be contacted given the relevance of international humanitarian law. If the affected population are persons potentially of concern to the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR staff on the ground may have greater or easier access. Other key contacts who could exert pressure on those denying access are the donor governments.
The issues of accountability and diversion are also relevant. It is difficult to control the destination of every parcel of assistance provided to a needy population. However, governments of both donor countries and those hindering access, have a legitimate concern in requiring greater accountability from agencies who provide materials and foodstuffs, particularly if diversion to insurgent or military forces is possible. Weak accountability may result ultimately in less assistance going to affected populations.

If access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance is denied, information must be collected and disseminated to those who can take appropriate action. This includes the UN Security Council, as denial of assistance may lead to a threat to international peace and security, for example, by giving rise to a mass departure of refugees. Other relevant agencies include the UN General Assembly, other UN mechanisms (for example, those responsible under various human rights treaties), regional mechanisms (both political and human rights), and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Facilitating participation in community–based protection

The extent to which an emergency settlement can protect itself will depend on the profile of the uprooted population. Finding ways to motivate the community to protect itself depends on the source of the threat which may be both from outside and inside the community. Particularly in situations of conflict, where one force seeks to destroy militarily and psychologically the adversary’s society, the family may be broken up by violence. Women and girls may be subject to sexual violence. One overall objective underlying community based protection is to seek to replicate the protection mechanisms of a secure community in the exceptional circumstances of emergency settlement.

Involvement of the community – As a matter of principle, it should be recognized that the involvement and participation of emergency settlement populations in the day to day protection of human rights is central to success. This includes assuring that all persons have access to resources which serve their basic needs. The community should also be involved in legal protection matters. For example, there is a fairly regular practice of establishing tripartite commissions (country of refuge, country of origin, UNHCR) to oversee repatriation movements. A quadripartite commission (that is, with a refugee component) should be the norm, where a representative of the refugees should be selected to participate.

Controlling generalized violence – Camp compounds and communities should be designed or reinforced in view of security concerns, utilizing security lights and fencing. Appropriate steps should be taken to de–mine dangerous areas near a camp or community. Generalized violence and banditry may be effectively controlled by community based security teams and roving guards. The affected community may be able to implement a system of rapid communication with those local government or international entities in charge of security and protection in their camps or settlement areas. Full scale military attacks present a higher level of threat to which an unarmed population would not be expected to protect themselves, while protection from threats of rape and coercion from within the community may only be efficiently addressed by the community structure.

Addressing cultural factors – Regardless of any cultural inflexibility of the emergency settlement community, assisting agencies must find a way to ensure that the needs of all groups are understood and addressed. Women and children in particular may be vulnerable to “hidden” human rights abuses. When dealing with cultures which suppress the participation women in the public/civic decision–making process, a first step may be the formation of separate women’s and youth committees or activities where, in time, women and youths will feel comfortable sharing information. Their direct involvement in the traditional decision–making mechanisms of the community can be obtained over time, particularly, once the members realize its usefulness for the well–being of the community.

Cultural factors should not be regarded as an impediment to the protection of the individual rights of women and children. Traditions are usually created in response to perceived need and are modified over time as the perceived need changes. The realities of emergency settlement require many changes, sometimes altering the lifestyles of uprooted persons permanently. For example, many refugees return to their country of origin and continue working in the same manner as they did while in exile. Resolution of situations of sexual violence suffered by Somali refugee women have required dramatic changes in their behavior. Women accustomed to living in purdah (separation of sexes) now sit on decision–making committees with male elders to ensure that informed and practical measures are taken by the community.

Facilitating access to services – Assistance agencies should help persons in emergency settlements obtain access to information, education, work and basic civil procedures and protocols. For example, they should have access to courts of law to protect their interests. They should have a means of communicating with the outside world, be able to receive assistance from family members, trace missing relatives, and have rights to
personal property. All events regarding their personal status, such as births, deaths, marriages, should be formally registered under the law of the country of their settlement.

**Strengthening participation and understanding** – The staff of the humanitarian organizations may sometimes impede effective protection and assistance of uprooted persons, particularly if they tend to treat all beneficiary populations alike. Gender and age sensitivity training can help to ensure the appropriate response by humanitarian organizations to situations of uprootedness. Management and emergency staff should be given priority for training. For example, People–Oriented Planning (POP) is a method of emergency management training conducted by UNHCR. This type of training provides a framework with which to examine needs and resources, learn about the traditions, and support survival in emergency settlement. Before deciding on the methodology, agencies should ensure understanding of the customs of the uprooted population and not rely on false assumptions in planning and implementation of its assistance activities.

**Armed elements of emergency settlement populations**

All countries are responsible for the protection of the human rights of the persons on their soil, regardless of nationality or origin. Government military or security forces may consider it necessary to enter emergency settlements either to protect or to maintain the civilian nature of its inhabitants. The presence of armed forces of the government on whose territory the uprooted persons find themselves could prevent voluntary or involuntary recruitment into an opposing or military force. In the case of refugees, even where their recruitment is voluntary and legal, upon taking up arms, their refugee status ceases. Their presence in a refugee camp may also pose a threat to the security of the other refugees.

Where the armed presence is illegal, education and public information campaigns about the necessarily civilian nature of such settlements is one way to inform the armed intruders of their violation as well as inform the uprooted persons of their rights. Moreover, dialog can be held at a decision–making level, in another country or different region of the country, to convey the concerns of the international community about the armed presence to seek mutually acceptable ways to deal with it.

Where the armed presence is not illegal, but results in the abuse of the uprooted population, physically or through the spreading of terror, efforts should be made to work with the central authorities with a view to changing or reducing the presence. The ICRC and UNHCR have conducted education for armed forces in aspects of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law as well as in the mandates of the humanitarian agencies and the realities of the uprooted persons’ lives. This type of education aims to dispel misconceptions which lead to conflict and to build a sense of team spirit which facilitates conflict resolution.

In principle, the presence of armed persons is unacceptable, especially within situations of armed conflict, because their presence compromises the civilian, neutral and protected character of the settlement. The only exception might be the presence of controlled armed personnel in numbers necessary to maintain order and security. Practical concerns may necessitate a measure of accommodation in order to facilitate the delivery of assistance.

**Towards a new instrument on humanitarian assistance and intervention?**

The spectrum of humanitarian organizations is so broad that it is difficult to conceive of an instrument which would guarantee access to them all by communities living in situations of emergency settlement. It may be more logical to work with the legal and policy norms currently in existence to maintain the access of those impartial organizations who now have it and enhance that of those who do not. The legal norms present in the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols refer to the requirement not to impede and even facilitate the activities of the ICRC “and any other impartial humanitarian organization” to assist and protect victims of armed conflict.

Many, including governments, contend that an element of State responsibility is the recognition by a government of its inability to adequately assist and protect persons on its soil and, thereby, to call on the support of the international community to provide such support. A logical extension of such a request made of the international community would be facilitating the access of international humanitarian agencies and NGOs to the populations in need.

Protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance must be seen as inextricably interrelated, although the legal and material assistance components may be handled separately. The monitoring and support of human rights are of particular importance where the cause of flight relates to general violations of human rights, or threats to personal security. Where flight is not related to human rights violations or armed conflict,
as in the case of the disaster displaced, material assistance will most likely be the dominant concern. The solutions to the problem of humanitarian intervention and assistance will benefit from both perspectives. For example, a tendency to focus on operational and logistical matters to the detriment of protection of the rights of individuals should be avoided.

A formal agreement is needed to improve the provision of protection and assistance, and to establish standards for intervention. However, it may be extremely difficult to devise an instrument that would comprehensively deal with everything of concern to emergency settlement populations including intervention, access, delivery of assistance, security of population and personnel. More practice in specific situations would assist the effort by showing what is practically feasible. A good case can be made for starting small perhaps within a regional or alliance context (cf. Lome IV, CIREFCA, CPA). Any future agreement should avoid imposing new structures and should encourage true cooperation.

- **Strengthening and enforcement of international norms**

How can the existing mechanisms be made adequate for the task of enforcement? Should governments be allowed to accept or reject on a case-by-case basis the jurisdiction of an international court? How can the practice of reporting on the protection of the civilian population be extended? Is an increase in mandates or flexibility in practice of UNHCR, DHA or ICRC, and improved or greater access in conflict zones called for? What are the best mechanisms to achieve peaceful solutions?

These questions regarding enforcement mechanisms reveal some of the underlying problems in the protection of human rights. Some important initiatives should be further explored and supported by the international community. These include the war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and discussions about the creation of an international criminal court.

A certain level of recognition by the parties of the level and extent of a conflict is required before they are obligated under the Geneva Convention or its Additional Protocol. As a result, the failure of one or another party to the conflicts to recognize formally the severity of the conflict has limited the extent to which international obligations bind them. In situations of emergency, including international and non-international armed conflict or internal disturbances, States may not uphold their human rights obligations. International humanitarian law may address situations of armed conflict, but its applicability often depends upon the conflict reaching a certain level of intensity. The question of “who decides?” that this level has been reached deserves further study. There is also a need to extend the range and effectiveness of obligations, including with respect to non-governmental entities (armed opposition elements).

Any future standard or guideline should include provisions to protect individual rights by assistance in a non-discriminatory manner on the basis of cultural integrity or for other reasons. Although a great deal of study has been done on the protection and assistance needs of uprooted persons living in a camps or settlements, more attention needs to be given to the protection of human rights for uprooted persons living in urban and dispersed locations.

Information management and dissemination, including media coverage, are important tools to protect human rights. Various forms of information can bring sustained attention to the reasons for emergency settlement and the unique needs of specific groups. These include dissemination of laws, policies of States and humanitarian organizations, and guidelines for protection, unbiased assistance and emergency management.

Reporting on the human rights protection of the civilian population should be a necessary component of the overall strategy of the international community in terms of emergency settlement. The confidential work of the ICRC and the predominantly confidential work of UNHCR is also extremely important. The comparatively good access that organizations like UNHCR and the ICRC have is due in large part to the confidentiality with which they work. The maintenance of an appropriate balance between confidential access and public dissemination of information should be protected.

The public reporting to the UN Secretary-General by the human rights divisions of UN peace-keeping missions is a positive development of the 1990s. The tendency to allow the needs of ongoing political negotiations to control what human rights information is included in reports published by missions which also contain political or military components should be kept to a minimum. Perhaps the creation of human rights missions institutionally separate from the political and military aspects of peace-keeping will prove to be a step forward in this regard.

- **Dissemination of human rights instruments**
With the advent of computer and communications technology, whether on diskette, CD−ROM or over the Internet, the relevant norms, and guidelines for their implementation, should be placed on or made directly available through every computer, lap−top and notebook in every office dealing with uprooted persons. The value of training in these matters and, in particular the training of persons in the various relevant institutions to further train in them is fundamental. Such workshops not only transmit information, they also allow for dialog, team−building and sometimes even conflict resolution.

References


International Instruments of Human Rights Law (partial listing):

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966
- United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984

Regional Instruments of Human Rights Law:

- The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950
- American Convention on Human Right, “Pact of San Jose” of 1969

International Instruments of Refugee Law

- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951
- Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967

Regional Instruments of Refugee Law

- OAU Convention of 1969 Governing the Specific aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa
- Cartegena Declaration on Refugees of 1984

International Instruments of Humanitarian Law
Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims of 1949  
Additional Protocols of 1977

Additional Resources of Interest

International Journal of Refugee Law  
Journal of Refugee Studies.  
The Refugee Survey Quarterly

RefWorld, the range of databases developed by the Centre for Documentation on Refugees. These cover international legislation, national refugee legislation, case law, related UN information, as well as reports on situations in particular countries. A substantial portion of these databases is now available on the Internet, while a comprehensive CD-ROM is planned for later in 1995, together with access on the World Wide Web.

Topic 8 – Provision of Assistance in Complex Emergencies

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War created hopes that major conflicts and wars throughout the world would be resolved, that displaced populations would be able to return to their places of origin, and that people would have the opportunity to focus on nation-building, reconstruction, peace and development. In fact, the post–Cold War era has been marked by increased civil conflict and war. Several proxy wars previously fueled by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. now rage on as internal conflicts. Many of today’s wars are resource wars of survival within the context of limited social, economic and environmental resources or political opportunities. The human suffering caused by civil war is often aggravated by the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment, as well as fragile food production and distribution systems.

In the context of war, the provision of humanitarian assistance to emergency settlements will be conditioned by the stance of the government and contending forces in the conflict. Humanitarian assistance is likely to be used as a tool in war, to establish power, gain the loyalty of local people, or weaken the opposition. Belligerents to a conflict generally focus on military victory and are not likely to embrace international humanitarian principles. The challenge for humanitarian assistance practitioners is to design relief and assistance programs based on an analysis of existing social, economic, political and military factors, implementing them in their proper context in order to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need and reduce the negative impact of military strategies. Humanitarian practitioners may have to rely on peacekeeping personnel in order to provide assistance. In addition, they are increasingly forced to consider the role of humanitarian organizations and their relationship with outside and multilateral military forces which are more frequently intervening in complex emergencies and providing humanitarian assistance in hostile areas.

The complexity of many of today’s emergency settlement situations requires a re-examination of the principles which guide operations of relief and humanitarian assistance. The following principles are proposed to guide contemporary operations. An examination and discussion of best practices follows. Numerous ethical dilemmas and issues are considered.

Principles
1. In the advocacy of the three established principles of humanitarian assistance – humanity, neutrality, and impartiality – humanity comes first.

In the past, the principle of neutrality was widely recognized as essential to the ability of agencies and organizations to assist and protect persons on all sides of a conflict. Today, it is increasingly recognized that there are situations in which completely neutral humanitarian space does not exist. Relief efforts become “involved in insurgency and counter–insurgency warfare, the struggle for state power and warlordism” (Omaar and de Waal, 1994; Winter, 1995).

In situations of war, aid is a political and economic resource and the provision of aid can be an extremely political act. Food and other types of relief are used by contending armies and donor governments as political and military tools. If this highly political and economic context of humanitarian operations is disregarded, there is a high risk that relief work will be manipulated by one or more of the parties to the conflict or that it will intensify or prolong the conflict (Macrae and Zwi, 1994; Smith, 1993). The primary allegiance of humanitarian assistance providers ought to be to the victims in a conflict. That is, the humanitarian objective must come first in situations where adherence to strict neutrality or impartiality impedes the overall humanitarian goal of the operation.

2. Humanitarian assistance should be provided in solidarity with the victims of complex emergencies and it should be associated with efforts to foster human rights protection and conflict resolution in hostile or unsafe emergency situations.

Solidarity requires commitment to pursuing an agenda based on human rights and the pursuit of justice. Assistance must be provided in consultation with the people with whom solidarity is expressed. Such assistance will involve shared risk and suffering with the people as well as accountability to the people. Solidarity may involve moving beyond the provision of relief and assistance to human rights advocacy and lobbying (Omaar and de Waal, 1994). Providers may risk expulsion or become targets of belligerents if they publicize human rights violations and engage in efforts to restrain such abuses. The provision of assistance without regard for human rights violations, however, may mean people are being housed and fed, and then tortured or killed in the next wave of violence. The most effective means of fostering human rights protection and conflict resolution is to be frank with combatants regarding violations and to be in solidarity with the victimized population.

3. No matter how desperately humanitarian assistance is needed, there should not be an automatic presumption of response to an emergency situation in an unsafe environment. Following a thorough analysis and discussion with the victims, the best decision may be not to become involved.

Providers of humanitarian assistance should conduct a thorough analysis of the situation, consult with the victims, if possible, and calculate both the risks and the likely consequences of involvement. If the circumstances are dangerous, they should seek to hire staff who are willing to work under hazardous circumstances, provide training and support that will strengthen their operation and ensure arrangements for staff security are in place.

In a context of conflict, the population is already at risk. The critical question is whether aid can be provided without further endangering the target population. Will humanitarian assistance relieve suffering and benefit the victims of complex emergencies? If analysis indicates that assistance will be manipulated by belligerents to their own advantage, that it will further the political or military goals of the combatants or a donor, that it will prolong the conflict, or that it will be used for purposes counter–productive to humanitarian assistance goals and strategies, it may be necessary to withhold needed assistance. The needs of the victims and their opinions should guide such a decision.

4. The emergency settlement population in hostile or unsafe situations should be involved as participants in program planning and implementation.

The most effective way to mitigate the vulnerability of relief operations to political manipulation or abuse is to devolve responsibility and accountability to the civilians themselves. Civilians will protect relief and development programs that they “own.” They can exert influence over militias, particularly those that seek the loyalty of the local population. Local participation and the devolution of management also empowers communities in the struggle against the forces competing for power. When humanitarian assistance programs are managed by local communities, they are often more effective, the scope of external intervention is reduced, and long–term development interests may be supported. Local involvement and accountability can also help demonstrate transparent motives on the part of assistance providers, reducing suspicion by the
population as well as parties to the conflict (Smith, 1993).

5. Under no circumstances should humanitarian assistance be delivered to or distributed among armed combatants, militias or bandits.

Humanitarian assistance providers must seek to establish aid delivery systems independent of government and insurgent forces, and be forthright about their aim to relieve the suffering of victims in complex emergencies. Humanitarian relief and assistance is often a tool which contending forces will use to expand or consolidate territory or advance their political and military position. When humanitarian providers can ensure aid delivery independent of military strategies, they are not likely to be manipulated by belligerents or serve the military and political interests of the contending forces.

The distinction between combatants and non−combatants is not always clear. In many conflicts, civilians serve as part−time combatants. In other situations, people are conscripted into military or resistance movements against their will or they are forced by economic destitution to join an armed force. Again, the local population is in the best position to ensure aid delivery is targeted to civilians in need, rather than armed forces. Getting to know the habits and traditions as well as formal and informal power structures of the people and establishing good relations with local people can be the best means of monitoring the delivery and distribution of assistance and preventing the diversion of relief supplies.

Some diversions will be unavoidable. The assistance provider should alert all factions that the assistance pipeline will be shut off for those areas or settlements where continued relief diversions by hostile factions occur. When humanitarian assistance has become a resource that fuels conflict between contending parties, aid should be withdrawn. In addition, when providers have lost the trust of the people whom they are serving and their role is no longer appreciated, it is time to shut down operations.

### Best Practices

#### Conditions for involvement and responsibilities

The majority of today’s refugees and displaced persons are being uprooted by armed conflict. The victims include refugees, externally and internally displaced people, and people trapped behind siege lines or geographical barriers (UNHCR, 1993). Those in need of assistance include civilians, and captured, wounded or otherwise incapacitated soldiers. According to The International Court of Justice, the purpose of humanitarian assistance is to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found – to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being – giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress (Minear, 1988). The provision of humanitarian assistance, however, is increasingly recognized as a political act. Complex emergencies are not simply the unfortunate consequence of political and military strategies; they are often the objective of such strategies.

Civilian populations are the target of contending forces whose leaders seek to establish military and political control and power. The delivery of aid will have a political impact and will affect the balance of power in a conflict. Therefore, humanitarian providers are required to engage in much more sophisticated social, political and economic analyses in order to evaluate the potential consequences of their assistance or failure to assist (Keen and Wilson, 1994; Macrae and Zwi, 1994; Slim, 1995; Smith, 1993).

When governments and insurgents fail to provide or allow relief operations, humanitarian assistance providers are forced to consider humanitarian intervention without the approval of the governing powers. The need to respond to human suffering is increasingly recognized as justification for such intervention. Major UN operations in Cambodia, Mozambique, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia–Herzegovina have demonstrated the willingness of the international community to intervene on behalf of suffering populations. Claims of national sovereignty are no longer adequate to prevent such intervention. Major violence against civilian populations is no longer considered exclusively a matter of domestic jurisdiction. Human life takes precedence over international legal constructs and “sovereignty devoid of humane values increasingly appears illegitimate” (Weiss and Minear, 1993, p. 61; see also Chopra and Weiss, 1992).

When the conditions for involvement exist, providers must assess whether or not they can indeed serve humanitarian objectives through their involvement and, if so, how. Humanitarian assistance providers must conduct an assessment of their own resources and abilities to respond effectively. Do we know enough? Are we best suited? Can we make a thorough analysis? Do we have access to resources: sufficient funding, capable staff, trusted local partners? Normally this process will include an assessment mission with clear terms of reference. (For more details see the Topic 3 Emergency Settlement paper “Needs and Resources
The decision to intervene on behalf of a civilian population without consent of the governing authorities is not a neutral position. How best to provide humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies is actively debated.

### Non-partisanship and evenhandedness

Minear and Weiss (1993) call for nonpartisanship, humanitarian action that “does not seek to promote a particular political or religious agenda, solidify the loyalty of a particular ethnic group or geographical area, dampen disaffection, or preempt insurrection” (p. 23). Smith (1993) argues for operations of evenhandedness, as defined by Peter Davies, the former executive director of InterAction – “to provide assistance in such a manner that none of the parties to conflict is able to accrue undue military advantage” (p. 100). Smith argues that evenhandedness can help reduce the exploitation of humanitarian assistance and help aid providers engage in dialogue with warring parties. She argues, however, that it requires effective coordination among humanitarian assistance providers with a view to a division of labor; the analysis of links between the emergency, the conflict and the prevailing economic situation; an analysis of military strategies and possible connections between those strategies and provision of external assistance; and specialized training in how to operate in armed conflict.

While acknowledging that humanitarian assistance can be manipulated to serve military or political interests, Smith (1993) and Keen and Wilson (1994) argue that emergency assistance can be used to reduce conflict and stabilize underlying economic disruptions. In order to provide effective relief, humanitarian providers need to understand strategies employed for political and military control and economic profit. In addition, they must recognize and understand strategies pursued for survival and efforts either to maintain livelihoods or to develop new ones. Rather than attempting to establish positions of neutrality, “organizations involved in international relief need to think about how they are responding to the dynamics of conflict, about which strategies they should be facilitating, and which they should be discouraging” (Keen and Wilson, 1994, pp. 209–210).

The limitations and even dangers of striving for evenhandedness are that “sustained relief can prolong conflict, or unbiased actions can risk maintaining conditions that led to the original conflict” (Smith, 1993, p. 100; see also Omaar and de Waal, 1994; Keen and Wilson, 1994; Macrae and Zwi, 1994; Minear and Weiss, 1993). When humanitarian assistance is used as a tool against civilians, the principles of nonpartisanship and solidarity conflict with one another. In such situations external assistance may have to be withdrawn; parties to the conflict may have to be pressured to seek a negotiated settlement; the international community may choose to use force and assume responsibility for the management and implementation of relief; or where one party to the conflict is clearly identified as the primary aggressor and violator of human rights, aid agencies may choose sides and favor the disadvantaged party (Smith, 1993).

For example, in the 1980s, humanitarian assistance was provided in Ethiopia without acknowledging the Ethiopian government’s famine–creating policies. Government human rights abuses, forced resettlement and the diversion of food aid was not criticized. The Ethiopian government of Mengistu was able to manipulate aid for its strategic and propaganda purposes. “Few of those familiar with Ethiopia avowed ‘neutrality’ and inferred that there was nothing to choose between the two sides. One senior Oxfam staff member privately commented: ‘I have always regarded the [Tigrayan People Liberation Front’s] struggle as a war against famine’” (Omaar and de Waal, 1994, p. 12).

The decision to become involved in complex emergencies is one that is wrought with ambiguities and uncertainty. After identifying if and how a provider will become involved in a humanitarian relief effort in a complex emergency, the provider must recognize its primary humanitarian responsibility to the emergency population and be held accountable to the beneficiaries of assistance. This requires a transparency of motives and involvement of the beneficiaries in program design, implementation and evaluation. A critical factor in this approach is to identify the differences, struggles and power structures within beneficiary populations. While respect for local leadership is important, all segments of the population must be included in the provision of humanitarian assistance. (See also the topic 20 Emergency Settlement paper “Supporting Emergency Settlement Leadership and Participation.”)

### Support for humanitarian assistance personnel

In complex emergencies, agencies and organizations providing humanitarian assistance and their personnel may experience vulnerability and powerlessness. Providing relief is difficult and may be life-threatening. Staff may be harassed or attacked. Personnel may be held hostage, injured or killed. The stress and vulnerability is
likely to affect their emotional and physical health.

Security training

While providers must be willing to assume some level of vulnerability and insecurity when working in conflict areas, agencies and organizations, at national and international levels, must also take responsibility for providing support and implementing measures that will increase the security of staff in dangerous situations. Field personnel should receive specialized training for posts in settings of armed conflict. They should be fully informed and know as much as possible about the situation in which they will work and the circumstances under which they will work. Inexperienced staff should work in partnership with more experienced personnel.

Several security–related precautions are essential for the viability of assistance and security of staff, including the establishment of:

- reliable and clear communications capacities within an operational area and with regional and international headquarters
- thorough and regular briefings about the situation and operations, preferably in coordination with other providers
- prominent identification of agency staff, vehicles and relief supplies with recognizable humanitarian logos

In some situations personal protection devices, such as bullet proof clothing or armored vehicles may be necessary. In other cases, armed guards or weapons may be required. However, these measures are only to be used for protection and not offensively.

Donors that ask agency personnel to put themselves in harm’s way on behalf of the donor must also take responsibility for the costs and arrangements of providing security.

Stress

Relief workers will have to care for themselves emotionally and learn to rely upon others for support and assistance. They must have some knowledge of stress, an ability to recognize it in themselves and others, and some skills for management of stress and frustration. The special demands of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies require agencies and organizations to consider developing personnel policies that provide adequate professional and emotional support, sabbaticals and remuneration.

Building trust

Perhaps the best support available to humanitarian assistance personnel in complex emergencies is to be found among the local population with whom mutual trust has been established. Jacques Willemsen, Dutch Church Aid, provides the following example:

A year before the “battle for Mogadishu” started in earnest, we saw the war coming. Having a mixed–clan staff of some 50 Somalis in the Northeast, this development was quite worrisome. We, therefore, sat down with the traditional elders and negotiated a deal. We would continue the water emergency program in their region, stretching from Central to the very Northeast of Somalia, as long as security and logistics would permit. They, in turn, swore to treat our Somali staff as “guests” according to the ancient Koranic tradition. Now, nearly four years later, we deplore the loss of one staff member. He died of malaria!

Our compound was attacked and the local people defended it, on order of the elders. Early in the war they sent an expedition to Mogadishu to rescue women and children related to our Somali colleagues from the carnage and brought 37 people back to safety. They lost a number of people and trucks in both events. When offered compensation and thanks, the elders responded, “What for? We have a deal.”

Later, when hundreds of thousands of their clan members fled back to the region and the food situation became precarious, it was their turn to call upon our deal. And we fulfilled our obligations.
What could be perceived as a “romantic” series of events, Willemse identifies as a carefully discussed, prepared and negotiated agreement based on mutual respect and trust resulting from loyalty to the communities in the face of pressure from the Barre regime. Established working relationships with the local population are the best foundation for humanitarian assistance programs.

### Qualities/skills of field personnel

Field personnel operating in complex emergencies are required to have skills far beyond those of a logistics officer who coordinates the delivery and provision of relief and humanitarian assistance. Often described as a generalist, the humanitarian assistance professional is required to have multiple skills; in complex emergencies, the political nature of the disaster requires additional skills.

### Political analysis

Recognizing that humanitarian relief and assistance is a political act, that aid is a political and economic resource, and that aid will affect the balance of power in a conflict, the humanitarian worker must be able to collect information and conduct sophisticated political analysis about the local patterns of conflict and alliance. Humanitarian assistance providers must be transparent in their motives to relieve suffering, able to conduct a thorough analysis of a given situation before and during an operation, and able to work cooperatively with the population whom they are serving.

### Communication skills

Slim (1995) has identified several additional skills required by today’s humanitarian field personnel. The ability to negotiate with parties to civil conflict in order to obtain access to people is essential. Skills related to conflict analysis, management and resolution may be required. An ability to communicate information about humanitarian assistance, as well as to counter propaganda that escalates instability and conflict, may be essential in order to make humanitarian assistance accessible. Practitioners will need to be able to work in urban and rural areas, recognizing the different circumstances, resources, vulnerabilities, survival strategies, and communication networks that operate in each area. Human rights monitoring and reporting is a critical aspect of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies; it requires a sophisticated understanding of political, ethnic, gender and class relations as well as the ability to document and collect such information.

### Negotiating/managing

Increasingly, humanitarian assistance personnel are required to select, manage and monitor armed guards for protection. Such responsibility requires critical personnel management skills as well as the ability to evaluate the political implications of making such decisions. Similarly, the ability to evaluate, negotiate and manage relations with military personnel who become involved in humanitarian assistance efforts, as well as evaluate the political and practical implications of developing such relationships is critical to maintaining primary organizational commitment to the victims in a conflict.

### Strategies for delivery of assistance

#### The actors

International aid providers include multilateral agencies, such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); bilateral agencies providing aid from donor governments; the International Red Cross movement; and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Multilateral agencies have the advantage of being able to mobilize significant political influence as well as logistical and economic resources. However, they have a structural bias toward the state, which limits their ability to operate impartially. More recently, the UN has developed alternative approaches of intervention, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, in disasters where there is no effective government or the government has been unable or unwilling to provide assistance, such as in Somalia, Sudan and Iraq. Bilateral aid agencies often respond on the basis of foreign policy objectives and are likely to have a political position on the war, resulting in an unbalanced provision of assistance.

NGOs usually have the strength of greater independence and flexibility as well as long-term on-the-ground experience, though they have less international influence and political power than multilateral and bilateral agencies. Local NGOs, in particular, have the important resources of local knowledge, informed staff and established trust among the population.
Coordination

(For a more complete discussion of coordination in emergency settlement situations, see topic 5 “Interagency Coordination During Emergencies.”) Each of the various actors has particular strengths and resources to contribute to the provision of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies. Ideally, the provision of assistance would be based on a needs and resources assessment which identifies what assistance is needed, where and by whom. A humanitarian assistance plan of operation developed through a coordination process should be based on the capacities and resources of each agency or organization involved in the effort to respond to the identified needs. Through a coordinated response which incorporates the tasks identified below, limited resources and energies could be effectively utilized, minimizing duplication and competition between providers.

Dialogue – One of the dangers of a coordinated and centralized approach to humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies arises from the multiple responsibilities and interactions among the many actors. Disagreements and an inability of providers to unite in a coordinated plan of operation is often a reflection of underlying differences about what are fundamentally matters of principle. Recognition of these differences and the acceptance of multiple agendas, may facilitate the development of a division of labor. However, when the differences in principles result in conflicting goals and objectives, coordination may not be possible. Ethical values motivating different agencies vary considerably depending on the nature and origin of the agencies. The common factor is that agencies are interested in somehow protecting and providing assistance to the affected civilian population. How this goal is implemented varies considerably. Constant dialogue – about principles, goals and objectives, agency strengths and weaknesses – is necessary if some level of consensus and a coordinated response is to be achieved.

A division of labor, with individual aspects of the coordination task assumed by individual actors, may be more manageable and effective. Such a division of labor would move coordination from the center to the field, based on a shared plan of action as the following example from the former Yugoslavia illustrates:

“In the Croatian town of Pakrac, located in United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) West, reconstruction efforts were begun in late 1993 following widespread ethnic cleansing during 1991–92. Croatian NGOs enlisted and trained international volunteers, who are now living with families in the area and participating in work camps to rebuild homes and community buildings. The activity, which began in Croatian neighborhoods, has recently expanded to include Serb families as well. Labor and materials are channeled from NGOs in Europe; limited assistance is also provided by the UNDP’s Office in Vienna as part of its Social Reconstruction Programme.

“Reviewing the various actors and their roles, a Croatian NGO official notes that ‘The large international organizations are very important when it comes to organizing mass support in the form of funds, food, and shelter.

But for reconciliation you must work with individuals and on the local level. This the United Nations can’t really organize’” (Minear, 1994, p. 8).

Evaluation – The role of the outside critic can be an asset. The concerned humanitarian critic may identify gaps in service delivery, unnecessarily compromised principles, and negative impacts resulting from the provision of assistance. On-going, self-critical evaluation of coordinated strategies is essential if humanitarian efforts are to avoid contributing to the disaster and facilitate long-term peace and development. Certainly the critique of informed and concerned individuals and organizations must be considered.

Capacity development – Civilian management and coordination of relief distribution and assistance may facilitate the development of civil society as well as minimize the concern civilians may have regarding questionable motives of aid providers.

The obstacle of military conflict – situation mapping

The primary obstacle to providing assistance in complex emergencies is military conflict. In order to overcome this obstacle, Smith (1993) proposes a mapping exercise as one strategy for developing a coordinated and effective emergency relief operation to sustain civilians in the context of war. The first step in this strategy is to identify three distinct zones within the operational area: government-controlled areas, insurgent-controlled areas, and those areas controlled by neither side.
The second step is to define access to each area and assign international aid providers to the areas they are best suited to serve. Those areas that are most vulnerable to attack should be identified and coordinated responses of protection and assistance must be developed. Such areas include: contested land areas, strategic geographical areas (for example, garrisons, urban centers, essential economic resources), and potential trouble spots (for example, refugee camps or major aid or logistical resources, such as warehouses, ports, airports, roads). In the best-case scenario, providers would present belligerents with service plans and negotiate operational agreements. It is necessary for humanitarian agencies to work together and present a united front in order to mitigate manipulating strategies of the belligerents. In addition, mechanisms must be established for participation of the civilian population in the planning and provision of assistance, and for accountability of all involved in the humanitarian response.

The final phase of the mapping exercise involves an analysis of military strategies employed in conflict. Most often the state assumes a defensive position in a conflict, attempting to protect their authority, power and infrastructure. Insurgency forces generally assume an offensive position, seeking to expand their authority and erode the authority, resources and power of the state. Relief operations and military strategies may intersect at the following points and each area should be fully analyzed as operational plans are designed and implemented in order to mitigate manipulation by the contending forces:

1. **Logistics** – Transportation and communications are crucial to any military strategy. The goal of the government or conventional military forces is generally to keep infrastructural systems open and accessible. Insurgency forces may attempt to restrict transportation and disrupt communications. Relief providers depend on a national infrastructure to implement programs and can only rarely rely on alternative systems. The creation of separate communications and transportation systems is expensive and may give belligerents the opportunity to fully exploit existing systems for military purposes. In addition, the development of additional infrastructure may benefit the government, particularly when such expansion is implemented through government channels. However, aid providers may become military targets when infrastructure systems are shared with belligerents.

2. **Geography and demography** – The goal of belligerents is to control or gain control of territory and civilian populations. Aid may become a means by which parties to the conflict seek to establish the loyalty of populations and control of territory. Aid providers should seek to provide relief independent of the control of belligerents.

Among the flood of refugees who fled Rwanda in 1994 were the extremists who were the principal killers in the genocide of well over a half−million Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu citizens. They used their positions of power and privilege to control the relief aid which was intended for the innocent refugees whom they used as camouflage for their operations. Such leaders served the short−term need of efficient food distribution within the camps, but rapidly led to militia control of the camps. The extremists were able to use the protection and assistance of international refugee support to establish their operations in exile within the refugee camps. They established control of both territory and people to strengthen their position.

3. **Economics** – Relief and humanitarian assistance may provide sustenance to the combatant forces and increase the logistical capacity of those forces. Assistance may enhance the political and social standing of the military force governing the area of service and grant them humanitarian credentials that they do not deserve. Assistance may also disrupt local production and markets. In addition, it may be exploited by some for personal economic advantage.

The Special Relief Programme for Angola (SRPA) was launched in 1990 in the midst of war in order to provide as much basic assistance as possible to civilians in all areas of the country, on the basis of neutrality. After the peace agreement in 1991, SRPA II was implemented with similar objectives. Both the Government of Angola and the UNITA resistance forces tried to manipulate the program to their advantage. Following resumption of the war in 1992, both sides showed contempt for humanitarian principles, but they agreed to a re-launch of the relief program because it served the war economies of both parties. UNITA had faced a cut−off in assistance from South Africa and the Angolan government had been forced to eliminate funding for social services as part of their economic reform (Omaar and de Waal, 1994).
4. Politics – Combatants will vie for international recognition and political legitimacy. Aid should be provided evenly in areas of need, avoiding the expansion of legitimacy for any party. Relief agencies must ensure they equitably manage the inevitable incidents that arise in war. In addressing important issues about the origins and determinants of conflict and human rights abuses, the aid community must treat all similar incidents the same way.

5. Social trends – Belligerents to a conflict pursue the twin goals of “capturing the hearts and minds of civilians” and undermining the credibility of the enemy. They may use aid resources to pacify populations or to obtain their loyalty. They may also use terror (rape, torture and violence) to undermine civilian support for their enemy.

For example, in Somalia in January 1991, humanitarian relief efforts were frustrated by deliberate actions of the waning parties to prevent relief supplies from reaching their enemies (Jonah, 1993).

Strategy analysis – An analysis of military strategies employed in conflict is essential to any humanitarian assistance strategy that providers adopt. The points identified above may serve as a guide to that process. When humanitarian assistance agencies coordinate their relief and protection efforts and establish a division of labor, the opportunities for belligerents to undermine, manipulate or exploit such resources may be mitigated. It is more likely that the aid community will be able to establish rules of operation when the focus is on reaching all civilians in need, not manipulating operational borders.

Public information – When assistance providers negotiate with one another and articulate a stated position on their response to human rights offenses, and attacks on civilian populations, personnel, aid convoys, and the infrastructure required for relief work, belligerents will be less likely to succeed in their efforts to manipulate civilians, providers and aid. Regular and comprehensive public statements regarding conduct of the relief operation may also help to mitigate propaganda or belligerents’ efforts to use aid to their benefit.

Participation – Civilian participation throughout the operation is the best mitigating factor. In addition, such participation creates a base for long-term reconstruction and development. In a report on humanitarianism and war, Minear, et. al. (1991) wrote:

“Civilian management of disaster relief programs represents an investment in the functioning of civil society, democratic institutions, and human rights.... While not ruling out any and all involvement by the military, whether on the receiving or the sending end, the importance of civilian management suggests a preference for assisting civilian initiatives in the difficult task of nation-building” (p. 39).

Role and use of the media

The media can be used to maximize the potential for effective programming of assistance in complex emergencies. Nearly all parties to a conflict appear sensitive to public and world opinion. The publication of treaty violations, human rights abuses and military attacks on civilian populations, humanitarian personnel, aid convoys, and the infrastructure required for relief work discredits the aggressor and undermines the authority they seek to establish. Therefore, the media can have a moderating influence on the violent and destructive behavior of warring parties. A positive, cooperative relationship with the media also may serve to expose the plight of civilian populations, foster political and public pressure for their sake, and help generate public support for humanitarian assistance and protection.

There are also risks involved in developing relationships with the press. Media personnel seek information about complex emergencies and the nature of the crisis, how humanitarian operations are proceeding, how given agencies are performing and how the government and insurgent forces are operating. Humanitarian assistance providers may not have access to such up-to-date information, if it is available. Superficial or partisan news releases or publications may create tensions in the region or threaten donor support. Forthright answers may put pressure on agency relationships with belligerents or undermine sensitive negotiations to gain access to vulnerable populations.

Humanitarian assistance agencies should have a clear strategy for how to relate with the media. Reporters and correspondents will ask tough questions, expect clear answers and demand accountability. Agencies that engage in relationships with the media will have to deal with the media representation of their response efforts and the consequences of such publicity.
Role of the military

The potential involvement of outside military forces and the use of military forces may have significant deterrent value and influence when humanitarian assistance providers negotiate with belligerents. When providers are unable to provide assistance to victimized populations because of government or insurgent actions, military support is increasingly utilized. There are some who argue that “when evidence is overwhelming that people are dying because of the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance, the international community has the obligation to intervene to assure that relief reaches the victims” (Jonah, 1993). However, involvement of military forces in the provision of humanitarian assistance is seriously debated. The role of the military in humanitarian emergencies may involve a variety of responsibilities, ranging from peacekeeping, to peacemaking, peace enforcement or peace building.

Peacekeeping has been defined by The International Peace Academy as: “The prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states through the medium of third party intervention, organized and directed internationally, using personnel to restore and maintain peace” (cited by Gordenker and Weiss, 1989, p. 126). In such cases, the use of military forces is generally defensive and non-coercive. Peacekeeping operations launched under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter require the consent of the parties to the conflict. Peacekeeping activities may involve security-related services or the provision of technical services.

Security-related activities may focus on maintaining safe conditions for threatened groups or persons. Their primary responsibility in some situations may be to maintain a separation of conflicting forces. In other situations, they may provide protection for civilian populations and humanitarian personnel.

Technical military services and logistical capacities may be utilized to deliver relief assistance and medical care, as well as to restore communications and transportation systems. When war and violence escalate to the point that humanitarian assistance providers are unable to access vulnerable populations, the resources and logistical capacities of military establishments may be the only means of obtaining access.

Peacemaking activities also may involve security-related services or the provision of technical services. They are distinguished from peacekeeping activities in that they are implemented without the consent of the government or parties to the conflict in the country. Chapter VII of the UN Charter enables the Security Council to undertake military action to provide humanitarian access or impose economic sanctions, without consent of a government. Often referred to as peace enforcement or peace building activities, in addition to peacemaking, such initiatives have been undertaken in Northern Iraq, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia.

For example, when the land routes to the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo were cut off in 1992, existing peacekeeping operations were extended beyond the mandate of monitoring the original peace process to supporting and protecting humanitarian relief operations. A humanitarian airlift of food and medical supplies was flown into the besieged capital by UN peacekeeping forces, with aircraft provided by about 20 nations. This effort required the UN peacekeeping forces to secure and manage the city's airport. In addition, a massive land operation of military escorts to protect relief convoys delivering food and relief supplies to other areas of Bosnia–Herzegovina was implemented.

The distinction between peacekeeping and peacemaking is unclear and criteria for deciding if and when military intervention is necessary should be established prior to any military involvement. Mackinlay (1993) suggests three categories that may define the scope of responsibility and involvement of military forces in humanitarian emergencies: national level security that assures the protection of serviceable ports and air terminals; local security that assures secure storage facilities for relief supplies, the protection of convoys, maintenance and improvement of roads, and bridges and de-mining operations; emergency logistics that provide support for the effective functioning of relief agencies, including communications, local air, land and waterway transport, heavy lift equipment, freight handling facilities, shelter, field power systems and potable water. In all cases the role of the military must be defined and a code of conduct for the use of force must be established.

When forceful military intervention is employed, the act of military intervention may involve high levels of violence, or the threat to do so, in order to protect civilian populations or the integrity of states. In the absence of internationally accepted criteria for intervention, charges of political motivations, subjectivity and (increasingly) the media-driven nature of responses are inevitable. Why intervention in Somalia in 1992 and not in Southern Sudan? Why in Bosnia and not Armenia, Tajikistan, Liberia and a dozen other places where crises have either exploded or are likely to explode in the near future?
Coordinating humanitarian and military operations

The coordination of humanitarian assistance with political and military actions is fraught with difficulties. It blurs the traditionally distinct roles of humanitarian and military agencies. Military assistance makes it difficult for humanitarian providers to operate evenhandedly and with credibility throughout an operational area. Access to people in need may be compromised. Negotiating the conditions of relief delivery may be made more difficult, as motives become suspect and relationships more adversarial (UNHCR, 1993). In addition, once a humanitarian organization has supported military intervention, they must be prepared to support the force that is used and may find their humanitarian agenda compromised (Omaar and de Waal, 1994).

Military resources are expensive and they can inhibit the development of local resources and institutions. The import of large quantities of relief supplies and food can destroy local markets and food systems, create food shortages and inflation. Military officials often lack the local knowledge necessary to plan and distribute relief effectively, based on an analysis of overall relief needs, local resources, and long–term reconstruction and development requirements (Mackinlay, 1993; Weiss and Minear, 1993).

Serious questions are introduced for humanitarian assistance organizations and personnel when military operations become part of an assistance effort. Under what conditions might a provider of humanitarian assistance collaborate with military forces to ensure service delivery to an emergency settlement? What forms might this collaboration take? When should an assistance provider refuse to collaborate with military forces? In each context these questions will have to be answered by those who are committed to relieve the suffering of civilian populations.

Military involvement must be understood as a limited response at extraordinary expense. If military involvement is undertaken, it should be integrated into the humanitarian assistance paradigm. In this regard, at the point of military engagement, a coordinating team should be established that includes leaders in disaster management, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development, conflict resolution, cross–line counterparts and military leaders.

It is essential to think about military intervention in a framework that links humanitarian assistance with conflict resolution. In addition, the need and outcome of military intervention must be evaluated for humanitarian purposes in terms of its impact on longer–term transformation of the conflict, rather than on its short–term capacity to effect disaster and relief goals. The primacy of humanitarian objectives must be maintained and the military must play, and be perceived to play, a subordinate, facilitating and supporting service role throughout a peacekeeping operation.

Military intervention should be a last resort of the international community in response to complex emergencies. All appropriate opportunities to strengthen and enforce, not weaken, the principle of universal human rights should be employed. Gross violators of these universal human rights, particularly at policy levels, should be charged and tried in international court for crimes against humanity. Civilian populations will not be able to live with security until they are assured that their human rights will be protected and enforced. If reconciliation and peace is to be achieved within a society, those responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable.

Uniform quantitative standards for the provision of assistance in complex emergencies do not exist in the same way that they do for more technical aspects of emergency settlement. However, many critical issues arise for humanitarian assistance providers in the context of violence and war.

First, providers face the question of involvement in the humanitarian emergency and responsibilities for providing assistance. Given the contested nature of resources in conflict situations, the issue of how to work in solidarity with the civil population at risk in the complex emergency and provide services evenhandedly in all areas of conflict is particularly troublesome. Complex analysis of the political, social, economic and military factors related to each particular emergency must be conducted and re–evaluated on an on–going basis. Programs must be developed to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, without fueling the military conflict. The question of coordination with other humanitarian assistance providers, the nature of relations and negotiations with belligerents to the conflict, and cooperation with outside military forces that may intervene in the emergency must be resolved.

Complex humanitarian emergencies challenge the professionalism and capacities of humanitarian assistance providers and organizations. Transparency of motives and accountability to recipient populations as well as
donors is required. The need to redress the historical inequities and human rights abuses which are at the root of so many of today’s conflicts is a challenge to the international community that supports and directs international humanitarian assistance. Integrated provision of relief, reconstruction and development assistance is essential if human suffering is to be alleviated and international peace and security is to be advanced.

References


Individuals are vulnerable when their physical security or health is at-risk. An individual may be vulnerable as a result of inadequate access to resources, inadequate protection from an external threat, and/or personal limitations in relation to the context in which he or she is living. All human beings require access to vital resources such as clean water, food and the means to prepare it, shelter, clothing, and sanitation. Not adequately meeting their basic mental, emotional or social development needs is an additional risk for children.

- External threats can be from other human beings, epidemic disease, disasters, or other conditions capable of overwhelming normal capacities for survival and health. “Be it earthquake, flood, cyclone or drought, it’s often not the disastrous event itself that causes the highest number of deaths, but the aftermath, when victims are huddled together in overcrowded, inadequate shelter, with insufficient food, contaminated water supplies, and no sanitation. It’s these awful post-disaster conditions that epidemics and disease take their toll – especially of women, children, the sick, and the elderly” (Fieth, 1995, p. 7).
Vulnerability may also be imposed on an individual by others through persecution and abuse based on gender, race, ethnic or political differences. Alternatively, vulnerability may spring from the individual due to personal limitations or weaknesses. Personal limitations that can cause vulnerability include:

- physical limitations – inadequate strength, size, health, capabilities
- social marginality – inability to obtain necessary social protection, cooperation, assistance, or support
- inadequate knowledge or skills
- mental/emotional disabilities – inability to function normally in a given social context

Even in cases of personal disability or limitations, an individual is not considered “vulnerable” if he or she has access to resources and support from family or community adequate to ensure survival, well-being, and basic development. When individuals and families lack access to basic resources, vulnerability is widespread. Ensuring access to adequate basic resources eliminates or greatly reduces the vulnerability of many who are not able to meet their own needs. Consequently, “vulnerable group” categories which are based on personal limitations, are not themselves sufficient to identify those who are vulnerable because they may be too narrow (if resources are generally lacking or there is an overwhelming external threat) or too broad (if families and other groups have adequate access to resources.) They are useful, however, in identifying those people whose vulnerability should be assessed.

Principles

1. Any support to vulnerable groups or individuals should be based on an understanding of the affected community’s strengths, capabilities, and “natural” ways of providing such support.

In order to address effectively the needs of vulnerable groups, it is necessary to recognize and, as appropriate, build upon the traditional coping and care systems of the family, group or community in the emergency settlement. The critical activities needed to support this approach are observation and analysis of the emergency situation and the people’s reactions to it. Ignoring the traditional systems of the affected population undermines the community’s own coping and healing mechanisms and has the effect of absolving people from assuming their own responsibilities.

There is a danger that interventions may deal with the disabled, elderly, separated children, and other vulnerable groups in a piecemeal way – especially when multiple NGOs respond simultaneously in the same emergency settlement. Although this approach may be administratively easier from the point of view of the outside responders, it does not strengthen the community’s own structures for caring for its vulnerable members. From the beginning of an emergency, assistance should be provided in ways that encourage and help families remain together and increase their coping capacities. A community-based approach is recommended for emergency settlement situations because such a response will: be more sustainable for the long-term, be more culturally appropriate, and be more cost-effective than an individual case work approach.

2. An initial assessment of the health, nutritional status and coping capacities of the emergency settlement and family groups within it must be made as soon as possible.

A rapid assessment should be conducted by an interdisciplinary team of experienced professionals to identify:

- those within the population who are at greatest risk,
- measures to increase family and community capacity to meet the needs of those at-risk, and
- direct interventions to protect and ensure the survival of those without family care.

The most vulnerable people will often be the least able to make their needs known. They must be sought out. In an emergency, the most vulnerable will be the first to die. Rapid action is required to identify those who are at greatest risk and to initiate appropriate measures to help ensure their protection, survival and well-being.

3. Measures to address the psychosocial needs of the population can help reduce vulnerabilities and are important from the early stage of an emergency.
It is extremely important to enable members of the emergency settlement to have as much control over their daily lives as possible and to resume as quickly as possible as many aspects of normal daily life as their circumstances permit. Participation and self-management should be basic approaches for achieving this end. Program implementors and those providing psychological counseling or other non-physical support must identify and respect what people are able to do for themselves. A basic goal of interventions should be to strengthen the capacity of people to cope and take care of meeting their own needs. Assistance should reinforce, not supplant these capacities. So far as possible, assistance should be managed by the affected community itself.

Emergency responders should support efforts to re-establish normal economic, social, cultural and religious activities within the community. The dependent position in which emergency survivors are often placed by relief organizations is very damaging. It compounds the effects of trauma and impedes recovery. For children, normalization of daily life is extremely important, including the opportunity to go to school and to see their parents in normal social roles, including those of provider and protector.

4. In assessing the situation and vulnerabilities of a population in an emergency, particular attention must be given to identifying and determining the situation of children without care, children with families other than their own, isolated women (i.e. without the support and protection of a family, but not necessarily single), disabled or elderly persons without family care, and others who may be isolated and vulnerable.

It is appropriate for those responding to situations of emergency settlement to take special care in assessing the needs and resources of those individuals and probable groups of people who are likely to require special assistance in order to survive the situation. The primary response should be to identify and reinforce family and community capacity to provide for their needs, avoiding or minimizing establishment of alternative forms of care. Aid providers should be cautious in the provision of aid which is not needed or which undercuts the affected population’s natural ability to cope.

5. Coordinated procedures must be put in place to ensure that vulnerable individuals are able to receive and make use of physical, psychological, developmental and other assistance in an equitable manner in the specific context of the emergency settlement.

At the beginning of an emergency, in keeping with the principles stated here and policies of UNHCR, UNICEF and other appropriate international bodies, competent authorities should establish and promulgate context specific policies relating to types and levels of service, and methodology and approaches to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

6. In an emergency involving displacement, all agencies involved should: anticipate that children will be present who are separated from their parents or guardians, make active efforts to identify and register them, and ensure they immediately receive appropriate care (e.g. keeping siblings together.) Separated children should be placed with a substitute family or, if this is not possible, in emergency care that replicates normal family life so far as possible.

As rapidly as possible, medical screening and interim care in substitute families should be arranged for all separated children. Their well-being should be monitored on an ongoing basis. Except as necessary to ensure their personal security, such care for a child should be arranged within the emergency settlement as close as possible to the place where the child was identified. Separated children should benefit from the same level of assistance, schools and services as other children. The standard application of the “best interest” of the child should be applied in all decisions related to placement of separated children.

As soon as possible after being identified, each child separated from his or her parents or guardian should be documented to record information needed for tracing and immediate care and an active system should be initiated for tracing parents, guardians, other family members or relatives.

7. Preventing the separation of children or disabled dependents from their families must be integrated into all aspects of emergency preparedness and response.

There are many reasons why children or disabled dependents may become separated before an emergency or during the response to it. It is important to determine very quickly how and why separations have occurred so that actions taken do not inadvertently cause additional separations. Especially during the acute stage of an emergency when the general population does not yet have access to basic subsistence requirements or is in physical danger, parents may tell their children or other dependents to present themselves as separated.
hoping that they will receive assistance or protection. In extreme cases, adults, who lack the resources or capacity to care for all those with them, may abandon children or weaker family members who seem less likely to survive.

Two kinds of actions are needed to minimize such separations. One is to ensure that vulnerable families, such as those headed by women, benefit quickly and fully from any assistance provided to the general population. Special measures may also be needed to ensure their physical safety. In addition, all children or other vulnerable individuals who appear to be on their own must be screened to determine where they have been living and with whom; whether it would be in their best interest to continue living with a parent or previous care provider; and if the provision of a small amount of food, other basic assistance, or better security would make this possible. Such targeted assistance should be phased out as soon as the families concerned are able to benefit from the same assistance provided to the general population. Any assistance provided to children or others who are separated must be at a basic level and provided with minimal public visibility. The screening of those who appear to be separated must be done by individuals of the same background as the affected population who have been trained how to interview children and assess their situation.

8. Any incidents of sexual violence should be carefully investigated in a sensitive way with complete respect for the confidentiality of the survivor. Action should be taken to ensure the survivor’s personal security from further violence.

Unfortunately, rape is often recurrent. The primary response should be investigation of the event to the extent possible to punish those responsible and protect those who have been harmed. Such investigations must be carried out without further endangering the survivor. To this end confidentiality must be ensured. This confidentiality, however, does not preclude the provision of appropriate support. Support should be culturally acceptable and easily accessible. The use of female counselors from the same ethnic group as the survivor will present the fewest barriers to communication and support.

**BEST PRACTICES**

A key operational issue in an emergency is identifying those individuals who will remain at-risk – even if basic resources are made available to the emergency settlement population – and initiating special measures to reduce their vulnerability and otherwise ensure their survival and growth. So far as possible, such interventions should be through, or in cooperation with their families, if present, and the community. A fundamental strategy in emergency response must be to improve rapidly the capabilities of families and the community to provide adequately for the needs of members, particularly the most vulnerable. In some cases it may not be possible to initiate rapidly enough interventions through families or the community to ensure personal security and/or physical survival. In these situations, direct intervention by outsiders is necessary. This type of intervention, for example centers to care for separated children, should be a last resort, but, where necessary, must be initiated very rapidly.

**Assessment of vulnerable groups**

Vulnerability is contextually determined. For example, to determine what social or other characteristics might make households headed by women more vulnerable than others, careful, gender sensitive assessment is needed. In other circumstances a particular social group, tribe, or clan might be considered pariahs or enemies and therefore be excluded from normal aid distribution by leaders, thereby making them vulnerable.

To make good and timely decisions about how to intervene to reduce the vulnerabilities of those at greatest risk requires accurate information and understanding of the social and cultural characteristics of the affected population(s) and of the current dynamics and capacities among them. In order to obtain such information quickly, an assessment team must include members with solid understanding of the factors that cause individuals to be vulnerable and the appropriate skills to obtain rapidly essential information from members of the affected population. Gender, cultural background, language abilities, cross-cultural skills and technical knowledge and skills are all significant considerations for putting together an assessment team.

Separated children and others who are vulnerable are often found at feeding centers, medical facilities, churches, military camps and other places where assistance might be available or anticipated. Visiting such sites and interviewing personnel is useful. Leaders, health workers, or teachers among the affected population are often aware of groups that need special assistance. Brief interviews with randomly selected women can often yield useful information about difficulties within the population and groups with special needs. Although it takes at least a few days, training and deploying community social workers is one of the most useful ways to identify groups and individuals with special needs and to determine how to respond to the needs of the most
vulnerable members of the population.

Indigenous personnel who are given basic training and ongoing supervision are invaluable in assessing individual and community needs; planning and implementing solutions; and monitoring the situation of those identified, especially any separated children placed in substitute family care. They can be much more effective than outsiders in determining the actual situation of children who are apparently without adult care and determining what sort of intervention may be appropriate. Recruiting, training, supervising and supporting such a group is extremely important. Health care personnel are needed to determine whether vulnerable individuals simply need basic food, shelter and care or require medical treatment. They should be provided with specific protocols for such assessments.

People involved in assessment of vulnerable groups must combine local people’s knowledge with technical skills and analysis. Assessors must be able to see beyond the obvious, have a respect for ordinary people’s knowledge and skills, and most importantly, be able to combine analysis with listening skills to address social and developmental problems without an over-reliance on pre-established methods.

Children

As minors make up the majority of most emergency settlement populations, at least one member of the assessment team should have training and experience in child welfare and development and a very good understanding of the principles and guidelines concerning children. All action concerning children must be guided by the “best interests” principle:

“The most basic element in national and international law guiding action concerning children is the ‘best interests’ principle. It is included in Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This principle has three essential elements. First, it means putting what is best for the child above all other considerations, political, social, religious or others. Second, it requires that a child be treated as an individual whose particular needs and circumstances must be considered, so placement or other important decisions, cannot be made on the basis of a general formula or without consulting the child. Third, it requires seeking to provide for a child’s developmental needs as well as for basic immediate material needs and security” (Ressler, Boothby and Steinbock, 1988, pp. 228–229).

In general, children are best cared for by their parents. Therefore, agencies involved in responding to emergencies should design programs to help prevent children from being separated from their parents. Since emergency settlement situations uproot families, restoring a sense of normalcy as soon as possible can help prevent families from separating. Single−parent families and families with disabled children may need special attention to their needs to prevent separation or abandonment. In the Rwanda emergency Food for the Hungry International demonstrated the effectiveness of an approach they call ChildWINS. In one camp in Goma they screened children who appeared to be separated and found many could continue to live with a family if some limited support was provided. With a view to preventing separations, they also identified vulnerable families among refugees returning from Zaire and helped them initiate group agricultural activities, secure housing and otherwise be better able to provide for their children’s needs.

When there is early warning of a possible emergency, key operational personnel of the ministry concerned with child welfare, other government personnel with responsibilities in emergencies, and NGO personnel likely to respond should be trained concerning actions required to prevent family separations and to ensure protection and care for separated children and other vulnerable groups in emergencies.

Growth monitoring is also extremely important for children. In addition to well baby and child clinics, community health workers must be trained to identify children in the community who are malnourished. An infant stimulation program connected with a well−baby clinic or feeding program can be very useful in helping infants recover as well as aiding the recovery of mothers who have suffered losses and/or trauma. This type of program promotes positive interactions between mothers and their infants. (See Elizabeth Jareg’s Psychosocial Factors in Relief Work During Famine and Rehabilitation: Field Guidelines listed in the references section for more information.)

Separated children

It is extremely important to define and coordinate policies and procedures concerning vulnerable children. In an emergency, an agency should be designated as responsible for coordinating action in keeping with the operating policies established. Context specific policies must be devised for each of the following:
• Preventing separation of children from their families

• Identifying and registering children without adult care and children with families other than their own

• Arranging age-appropriate emergency care for separated children with substitute families if at all possible

• Documenting the social history, condition and special needs of each child separated from his or her parents or guardian

• Initiating tracing for family members of each child separated from his or her parents or guardian

• Reuniting separated children, as possible and in their best interests

General policies (see for example those of UNHCR (1994(a)) and UNICEF (1986)) may need to be revised for specific emergency settlement populations. For example, institutional type care should generally be avoided. In some situations, however, it may, on an interim basis, be the least harmful option available. A clear, harmonized policy is needed to prevent agencies from establishing forms of care that are inappropriate and to define what actions to take for children without appropriate adult care.

Globally applicable policies, guidelines and principles have been defined (UNHCR, 1994(a); UNHCR, 1994(b); UNICEF, 1986; Williamson and Moser, 1987), but in every emergency, situation-specific policies and procedures must be defined as part of preparedness and contingency planning and the initial response. For example, a clear policy is needed to prevent agencies from establishing forms of care that are inappropriate. In addition, procedures are needed to define what action to take when separated children are identified. The legal guardianship of children separated from their parents or guardians should also be established and made clear to all parties involved in responding to the emergency. Normally guardianship is established by the law of the country in which separated children are residing. Responsibility for guardianship will be with some arm of that country’s government that may choose to retain the responsibility or designate a non-governmental body as the guardian. In cases where no government is prepared to act in the best interests of the separated children de facto guardianships should be established by the international organization directly concerned, for example UNHCR in a refugee situation, or UNICEF in other situations.

As a group, children without family care are the most vulnerable people in an emergency. As soon as possible after being identified, each child separated from his or her parents or guardian should be registered and provided with immediate care. If possible, substitute family care should be arranged at the outset, but for any children who are placed in other forms of emergency care, substitute families should be arranged as soon as possible within the affected community. Documentation of social histories must be done as soon as possible and active tracing initiated for parents or other surviving family members or relatives.

1 The term “unaccompanied child,” often leads to confusion about which children it includes and what kinds of action is needed for their benefit. Consequently, the term “separated children” has been used in this paper.

Before a separated child is entrusted to an adult requesting family reunification, the relationship with the adult must be verified and appropriate weight given to the wishes of the child. There are risks that must be avoided when making decisions about family reunion for separated children, e.g. placing the child based on an unfounded claim of relationship, placing the child with a parent or relative who may have previously abused or neglected the child, or refusing to make a reunion because a child claims not to recognize the adult requesting reunion. For a variety of reasons a child may say he/she does not recognize a parent or relative, particularly if there has been an extended separation. It may take several interviews before such a child is prepared to accept or admit that the person making the claim is, in fact, who he/she claims to be. At the same time, false claims are a genuine risk and the process of verifying relationships must be done carefully.

Displaced and refugee children should be informed about options and permitted to participate in all important decisions affecting them, such as their placement with a family, movement back to the place or country of origin, local settlement, or third country resettlement. They should be kept informed about the progress of activities undertaken on their behalf, such as tracing or efforts to arrange placement or movement. Long-term placements should seek to maintain significant relationships as well as community ties that a child has established. Weight should be given to the views of the children in keeping with their degree of maturity.
The elderly

“Elderly refugees constitute a particularly vulnerable group as they are often confronted with a number of problems arising from their diminishing physical or mental ability to deal with the requirements of life. It is also evident that the effect of displacement experienced by the aged is more pronounced than on the others” (UNHCR, 1994(c), p. 60).

The number of elderly found in an emergency settlement community is more likely to be related to the location of the emergency settlement community rather than the direct cause of the emergency situation. Those communities which have become emergency settlements without displacement will likely have a very high percentage of vulnerable elderly. This may be due, in large part, to the ability and interest of younger people to move out of the emergency situation, whereas the elderly may have less ability, means, and interest in leaving their long-term home. An assessment of vulnerable groups in the Republic of Georgia undertaken in 1993 ranked “Old Age Pensioners” as the largest vulnerable group in the country (InterWorks, 1993, p. 79). In many instances the vulnerabilities of the elderly in urban situations are also increased due to devaluation of their pensions or other stipends. Those on fixed incomes, without access to wages or other compensation, will be the most vulnerable to economic collapse and widespread failure of urban support systems.

Emergency settlements arising out of displacement, such as those caused by war or widespread hardship, will likely have relatively fewer elderly in the population than stable communities because the elderly may have been unable to make the move with their families due to health, or attitudinal reasons. Also, it is often the case in extreme emergencies, that the elderly, along with the very young are the first to die, and therefore will be under-represented in successive demographic analyses after the initial phase of the emergency.

Assistance programs for the elderly should generally be comprised of remedial, rehabilitative, and developmental services. These services or programs should be incorporated into the national program(s) of the country in which the emergency settlement exists. Since lack of opportunity or access to wages or other subsistence is a primary problem for the elderly in emergency settlement situations, subsistence or living allowances should be considered for this group. Outreach home care services should be provided to those who are constrained (for whatever reason) from access to other public programs of assistance.

Isolated women and households headed by women

“The circumstances that precipitate the flight of refugees from one country to another often result in families leaving at least one member behind; in time of war, it is inevitably the male head of household who is either engaged in battle or has lost his life. This means that the woman is compelled to take on the role of head of household and carry out duties and functions” with which she may be unfamiliar (UNHCR, 1994(c), p. 56). In these situations the factors contributing to the vulnerability of households headed by women are their lack of experience in this role, stress and/or trauma from the loss of a spouse, economic disadvantages due to societal norms and traditions, and their expanded responsibility as provider and protector of their children.

Many women in this situation are also vulnerable to opportunistic abuse by men in positions of power or who control the material support desperately needed by these women and their families. Pressures may be placed on women to provide sex for money, material goods or access to important administrative procedures.

Assistance to households headed by women heads should include the following:

- Activities to enable them to earn the extra money which they need for their families (UNHCR, 1994(c)).
- Provisions to enhance their personal security, e.g. lighting areas used at night, protected areas in which to live.
- Mutual support groups among women (UNHCR, 1994(c)).
- Mechanisms through which women are ensured a voice in decision-making concerning the settlement.
- Availability of health services with female personnel (UNHCR, 1994(c)).
- Educational and recreational facilities for children (UNHCR, 1994(c)).
• Avenues through which women can report episodes of sexual exploitation (UNHCR, 1994(c)).

• Support of specified men and elders within the community on whom women can count with certainty (UNHCR, 1994(c)).

The physically disabled and chronically ill

The physically disabled may or may not be individually vulnerable. The general approach to disability should address three basic issues. The first is prevention which may be addressed through public health programs and other activities designed to reduce the risk of physical impairment. In the early stage of an emergency it is important to screen the population to identify any individuals having difficulty meeting such immediate survival needs as:

• obtaining food, water or fuel;
• preparing or eating food;
• washing himself/herself;
• washing clothes;
• dressing;
• moving around within his/her living area;
• using sanitary facilities;
• understanding what is said to him/her;
• expressing thoughts, needs and feelings; or
• obtaining basic medical or other essential services (UNHCR, 1991).

Second emergency responders should ensure that the immediate needs of these individuals are met. So far as possible, the needs of people with serious disabilities should be addressed by strengthening their own capacities and those of their families to meet their needs. Their strengths and abilities must be recognized, not just their limitations. Finally, there should be a program of rehabilitation for the disabled and they should be integrated within the general population and enabled to use the same health, educational and other services as other members of the community. Emergency responders providing services for people with disabilities should aim to reach all such individuals.

Programs for people with disabilities should be community-based and incorporated into the overall emergency settlement assistance program. It is important that outreach programs be involved with early detection. Where possible, treatment programs can facilitated by integrating program policies for individuals with disabilities into educational, medical, nutritional, and other community-oriented programs or initiatives. So far as possible, disabled children and adults should be integrated into the same programs, services, and educational, cultural and recreational activities as others in the community.

The following questions are taken directly from the UNHCR “Guidelines on Assistance to Disabled Refugees” (1992, p. 14) and should be asked when new projects are proposed.

Approach

• Will the intervention tend to increase the dignity of the people affected?
• Will it encourage the development of refugee human resources?
• Is it in keeping with refugee’s cultural and religious beliefs?
• Will it result in the better integration and acceptance of the individual?

What

• What strategies will be used?
• What material/equipment are needed – locally devised and prepared?
• What existing channels will be used?
• Will efforts be made to make people independent?

Who

• Who will be the major category of direct care workers? Parents, disabled persons, primary level personnel or professionals?
• How comprehensive is the coverage?

• Who will be the major target group?
  (a) a single category of disabled persons?
  (b) a single age group? or
  (c) all disabled or all age groups?

• How many will be served?

• Are existing organizations being involved?

Where

• Where will the programme/project be mainly conducted? In the refugee camp/settlement? In the home? In a small local centre? In a central city location?

Cost – Per disabled person.

• Is there a multiplier effect?
• What about continuity/sustainability?
• Can indigenous measures be used? What is the most cost effective?
• Would it be feasible to train local/refugees?

The traumatized and mentally disturbed

In emergency settlement situations the daily difficulties of coping with emergency stresses are often compounded by the cumulative stress of crisis events which have already occurred. (For a more detailed discussion, see the Emergency Settlement paper “Social and Psychological Aspects of Emergency Settlement.”) There may be a higher incidence of mental disturbance throughout the population affected by disaster, especially those who have experienced or continue to experience violence. In recent years various types of disasters have demonstrated the importance of psychological assistance and the manner in which it is provided. Psycho−social programs for refugees and displaced persons have been provided in countries as diverse as former Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka (Revel, 1995(a)). Even though such programs needed, the simple provision of service and the establishment of a presence in the emergency settlement does not guarantee effective outreach.

“Violence is part of many refugee situations and its victims should have access to coordinated medical, counseling, material and legal assistance. Furthermore, in addition to immediate access to treatment, field offices should ensure that these refugees are given priority attention for recovery and long−term rehabilitation. In such matters, field staff will need the guidance of qualified experts.

“Depending upon a person’s coping mechanisms, not all will want or need to avail themselves of all these services. However, those working with refugees must be alert to the mechanisms of avoidance and denial, and be sensitive to complaints and the hidden problems behind them. Feelings of rage, despondency, insufficiency, etc. are very often not admitted, or are repressed.

“The process may be further complicated by the suspicions of such refugees of representatives of authority, doctors, compatriots they do not know well (e.g. interpreters) and the fear of betrayal engendered by their experiences. Medical, social and psychological examinations thus may be regarded by some refugees as a threat” (UNHCR, 1992, p.71).

Traumatized persons

Social or community workers who interact directly with the victims of torture or other survivors of violence must proceed with both sensitivity and persistence to provide outreach services to these people. Care must be taken not to further distress those already suffering psychological pressures through the actions of assistance providers.

Survivors of rape
An important starting point in the provision of counseling for the survivors of rape is to use trained female counselors of the same ethnic background as the survivors. It is essential that counselors working with female survivors of sexual violence be women. Appropriate professional training (e.g. social work, psychology) is important as is relevant prior work experience. It is important that counselors receive training specific to dealing with issues of sexual violence in the cultural and social context in which they will be working, even if they are of the same ethnic background as the people in the emergency settlement. For most social issues the best arrangement is generally to have trained workers from the community who do face-to-face work with professional supervision. With the issue of sexual violence, however, there is an advantage to having counselors of the same ethnic background who are not from the same community as those with whom they are working, because maintaining confidentiality is extremely important among the survivors.

“At the beginning of 1993, a world-wide campaign started to help the thousands of women who were systematically raped. Pressure for immediate and obvious action in response was very high. However, it was decided to have a low-key, professional approach to try to avoid another trauma to an already overloaded situation. The rationale for that choice lies in the cultural background: women who would have been seen entering a ‘Centre for Raped and Tortured Women’ would immediately have been labeled as ‘raped’, thus ‘impure’ and therefore not eligible for marriage” (Revel, 1995(b), p.8).

Mentally disturbed persons

The term “mentally disturbed” as used in this discussion refers primarily to those people in the emergency settlement community who have a pre-existing mental disturbance. This group is considered vulnerable as their disturbance will likely hamper their day-to-day survival activities and their ability to access offered support services. The priority areas of intervention are support and improvement of their family situations and normalization of their surroundings. While psychotropic medication is helpful for some cases, in the emergency settlement situations it may not be available, and a qualified physician must be available and capable of managing its use. In all cases the context in which the mentally disturbed are living will dictate priority responses.

“Mental health services are provided in refugee camps in a variety of work settings that range from the most primitive (outside without benefit of an office or private space as in some camps in Hong Kong) to quite attractive space that meets Western criteria (as in Bataan). In the former situation the noise level from the camp population is high, privacy is totally lacking, and the discomfort provided by the elements is disconcerting. Services in the camps generally include social history-taking, limited counseling, psychotropic medication, and the use of traditional healers as found in Khao I Dang and Phanat Nikhom Thailand and in the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (Bataan). Traditional healing includes prescribed rituals, incantations, steam baths, massage, herbs, and other organic materials that are used with apparent effectiveness. In addition a great variety of group activities led by a mental health provider or indigenous paraprofessional are used extensively” (Gong-Guy, Cravens and Patterson, 1991, p. 643).

Public health and community-based interventions in mental health

“Primary prevention has its roots in public health, which adopts a communitywide perspective for addressing health concerns. A public health approach differs from the clinical-psychology/medicine emphasis on one-on-one curative care, its hallmark being community action” (Turshen cited by Williams and Berry, 1991, p.632).

Community-based intervention programs can be very useful in promoting recovery. In the Ukwimi refugee settlement in Zambia the trauma program of the International Catholic Child Bureau (initiated by Margaret McCallin and Shirley Fozzard) was run almost entirely by refugees. It included such measures as an infant stimulation program, structured play groups primarily for children identified as being traumatized, volunteer groups of village counselors, training in trauma-related counseling for selected teachers in the Zambian schools for refugees and in the refugee-run schools, and therapeutic structured activities for children.

The following is an excerpt from a report written for UNICEF immediately after the city of Kigali was taken by the RPF: “At this stage the most important steps to mitigate the effects of trauma on children, separated or not, are as rapidly as possible to promote a normal, peacetime environment for them.” The three most critical needs in this regard are for nurture within a family environment (which underlines the importance of early steps to arrange foster family placements for separated children and to arrange for family reunion), physical
The opportunity to play is extremely important for children because this is a principal way that they will psychologically process their experiences and begin to come to terms with them. The resumption of regular school will be very important to the normalization of children’s lives and will eventually provide opportunities for appropriate interventions to address the effects of trauma. Activities such as structured group play, sports, music, singing, handicrafts and cooperative projects can also be beneficial. The ability of parents to resume their normal family economic and community roles are also important to the normalization of children’s lives. Participation in their preferred forms of religious expression can also provide support, and opportunities for emotional release.

Beyond measures to promote the normalization of children’s lives, certain interventions may be appropriate, although none of them should be imposed on children or their families. Research in situations of armed conflict has shown that children’s trauma is most effectively addressed when that of their parents or guardians is addressed as well. The mother’s psycho–social well–being is extremely important to that of her children. Also, any measure to address directly psycho–social trauma must be relevant to the culture and life circumstances of those expected to benefit. The following are examples of interventions that have proven to be beneficial:

- infant stimulation programs
- religious ceremonies for healing
- women’s groups that provide opportunities for social interaction
- school–based measures
- opportunities for expression through making pictures, group discussion or writing
- peace education
- counseling by teachers with special training
- counseling by paraprofessionals who have ongoing professional support

In formulating guidelines about mental services for emergency settlements, one of the key issues is the differentiation between these programs and other, more typical mental health services in non–emergency situations. The following short guideline prepared by Diane Myers (1994, p. 1) was based on the experience of mental health administrators and practitioners who have provided disaster mental health recovery services.

**KEY CONCEPTS OF DISASTER MENTAL HEALTH**

1. No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
2. There are two types of disaster trauma (individual and collective).
3. Most people pull together and function during and after a disaster, but their effectiveness is diminished.
4. Disaster stress and grief reactions are a normal response to an abnormal situation.
5. Many emotional reactions of disaster survivors stem from problems of living brought about by the disaster.
6. Disaster relief procedures have been called “The Second Disaster.”
7. Most people do not see themselves as needing mental health services following disaster and will not seek out such services.
8. Survivors may reject disaster assistance of all types.
9. Disaster mental health assistance is often more “practical” than “psychological” in nature.
10. Disaster mental health services must be uniquely tailored to the communities they serve.
11. Mental health staff need to set aside traditional methods, avoid the use of mental health labels, and use an active outreach approach to intervene successfully in disaster.
12. Survivors respond to active interest and concern.
13. Interventions must be appropriate to the phase of disaster.
14. Support systems are crucial to recovery.

Conclusion

Vulnerability, whether due to age, disability, gender, or severe psychological stress is always an important issue for consideration in the provision of aid to emergency settlement communities. Whether the affected people are refugees, internally displaced, under siege, or impoverished due to natural disaster, there will be categories of vulnerable groups who will present special needs which may not be readily seen or understood by those responding to the emergency. Quick assessment and an understanding of vulnerable groups which are likely to be present will facilitate uncovering and addressing these issues.

The identification of vulnerable groups and the categorization of individuals as belonging to such groups is only important if such a system leads to the establishment of programs or other responses which help the specific groups named. An understanding of these vulnerabilities and situation-specific assessments should provide responders with the insights needed to take appropriate action to address these needs. Based on this understanding, emergency responders should also strive to strengthen overall community structures and facilitate traditional coping mechanisms. The following points are offered as an overall guideline for the implementation of community services for vulnerable groups and are compiled from various sources, but particularly from the Radda Barnen report entitled “Social Work in Refugee Emergencies” (1994).

- Participation of community services coordinators in the earliest stages of the emergency is an important element of emergency response and should be regularized.

- Although there will be short-term difficulties in establishing community-based services for vulnerable groups in the first days of an emergency, community service workers should nevertheless be deployed at this time to conduct assessments and analysis of information that may be used as the situation begins to take shape and community structures begin to solidify.

- An understanding of the groups likely to be at greater risk in emergency situations will facilitate assessment and design of priority interventions.

- Specific areas of concern requiring urgent response often need specialist inputs (for example support for separated minors, survivors of rape, and mentally disturbed).

- The continuity of such community based programs for assisting vulnerable groups should be guaranteed. The problems are long-term, and so must be addressed with a long-term view, even though the programs of support may have been initiated in response to a “short term emergency”.

- Formal and non-formal education should play a larger role in emergency response than at present.

Standards

While standards have not been specifically addressed in this paper, the idea of standards or useful “yardsticks” by which community services can be measured has been brought forward by several of the contributors and reviewers of this document. It is hoped that some of these standards can be discussed and compiled at the Emergency Settlement Workshop and subsequent activities of the Emergency Settlement Project.

References


Introduction

This paper addresses some of the particular circumstances which exist when emergency settlement occurs in a non-camp environment. These situations are typically called “urban” or “dispersed”, and are viewed in terms of the unique issues which characterize them. There are increasing numbers of displaced populations, living in a state of urban or dispersed emergency settlement, who require support from the international community.

As opposed to a camp where those taking refuge live together and are served by assistance agencies en masse, the dispersed populations live with and among permanent residents. Two primary concerns regarding urban and dispersed populations are the consideration of host–guest relationships and the need to adapt assistance measures to their specific circumstances, rather than try to apply principles of mass assistance more appropriate for camp–like scenarios. Although many of the principles and practices herein are drawn largely on the experience of UNHCR and other agencies responding to emergencies in camps or camp–like
situations during the past 20 years, this paper seeks to establish specific standards for alternative arrangements.

**Principles**

1. **Persons displaced by emergencies who find shelter in urban or rural communities have the same rights to essential services and protection as persons accommodated in camps or other types of emergency settlement**

An emergency camp situation (especially in the case of refugees) is an artificially created and hopefully temporary environment, which in most circumstances is less preferable (from the point of view of the displaced) to integration of emergency settlers into several local communities. Although in both situations all concerned parties must adapt, the camp environment requires a more extreme degree of behavioral change on the part of the beneficiaries to allow services to be provided as economically and efficiently as possible. Camp residents lose more day-to-day control over their own lives. Situations of extreme crowding and the associated public health and environmental issues are worsened in camp situations.

In the dispersed settlement situation, efforts must be made to uphold the displaced population’s choice for integration into the local community even when such arrangements are administratively more difficult for the program administrators. The assistance providers, therefore, must adapt and take deliberate steps to extend their reach and coverage to provide assistance to those dispersed people, even when it appears more efficient to promote centralized distribution. Assistance plans should ensure that the artificial disruption or intrusion of the assistance program into the conditions of normal life is kept to a minimum.

2. **Where displaced persons are dispersed throughout local communities and have the opportunity for a more normal and self-reliant way of life, international assistance should be provided in a way which increases the capacity of those people to solve their own problems, and avoids establishing prolonged dependence on food rations or other subsistence allowances.**

Assistance providers need to be aware of the peculiar problems likely to occur in dispersed settlement situations. Relationships between assistance providers, those taking refuge, and the host communities and families need to be carefully evaluated. Once a family has accepted the displaced persons under their roof, the emergency assistance providers should consider the capacity, willingness and limitations of the host family and address basic needs for all affected.

Assistance agencies should avoid the tendency to “take over” assistance programs to dispersed populations based on the assumption that those in need and those providing aid are no longer able to manage their own lives. To respect the ability of the host population, it is important to contact the leaders and update them on the international situation as they provide updates on the local situation. Assistance providers should invite the leaders’ solutions as part of the emergency plan. The leaders can obtain feedback from their constituents regarding recommended ways to assist the displaced.

The advantages of a dispersed versus a camp settlement relate to the potential for greater self-reliance, enhanced dignity and possibly faster recovery. Those directly affected by the emergency may develop more varied strategies for the pursuit of independence and solutions to their emergency situation. Also an enhanced sense of psychological well-being may result from integration with a stable population which is able to offer support and advice.

3. **Displaced persons dispersed throughout communities (both urban and rural) are often of diverse origins and backgrounds, and with varying economic statuses and skill levels. Assistance providers should address this diversity when planning their support interventions.**

To incorporate issues of diversity into assistance planning, the involvement of those living in situations of emergency settlement should be encouraged. Their diverse skills should be utilized to help move the situation out of the emergency context. This involvement serves to give the displaced more control over their lives, empowering them to solve their own problems. There are many important tasks in emergencies which do not require professional skills, but depend on a willingness to assist such as distributing food, calming people, and directing people to services.

4. **Attempts to support dispersed emergency settlement populations must give priority to those with special needs such as the disabled, the elderly, single parents, isolated women without support, or unaccompanied children.**
The needs of vulnerable groups in relation to the particular features of dispersed settlement must be emphasized. Groups with special needs do not, however, automatically have priority over the general population. With the added difficulties of access, coverage and information flow in a dispersed settlement situation it will be harder to ensure that the necessary forms of support can be given to those with special needs. Special efforts and arrangements should be made to overcome these limitations. Such attempts should, whenever possible, be based on self-help principles.

5. Programs to support persons dispersed in local communities must respect the interests and structure of the host populations and involve them in the assistance effort.

Respect for the interests of the host population involves an appreciation of traditional leadership structures, and traditional ways of taking decisions, approaching change and solving problems (while not automatically assuming that these structures and approaches are able to cope unassisted with the new responsibilities and demands of emergency settlement, such as food aid distribution). Even when the host population is intent on providing needed assistance, the numbers and needs of the displaced may overwhelm a population which itself may be surviving at a minimal subsistence level.

The integrity of the host communities and their way of life may be dramatically altered by a sustained relief operation. The guest-host relationship can potentially turn into a relationship of exploitation of one party by the other, and the “logic” of relief operations can too easily be allowed to dictate a new set of rules, procedures and behavioral norms for the whole of the affected area.

6. Decisions to support populations displaced by emergency who are being sheltered in host population homes must consider the capacity, willingness and limitations of the hosts to care for the displaced. Emergency assistance providers should ensure that the basic needs of the host families and the displaced are met and that the capacity of the host population to provide support is routinely reassessed.

In an emergency situation the hosts are often in need themselves and may be tempted to abandon normal activities and join the displaced. In Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan, for example, more of the local residents received outside aid than did the 100,000 Kabulie internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing there in a situation of emergency settlement. This resulted in disputes between the host community and the IDPs (Ehsan). Especially in long-term emergency situations, assistance must be extended to host populations when cash and food reserves are depleted. In Sarajevo, for example, it was estimated in early 1995 that 65-70% of the population relied solely on international humanitarian aid to exist (Reed).

7. Programs to upgrade the living environment of the displaced who are dispersed in communities should aim at benefiting needy host populations as well.

Needs must be seen in the larger sense of the collective needs of the displaced, the needs of the host family, where applicable, and of the host community. This may mean, for example, that if the national health structure is unable to provide treatment of a particular disease among the displaced in rural areas, assistance programs should aim to capacitate the existing structure to serve the needs of the entire community, not just the needs of the displaced. Not to do so would likely cause serious political problems in the community between the displaced and the local people as well as between local and national-level leaders and administrators. In this case the needed support should be designed to benefit both the host and guest populations.

Needs and resources assessment must also consider the overriding protection concerns of freedom of movement and freedom to pursue economic opportunity and self-reliance strategies in the overall community context. For example, identification of needs and resources related to arrangements for keeping livestock, for a reliable mail service, and for documents that facilitate movement and travel can be important in this context, where they might only be secondary in a camp situation.

In most cases, those dispersed in communities are not in need of shelter assistance from the international community, although this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There should also be no need to provide separate health facilities or security arrangements. However, where the capacity of existing facilities and infrastructures can be improved and made accessible to the displaced populations both the host community and the targeted beneficiaries will benefit.

Best Practices

- Dispersed settlement
Staff working with dispersed populations need to be aware of the unique variables in providing support for those populations. While there may be more leeway for creative options in program planning, there may be a greater likelihood that needs and behaviors go unnoticed or work against the ultimate goals of the assistance programs.

Although dispersed settlement often occurs spontaneously, there are often forces which pressure a gradual change from dispersal to concentrated settlement. Wherever food assistance is provided, there are administrative and political pressures to make distribution systems more economical and more centralized over time. Beneficiaries may relocate to be nearer to distributions and to the authorities best able to resolve the problems that arise. Host–guest relationships may become strained. These factors may eventually result in a tendency towards creating camps.

In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, the continued dispersal strategy resulted from an aversion of the government to camps. Without this stance on the part of the authorities it is possible that refugees, hosts, and assistance organizations might have moved towards camp–based assistance as a mutually acceptable answer to the problems they were facing. The following are some observations and options to consider:

1. **Needs are harder to identify and assess in the dispersed situation.** Distances between those requiring assistance can be much greater; the number of locations may be much larger and the situation, needs and resources of each location are likely to vary considerably. There is also a danger that displaced persons or other disaster victims could be overlooked.

   “There are many reasons why persons conducting disaster assessments should strive to obtain information from all of the regions and populations within the disaster site. Most important, all regions may not be affected uniformly by a disaster. Consequently, some regions may contain populations so severely affected by a particular disaster that entire cities are rendered completely inaccessible and incapable of communicating because of the destruction of local roads and communications systems. On the other hand, regions with relatively minor damage and intact communications systems may be able to convey graphic images of highly localized destruction to disaster relief agencies, thereby diverting attention from more devastated regions. For example, during the 1976 Guatemalan earthquake, the mortality rates between cities varied from 36.1 to 234.1 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants. Several of the most devastated villages were isolated by landslides and were unable to communicate their urgent needs to the outside world. It would have been incorrect to interpret that lack of requests for outside assistance from these remote villages meant emergency relief was not urgently needed” (Lillibridge, Noji and Burkle, 1993, p. 74).

2. **Most communities have not been formed with access to international assistance as the prime design criterion.** They are accustomed to coping with a low or minimal level of outside support and applying traditional remedies and self–help solutions. Needy cases are not automatically brought forward for outside help and people sometimes do not wish to offend their “hosts” by implying that the support they are receiving is, in any way, inadequate. In some cases, the displaced may not have an independent voice – it is the “host” population that speaks for them, and the host’s assessment of needs can be different from that of the guests and the assistance providers.

3. Host families are more likely to share what they have with the displaced if they are relatives. However, the guest–host relationship may itself give rise to new kinds of need. Debts can accumulate, and repayment is sometimes exacted in the form of reduced food rations. Unfavorable marriages or exploitative work relationships may also be used as a form of repayment.

It would be an oversimplified assumption to claim that everyone has the potential to be more self–reliant in the dispersed settlement than in a camp situation. In a situation of reduced access to assistance due to their dispersed situation, men may turn to crime or to dangerous or exploitative work. Women and children, including unaccompanied minors, may be at risk of being driven into exploitative relationships, work or prostitution by debt or by lack of support. Protection problems may arise from the remoteness of some locations, and the lack of or limited access to authorities or neutral parties prepared to provide protection, arbitration or
Identifying expertise in responding to dispersed emergency settlement

Although there are not particular organizations or agencies specializing in the provision of assistance to those in dispersed situations, there are specialized skills and techniques for effectively dealing with the particular challenges of the dispersed emergency settlement situation. Church groups and other local groups with a desire to help might be the best suited to respond in this situation due to their understanding of the local community, the host-guest relationship, and (usually) developmental outlook. Local groups are often organized and ready to respond quickly, but may lack resources. The following are useful characteristics to look for when identifying partners for needs assessment and program implementation for dispersed populations.

- **Ability to be impartial** in assessing both long-term and short-term needs of both displaced and host populations
- **Ability to work with communities** by identifying their potential as well as their shortcomings in identifying their own needs, and finding ways to involve them in a responsible, ongoing needs assessment process
- **Familiarity with the way of life** of the displaced population in their areas of origin, and of the host communities prior to the influx
- **Familiarity with existing development plans** and approaches of the host area as well as the displaced persons' areas of origin prior to the influx
- **Organizations with a development background** and approach can ensure that necessary levels of relief assistance are seen in the context and planning perspective of longer-term goals of the host area and of both populations.

Methods for needs assessment in dispersed populations

Since conditions will vary seasonally and from one location to the next, it is difficult to generalize the type of support needed. The assessment has to be continuous or at least periodic, and has to be done community by community, and ultimately, family by family. It is therefore appropriate that the needs assessment process be decentralized to the extent possible; that a capacity be built up for monitoring, assessing and reporting on needs in each area; and that the beneficiary population be closely involved in needs assessment and assistance planning.

To assess needs and resources, it will be necessary to have meetings with both the displaced and the hosts to form the complete picture. The ideas of local leaders, from rural, urban, regional or district levels, should be considered regarding the actions to be taken. An assessment team representing different areas of expertise and including professionals in the host and displaced population should be selected. A useful method for needs assessment of dispersed persons is Participatory or Rapid Rural Appraisal (PRA or RRA) which is an effective and flexible tool for assessment of community needs and resources. These methods are especially appropriate in this situation since they are based on a highly developmental approach.

Estimation of the number of displaced or other disaster affected people in dispersed situations

Estimation of the number of those living in a situation of dispersed emergency settlement is best done by combining and analyzing information from a variety of sources and not giving absolute authority to any single source. This concept is also known as “triangulation” and applies to virtually all types of assessment (Singleton, et al. 1988). For dispersed populations, however, the approach is even more critical since information is more widely dispersed and therefore more subject to discrepancies. The following sources of information are recommended for possible triangulation:

- Village or town/quarter authority records
- Head counts at food and other distributions
- Dwelling counts
- Mapping of dwellings
- Spot checks on all the above
For a more detailed description of each of the above, please refer to the *Emergency Settlement Paper – Needs and Resources Assessment*.

### Skills required to use these methods of estimation

The primary skills required to collect information from the sources mentioned above include:

- anticipation of where imperfect methods are likely to prove unreliable
- exercise of judgment as to appropriate action to take
- negotiation/coordination of skills to ensure that too much reliance or authority is not accorded to any given source or method
- keeping all parties involved in the process of interpreting signs of inaccuracy and jointly selecting approaches to achieving tighter results
- commitment, honesty and ability to keep accurate records.

### Methods for conducting a rapid census of dispersed persons

The term **census** means counting (and where necessary documenting) a population for the purpose of arriving at a number and a population profile. The term **registration** means listing some or all of a population as beneficiaries of a program of assistance and/or protection in a manner which facilitates the planning of these activities and the distribution of the assistance. (For a more complete discussion of registration see the topic 18 Emergency Settlement paper “Population Estimation, Registration and Distribution”.)

In dispersed settlement situations there may be more movement of people between locations where assistance is provided, and greater likelihood of double registration. As people move, arrival in the new location will often be recorded, but recording of departure from the previous location will be much less common.

Especially in urban settings, census methods should make the fullest possible use of skilled and educated people among the displaced and host populations. It is possible for a displaced population to organize its own address–based registration, leaving assistance providers or census organizers to concentrate resources on verification and upgrading of standards. Wherever this is feasible, it is likely to prove the most cost effective approach to census or registration. In either a rural or an urban setting, direct involvement of the displaced population in planning and conducting their own census can be a major stimulus to the discovery of a sense of community identity – leading to the setting of self–monitored standards of behavior towards one another, the host population and the assistance providers. It also provides a useful forum for discussion of common problems and creative self–help.

Restricting movement would undermine the freedom of the displaced to pursue ways of improving their own situation. Similarly if spontaneous return to areas of origin is occurring (e.g. to inspect damage to property, to maintain claims to land, or to plant crops in preparation for a gradual return of the family) but families still rely on regular sources of food in the dispersed settlements, it would be counterproductive to design a census method or an assistance program that penalized families for brief periods of absence of some family members.

**The preferred method for census is thus one which is designed to be flexible enough to make provision for absence and for movement.** This implies creating a non–threatening environment in which families are allowed to record details of all the family members who need humanitarian support, mentioning whether they are present or absent at the time of the census.

Links between assistance programs and the census method are an essential consideration in census design. Assistance planning should be based on a family–level planning figure. According to the assistance policy chosen, this would be based on the number of family members present at the time of the census, plus an “assessed” number of additional persons from those recorded as absent.

**Primary features of the preferred census method**
1. Census is location-based and/or address-based – To allow assistance planning figures to be verified and updated by location as necessary, the displaced persons need to be counted and registered in the locations and in the houses where they are living. All records for a single location need to be handled and sorted together so that they can easily be carried back to the place in question for checking and updating. Valid registrations for assistance purposes should consist of a unique combination of personal identity and location of dwelling.

2. Settlements and dwellings need to be accurately mapped – Without a sustained effort to map settlements and to record the location of households, verification following the initial census will be very difficult and may add confusion rather than clarity. Mapping makes it possible for other staff or persons to conduct the verification and acts as a guide for many uses including nutrition surveys, immunization campaigns and use by community services staff. New locations of host families can also be discovered this way. It can provide a basis for the analysis of the dispersed settlement pattern to identify and differentiate the actual existing locations. This is better than following the tendency to lump the displaced together in administratively convenient groups. A further advantage of mapping is that the expansion and contraction of the target population can be monitored over time.

3. A verification phase must be fully integrated into the census – It should always assumed that the initial documentation and census-taking exercise will not be completely accurate. A system of continuous verification should be planned from the beginning. Maps prepared during the census will facilitate this process. Verification exercises should be done in all locations, giving priority and repeating the exercise in locations which require closer scrutiny, for example where headcounts at distributions indicate discrepancies, or where initial mapping or recording proves to have been done incorrectly or incompletely.

Instead of conducting either a formal census exercise or registration, another option to consider is to refresh and improve the quality of available estimates, including records kept locally by the affected population. One way of improving the accuracy and reliability of village-based record-keeping systems is by intervening to ensure the involvement of skilled and responsible persons in the process, and by providing appropriate kinds of support and follow-up.

4. Clear policy on handling new arrivals or other new cases, after the census is completed, must be formulated – In order to prevent the census from “casting in stone” a settlement pattern that is in fact dynamic (and in refugee situations, to ensure that new arrivals continue to be granted asylum), a fair system for reviewing new arrivals should be agreed before implementation of a census. This involves defining responsibilities for recording new arrivals and ensuring that all locations have the capacity to follow the agreed procedures. Checking on changes of various kinds should be integrated into the work of verification teams.

Even where there is pressure to quickly arrive at a new and accurate total population figure, consideration should nonetheless be given to making registration optional – offering it as a way of explaining one’s case and one’s situation more fully to assistance providers. This approach may be particularly suitable for nomadic groups, who sometimes resist census or registration as an infringement of liberties or family dignity and who need to retain full freedom to come and go as they choose. Initially, in this approach, the assistance strategy can be to provide assistance to all on the basis of estimated numbers rather than to registered cases only.

One way to encourage registration would be to announce that ration scales will be gradually revised downwards for cases not “protected” by accurate full-family registration. Registered cases may also be subject to gradual reductions in levels of assistance, but this is done in consultation with the family concerned on the basis of changes in their situation or ability to cope.

- Indicators to consider in differentiating between the ongoing, chronic needs of the local community and those imposed by the emergency influx of displaced persons into that community

Comparative population statistics are the principal indicators for differentiating between chronic needs and emergency needs of an existing settlement receiving an influx of displaced persons. The following are essential working tools for prioritization of needs assessment and assistance efforts:

- estimates or actual figures of the ratio of host to displaced populations by location
- ratio of average host family size to average number of displaced received per household (where applicable)
• relative population profiles of the two communities (single female heads of household, school age children, etc.)

Familiarity with current development plans, projects and standards of local government authorities is essential for distinguishing between chronic needs of the community and new needs resulting from the influx, and for planning assistance approaches that enhance ongoing development efforts. To this end, departments and services implementing existing development schemes should be involved in the new needs assessment which gives them an opportunity to plan for additional inputs in the context of their previously prepared plans and approaches.

Indicators of congestion and overcrowding of houses and overuse of community facilities and services may be obtained by comparing the current situation with prior records. Government information on design capacities of the facilities and/or recollections of staff responsible (e.g. at health facilities), are important sources of information for distinguishing chronic needs and new levels of need. For example, observations of the number of people using a well or public water point, calculations of the amount of water drawn, records of the time it takes for the well to empty and be recharged, combined with discussions with users of the well, are standard methods for determining the extent of new needs and additional capacity required.

In larger urban situations, there is a link between over-use and under-functioning of municipal services. For example, when water services are over-used there is a tendency for breakdowns in the system which result in the provision of even less water than in normal times. The same can be true for the provision of gas, electricity, and centrally heated water which are used for residential heating systems in cold climates.

In these cases the required expertise for reconstruction and repair of services will usually be available locally. What is typically needed from the international community is money and/or specific technical materials for the repair work. The local engineering departments or service ministries should be able to provide specific technical expertise regarding the capacities and irregularities of the systems under their authority.

Indicators of agricultural productivity and previous levels of food self-sufficiency in the community may be difficult to obtain, but even reasonably reliable estimates are helpful for avoiding over-supply of relief food assistance and adversely affecting the productivity of the community.

Program implementation in urban situations

There are several situations which can lead to emergency settlement in urban centers. These include displacement and loss of shelter due to natural hazards such as earthquakes and storms, and influxes of refugees and displaced who are fleeing war. Additionally, unique urban problems can change a “normal” community situation into an emergency settlement through loss of basic urban services such as municipal water and sewerage systems and electricity or other fuel sources (especially in very cold climates.) Although these types of emergencies can happen due to economic or other related causes, they are often the result of warfare or situations of siege and/or blockade which may result in damaged urban infrastructure and an influx of refugees and/or displaced people.

Assistance providers must prepare for the particular needs and problems likely to arise in urban and dispersed settings. In situations of civil conflict, cities and towns may come under siege. People may be cut off from their normal sources of food and services. Rural areas may be unable to produce food for themselves and urban markets. Starvation is the single largest cause of death in most sieges (Cuny, 1994, p. 153).

Emergency situations often entail economic collapse where the value of local currency plummets at the same time that prices increase for food and other commodities. Inflated food prices may make food unavailable to the general public long before food supplies actually run out. Those receiving food assistance may be forced to sell some of it for cash and efforts to steal or divert food may increase.

Chief constraints in urban settings

The following are noted as major constraints in attempting to implement humanitarian programs in urban settings:

1. Difficulty getting an accurate registration of the numbers and names of the displaced
2. Additional people living in an already crowded environment
3. Additional demands placed on inadequate facilities

4. Displaced people are located in a place that is not easily accessible and/or crowded in unmarked houses

5. Difficulty communicating with the displaced population

6. Corruption and dishonesty among local leaders and/or phantom registrations

7. Fear of other ethnic groups

Some of the problems associated with urban settings have been addressed by providing the population with the means to contact relatives abroad by phone (incoming calls only) and by mail, facilitating travel to major towns to contact banking services, encouraging participation of the displaced population in planning and implementing their own registration and food distribution systems, forming/supporting a group to research educational opportunities, helping students to apply for grants, and forming a joint host/displaced education committee to design a common curriculum for an education program.

### Constraints to program implementation in rural, dispersed situations

In rural and dispersed settings, constraints to program implementation relate primarily to distance, the number of locations, time between visits to the same location, road conditions, difficult access, extent of services required to reach relatively small numbers of people, and problems in reaching locations in a timely manner. Monitoring is more difficult as the geographic area is much greater, and because different communities may respond differently to local issues. These factors make the application of standards and norms for the entire operation difficult to conceptualize and enforce.

Although it is generally held that dispersed settlement is preferable to camp settlement, many issues arise as a result of the increased difficulty in accessing the dispersed. The disadvantages of dispersed settlements include the difficulty of distinguishing, reaching and assisting the population in need, potentially greater assistance program costs when dealing with both host and guest populations, and many scattered locations instead of fewer concentrated locations. While rural, dispersed settlements are not generally constrained by overcrowding and excess demands on facilities, they face the remainder of the constraints for urban, dispersed settlements (as listed above) in addition to the danger of being attacked if in a conflict area.

### Some solutions

The problems of providing humanitarian assistance in rural dispersed settings have, in some cases, been addressed by decentralizing needs assessment, delivery of assistance, and monitoring and follow-up procedures. In some cases several regional logistical centers have been set up. Teams of field workers and staff from various concerned agencies have worked together on programs and problems of their mutual interest.

Some standard universal forms of projects (e.g. latrines, water supply, and registration) can provide opportunities to forge common standards for achieving good levels of participation and replicable approaches. Problems of remoteness and diversity can be gradually overcome. Different areas will often develop different identities and characteristic problems.

Many of the solutions for dispersed settlement are self-help by default. For example, health programs may consist of very little outreach or community participation because of difficulties of coverage, but villages can develop systems for notifying such service providers quickly and for transporting patients to clinics. The following is a short guideline for overcoming common constraints:

1. Work closely with leaders of both the displaced and the local population.

2. Be flexible – refusing to assist “others” (i.e. soldiers, rebels) can lead to great obstacles. Some provision can be made to assist those in power to help those needing assistance.

3. Communicate with the local population. This can be done through posters at public service places (like clinics, hospitals), radio announcements, and word of mouth.

4. Keep records and hold responsible people accountable.
Public information needs in dispersed settlement

Information is critical for all aid programs. In cases where the target population is widely dispersed, making this information available to all in an efficient and fair way is much harder than in a confined camp situation. Public relations and awareness-building programs must involve local leaders through town meetings and work with the local service agencies as well as beneficiaries. In rural communities, it is a good strategy to hold meetings on market days or other times known to be “active” for the community. Collect suggestions for best times and places to meet and be flexible enough to facilitate the flow of information through whatever channels are best suited to the particular situation and context.

Distribution considerations for dispersed and urban communities

A distribution center in the community where supplies can be obtained by use of an identification card with a registration number and perhaps a photo is the easiest to administer and monitor. Assistance providers can make use of already established community distribution centers unless these are known to be problematic or corrupt. In all cases, the distribution agents must guard against prejudice by center staff toward any ethnic groups to avoid the distribution center becoming a political tool or target. Registration with verifiable identification is crucial. The name, age, number of dependents and place of residence are critical pieces of information which should be included in the system. Such ID cards can also be used for obtaining emergency and routine medical assistance. A more comprehensive discussion of registration and distribution systems is taken up under a separate topic paper of this series entitled Registration and Distribution.

Psychological and counseling needs specific to dispersed displaced persons

Dispersed displaced people may be more vulnerable to exploitative relationships or physical danger because of reduced or tenuous access to humanitarian assistance. This vulnerability may result in specific psychological/counseling needs.

Displaced persons fleeing civil war, violence, or starvation may be in shock. In cases of ethnic war, it is important for assistance providers to be aware of the dynamics of the situation that may have caused the war. The affected must be in a safe environment before they can deal with their traumatic experiences. Children should begin normal activities as soon as possible. Individuals should be encouraged to alert caregivers to signs of trauma in others. Emergency assistance providers should bring in trauma experts to hold workshops, create forums in which the affected can tell their stories, and facilitate the formation of support groups where possible. (See also the topic 19 Emergency Settlement paper “Social and Psychological Aspects of Emergency Settlement Situations”.)

Monitoring and evaluating programs for dispersed populations

Monitoring structures or other systems of accountability at distribution centers (amounts received/delivered/on hand) must be in place. The responsible persons at distribution centers must account for all supplies received before they can get a new supply. Except in the case of an ongoing influx where those needing assistance arrive at a greater rate than can be managed by existing structures, supplies should be forwarded on an as-needed basis. In the extreme case of a large ongoing influx, supplies will likely need to be sent based on estimates of expected arrivals as well as registered or estimated existing beneficiaries.

At the time of distribution, spot surveys should be done to determine the numbers and status of the beneficiaries and whether or not they are receiving an adequate ration or other distribution. Monitors should strive to get feedback from the beneficiaries as well as the distributors. Monitors should survey the actual distribution sites during distribution operations. Due to the dispersed nature of the beneficiaries, the assessment of actual use of the distributed aid by the targeted beneficiary group(s) will be more difficult than in camp situations. Therefore, monitors should also make spot visits to beneficiaries’ places of residence to determine that the assistance is actually reaching those in need.

References


Introduction

The problems of today’s uprooted populations are complex and defy simple solutions. Involuntary migrants are often caught in the gap between limited commitments of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced populations and the limited resources and willingness of less developed countries to address the root causes of flight. In recent years, repatriation, return, and reintegration have become the predominant settlement solution for uprooted populations.

Repatriation refers to the process whereby those who have been displaced across international borders are re-established in their country of origin with a restoration of the bond between citizen and state. In Namibia and South Africa, for example, refugees returned to their country of origin following the establishment of a new government and constitutional structure which provides for their full recognition as citizens and opportunities to participate in civil society.

Return refers to the physical fact of return to place of origin without a bond necessarily being restored between citizen and the state. For example, in Mozambique refugees and displaced persons are returning to more uncertain conditions where a fragile peace has been negotiated and the government is engaged in a reconstruction effort that is supported by international humanitarian assistance. When refugees are forced to return due to coercive events in their country of exile, they usually return without restoration of such bonds.

Reintegration refers to the process of becoming part of the social, political and economic systems operative in the area of resettlement.

Topic 11 – Repatriation, Return and Reintegration

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.
These definitions move beyond the more narrow and technical vocabulary adopted by refugee assistance agencies in that they refer not only to persons who have been recognized as refugees, but also those who have crossed international borders without benefit of the recognition of refugee status and those who have been internally displaced. In addition, the definitions recognize the difference between repatriating populations of refugees whose rights of citizenship are restored and populations of self-repatriating or voluntary returnees whose rights may not be recognized or those who return without resolution of the conditions which caused their flight.

Humanitarian assistance programs which have implemented the three preferred permanent or “durable solutions” historically applied to refugee situations — third country resettlement, permanent integration into communities of refuge, and voluntary repatriation or return to place of origin — have not kept pace with the expanding population of involuntary migrants in the contemporary world. In 1993, an estimated 42.2 million people were forced to flee their homes to escape persecution, violence or disasters. 1994 estimates show an increase of 3 million in that number.

Over the past decade, the number of refugees and displaced persons has increased as the number of uprooted peoples exceeds those for whom durable solutions have been found. The resources of host governments, host communities, and donors who support emergency populations have been stretched as they have provided protection and care and maintenance for uprooted populations, some of whom have been in exile for over two decades.

Third country resettlement is generally used as a “safety valve” when the absorptive capacity within the region of displacement has been exceeded, or when ethnic or cultural differences between refugees and host country populations could lead to conflict, or when, for any number of reasons, the host community feels the need to exert pressure on the uprooted population to relocate. Third country resettlement takes place mainly in industrialized countries. Given existing immigration quotas, individual resettlement to these countries provides a durable solution for approximately one percent of the refugee population per year (Rogers, 1993; Stein and Cuny, 1994).

Permanent integration into countries of first asylum is not an available option for most refugees and displaced persons. Approximately 90 percent of the world’s uprooted populations live in the less developed nations of the world. Host communities and countries are not in an economic position to integrate large populations of new citizens when their resources are already severely constrained. The presence of refugee and externally displaced populations exacerbates social and political tensions in host countries. However, the root causes of displacement are not easily overcome, which makes repatriation or return difficult. In spite of this, the durable solution of repatriation and return is the only option that exists for most uprooted populations, including the internally displaced who cannot be integrated into the communities to which they fled.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees proclaimed 1992 the year of voluntary repatriation within a decade of voluntary repatriation. Both self-induced and internationally supported repatriation have expanded. During 1992/93 approximately four million refugees returned to their places of origin. For example, people returned: to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran, to Cambodia from Thailand, to Iraq from Iran and Turkey, to Angola from Zaire and Zambia, to Somalia from Kenya, to Ethiopia from Sudan, as well as to Mozambique and South Africa. During the five year period, 1990–1994, almost seven million refugees have returned home (Stein, 1994).

Repatriation and return: the “preferred” durable solution

Historically, refugee movements have tended to result in permanent exile of displaced populations. In the 1950s and 1960s refugees were largely seen as a European problem. Post–World War II solutions gave priority to refugee integration and third country resettlement. An important exception was the return of about 200,000 refugees to Algeria in 1962, supported by the governments of France, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Generally, repatriation was considered a questionable solution that required individual initiative and a desire to return. Forcible return was prohibited and considerable efforts were made to ensure repatriation was voluntary.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, refugees and uprooted populations created by anti-colonial wars in Africa were generally recognized by governments, donors and humanitarian assistance personnel as involuntary migrants who would want to return home. In general, repatriation was considered the natural outcome of the successful conclusion of struggles for independence and liberation from colonial rule throughout Africa. While the importance of confirming the voluntary character of repatriation was emphasized, international support for repatriation, return and reintegration was provided as the primary solution to uprooted populations. In the
1970s several independence wars ended and mass returns occurred: to Nigeria, Bangladesh, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea−Bissau, Zaire, Cambodia and Zimbabwe.

In Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe third country settlement was the prevailing solution throughout the 1960s and 1970s and early 1980s. International assistance was provided for care and maintenance of refugees in countries of first asylum as they were screened for resettlement.

In the mid−1980s and early 1990s a shift occurred and repatriation was promoted as the preferred solution for refugees, some of whom had been in exile over ten years. Programs were established to support the return of Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese who were living in Thailand. In the late 1980s and early 1990s refugees from Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua began returning home.

In compliance with its mandate to provide protection and seek durable solutions for refugees, UNHCR established four preconditions for its participation in organized repatriation (UNHCR in Stein and Cuny, 1994, p. 176 and Stein, 1994, p. 3):

• a fundamental change in circumstances causing flight must have occurred

• the repatriation must be voluntary

• an agreement between the host and home countries providing clear and unequivocal arrangements for safe return and settlement must be established

• refugees must be able to return in safety and with dignity, preferably to their places of origin

Most contemporary repatriations fall short of this ideal. While the preconditions represent appropriate high standards for humanitarian assistance, in practice it is not possible to achieve these standards when emergency populations are returning to places where conditions which caused flight have not been substantially overcome. The complexity of problems which force migration are not easily addressed.

Forced migration is caused by internal tensions, conflicts with neighbors, ideological or ethnic conflicts, political repression and persecution, economic destitution or ecological disasters. Uprooted populations are diverse and include “classic refugees” as well as externally and internally displaced persons. Host populations and those who refuse to flee are impacted by the emergency as well.

Home governments may consider the flight of emergency populations a positive development – a pressure valve for socio−economic stress or effective expulsion of dissidents. Host communities and governments often have economic, political and security interests in minimizing the number of refugees and displaced persons who move into their areas. Immigrant populations are often considered security or foreign−policy risks. On the other hand, sometimes host communities see uprooted populations as an opportunity to generate external assistance for relief and development. For example, in Sudan, the government wants to repatriate refugees who are living in the cities of Gedaref, Kassala, and Port Sudan because they are considered a burden on urban infrastructures. However, money for relief and development is provided for camp refugees and there is less concern for repatriating them.

Donor countries which support humanitarian assistance are increasingly concerned about the rising costs of providing protection, emergency relief, and care and maintenance for uprooted populations. In search of a durable solution, voluntary repatriation is now promoted by many governments, donors, and humanitarian assistance providers as the best solution for emergency populations, with cheaper and shorter−term assistance programs provided to support initial settlement (Allen and Morsink, 1994, p. 3; Harrell−Bond, 1989; Stein, 1986).

Spontaneous return and voluntary repatriation

Increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons are choosing to return to their country and place of origin as an alternative to the indefinite temporary situations in which they live. Ninety percent of the seven million refugees who returned home in the 1990s, did so without international assistance (Stein and Cuny, 1994, p. 6). Only 100,000 of the estimated one million African refugees who returned home in the early 1990s did so through orderly and organized internationally assisted repatriation programs (Stein, 1994). Voluntary repatriation is viewed by some as a proactive response of emergency populations who desire the opportunity to establish roots and become settled in a world that offers them less than perfect solutions. Emergency populations are becoming the main actors in voluntary repatriation and they determine when and how they will
return. Based on their own criteria, they evaluate their situation in exile and conditions in their place of origin, deciding whether it is safe and better for them to return, to stay, or to go elsewhere.

Although refugees and displaced persons are returning home, their return is not problem free. Many who return are at risk of repeated flight because the political and economic conditions that originally caused their emergency migration have not been resolved. “Countless numbers of refugees return home in the face of continued risk, frequently without any amnesty, without a repatriation agreement or program, without ‘permission’ from the authorities in either the country of asylum or country of origin, without international knowledge or assistance, and without an end to conflict that caused the exodus” (Stein and Cuny, 1994, p. 174).

Contrary to common wisdom, there is no return to the status quo. Whatever the cause of flight, it will leave a socio-economic and historical scar in the community. Other changes will be induced by the experience of the flight itself. If people are returning to an area that has been in conflict, for instance, de-mining and reconstruction may be required. Community relations will have to be re-established as “stayees”, internally displaced, and refugees establish land claims and rebuild their lives.

In order to contribute to durable solutions, the international agencies and organizations that provide protection and assistance to these populations need to understand the context in which repatriation is occurring, the perspectives and motivations and criteria of emergency populations, the role of host and home governments as well as non-recognized entities, their own responsibilities regarding human rights and what their role should be in the repatriation effort.

The factors which influence the attitudes of refugees and displaced persons regarding repatriation and return vary, depending on the context, the circumstances which caused flight and the temporary living situation of the emergency population. These factors include: (De Jonge, 1994; Rogge, 1994; Stein, 1994)

- length of time in exile
- degree of integration in place of asylum
- the level of socio-economic development achieved in exile
- the level of cohesion in the displaced or refugee population
- the pressures exerted by authorities to return
- perception of sufficient protection, security and safety of return
- the measure of physical disruption in place of origin
- the extent to which political, economic or social change has occurred in the place of origin
- the provision of material and moral support for return and integration
- the opportunity to exercise more control over one’s life
- economic opportunities promised in the area of origin

The expanding emergency population in the world today as well as the diminishing durable solutions and shift toward an emphasis on voluntary repatriation and return requires careful analysis and creative thought in order to respond to the needs of uprooted peoples and assure protection of their human rights. Protection is often inadequate and voluntary repatriation or return may be motivated by poor living conditions, pressure to leave, or threats or danger in the host country. In other cases uprooted populations that choose to repatriate may be acting out of a renewed position of strength and a desire to return to their communities of origin even though peace has not been established (Stein and Cuny, 1994).

Protection and assistance must be provided in order to protect the returnees and support their move as a durable solution. On the other hand, compromising properly high standards and principles regarding repatriation risks abdication of responsibilities to protect human rights and alleviate human suffering. The distinction between supporting voluntary repatriation and return and promoting repatriation and return as the “preferred” solution is not always clear. The following review of principles holds up the ideal standards and discusses them in light of contemporary realities. An examination and discussion of best practices follows. Various ethical dilemmas and issues are considered.

Principles

1. The essentially voluntary character of repatriation and return should be respected in all cases. No persons should be relocated against their will.

Refugees, displaced persons and victims of disasters flee their places of origin because their safety and livelihood are threatened by circumstances in their place of origin or because they fear persecution or
violence. Historically, the voluntariness of return has been emphasized and individuals have been interviewed in order to ascertain their desire and or willingness to return. Voluntariness implies both an informed decision and an unforced act of will. Ascertaining the voluntariness of repatriation requires direct and unhindered access to all of those displaced. When possible, their participation in the development and implementation of return programs may increase their disposition to resettle.

Increasingly, the emergency populations’ needs are served en masse and solutions are sought for groups. In the past, individual initiative and a desire to return was established prior to any return. While the ideal principle prevails that no one should be repatriated or returned to their place of origin against their will, both the shift to group solutions and the preference for repatriation and return as the best durable solution may compromise this principle. Decisions to return should be made by each individual, though they may be influenced by groups with whom they identify or associate.

2. The basic rights of voluntary return and restored citizenship and human rights should be recognized. International cooperation should be aimed at achieving this objective.

Without the basic right of voluntary return, restored citizenship and recognized human rights, forced migrants remain vulnerable to the forces which caused their original flight. Increasingly, uprooted populations are returning to their place of origin without a change in the conditions which forced them to flee. Citizenship rights are not necessarily restored and the protection of human and civil rights are not assured. State sovereignty rights limit the influence and intervention of international actors and other states. International legal instruments and mechanisms of enforcement are needed in order to protect the human and civil rights of repatriating and returning populations. Constraints or conditions on the provision of aid may have the power to influence government action. However, aid may also negatively influence returnee motivations, movements, and decisions, as people tend to follow aid. On-going civil war in the place of origin makes it impossible to establish guarantees of human and civil rights. The voluntariness of return is particularly important in such vulnerable conditions.

3. All repatriations should be carefully examined for elements of coercion or danger. Refugees and displaced persons need and should have access to accurate information to enable informed decisions about relocating.

Displaced populations should be provided with all available information regarding existing conditions in their country and community of origin and the source of that information in order to enable informed decisions about relocating and reduce the possibilities of coercive or dangerous return. They need to be able to assess the political, military, economic and environmental situation in their place/country of origin as well as the political, economic and social supports necessary for return. Visits by individual refugees or refugee representatives to their place of origin to inform themselves of the situation could be of assistance. Independent human rights groups should have access to refugees before, during and after return in order to assess and assure the voluntariness of their decisions. Spontaneous repatriations should be carefully examined for elements of coercion or dangerous mis-information.

In many situations uprooted populations return on their own rather than waiting for formal action by the UN. In fact, the great majority of refugees and displaced populations who return do so on their own initiative. In 1992 of the estimated 2.4 million refugees who repatriated, approximately 1.7 million did so spontaneously (UNHCR, 1993, p. 107). Some refugees and displaced populations choose to return without the protection of the UN because they fear that by returning through official channels they will be identified by local authorities or residents as returnees, placing them at a disadvantage or at risk (Rogge, 1994, p. 29). On the other hand, individual identity cards for all returnees may provide the documentation they can use to claim rights to residency, land, reconstruction and development assistance, and support.

4. The country of asylum, country of origin and other involved military and political authorities in the area concerned must agree to clear and unequivocal arrangements for the safe return of persons seeking repatriation.

UNHCR takes the lead role in operationalizing this principle as it applies to refugees. The UNHCR statute calls upon the High Commissioner “to seek permanent solutions for the problems of refugees by assisting Governments … to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, and to provide for the protection of refugees by assisting governmental and private efforts to promote voluntary repatriation.” By means of tripartite agreements initiated by UNHCR with the host government and the government of the country of origin, amnesties for political offenses, assurances of safe passage for returning refugees, material assistance to help them re-establish themselves and provisions for an international presence to monitor their safety are
negotiated (UNHCR, 1993b). When forces controlling the area to which refugees are returning are not those of sovereign governments recognized by the UN, expanded negotiating bodies must be created to develop a safe plan for repatriation. It is essential to find ways to include non–State entities when repatriation plans are negotiated in a context of conflict, for they may have valuable information on situations and conditions and have an important role in the provision of relief, assistance and protection (UNHCR, 1993a).

In addition, protection and return agreements for displaced populations, both external and internal, need to be established. While the needs of displaced populations may be addressed when refugee repatriation programs are offered, the protection of their rights and support for their return is often neglected. A gap in the international humanitarian assistance network exists when it comes to responding to the needs of displaced populations.

5. Returnees should be allowed and assisted in their return to places of origin – ideally to their former homes, villages and land, if possible, and if that is their preference.

The right to return to one’s own country is recognized in a number of international and regional human rights instruments as well as in the domestic legislation of several States, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Repatriation and return assistance should be based on the point of view of refugees and displaced persons and reflecting the priorities and desires of the returnees.

Economic, political or security factors may hinder the return of emergency populations to their place of origin. Negotiations, plans and support for return must address local needs for: safety, political protection, recognition, and inclusion of the returning populations; land and economic opportunities; as well as reconstruction and development assistance which addresses the immediate and short–term needs of the refugees or displaced persons, with a concern for the long–term development objectives of the community and the country. This may include food aid, shelter, health care, etc. Return to places of origin may provide returnees more power, stability and control over their own lives and support the durability of their return. Potential returnees should be informed by their government and involved humanitarian assistance organizations of the negotiated agreements as well as the support and assistance that will be available.

6. Refugees and displaced persons who voluntarily return to their place of origin should in no way be penalized for having left it.

Refugees and displaced persons should be allowed to return in safety and dignity to their homes without any fear of persecution, harassment, discrimination, arbitrary detention or physical threats during or after their return. Viewed as destabilizing influences, people who will place additional stress on limited resources, persons with whom stayees will have to compete (sometimes even as enemies) repatriating refugees and returning displaced populations are not always welcomed home. They may be treated with suspicion and excluded by local populations who are trying to maintain control and security in their own lives. Provisions for monitoring and assuring local recognition of civil and human rights and non–discrimination in political, social and economic sectors must be established. In addition, the receiving community should be involved in the repatriation and return planning process. Local populations can be empowered to receive returnees when they are included in reintegration programs.

7. Authorities at national and local levels of the country of origin, in repatriating and integrating populations, should facilitate their return and settlement and grant them the full rights and privileges of all nationals of the country.

National and local–level authorities should establish and support efforts to eliminate the root causes of flight and create conditions conducive to return and settlement. Nationally and internationally negotiated agreements are meaningless if they are not adopted and implemented at the local level. Returning populations should be provided with the necessary travel documents, entry permits, citizenship and identity papers needed to secure their rights at the local level. Efforts should be made to ensure that they have equal employment and educational opportunities as other nationals.

8. All those who freely decide to return to their place of origin should be given reasonable and appropriate assistance by the country of refuge, the country of origin, international agencies, inter–governmental organizations, non–governmental organizations and voluntary agencies to facilitate their return.

The support response that is provided to returning refugee and displaced populations varies. Multiple political, economic, social and environmental needs may exist. The level of assistance that is considered reasonable
and appropriate is debated within and among governments, inter-governmental organizations, international organizations and voluntary agencies. However, there is general agreement about the importance of coordinating humanitarian assistance in a manner which will support rehabilitation and development. Though long-term development needs cannot be resolved through repatriation and return programs, return and reintegration assistance must be linked to state commitments to provide for the basic needs of their people and address long-term development needs.

9. In areas where there are both internally displaced returnees as well as returning refugees (who may be from several different countries) it is important to harmonize assistance levels, and jointly manage programs, when possible.

Many returnees are in desperate circumstances and their integration is jeopardized. Pre- and post-return assistance for returnees is needed to support their resettlement. At times, conflict between stayees and returning populations arises because post-return assistance is not available to those who stayed and yet their need for rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance may be as great. In addition, returnees may include refugees from several different countries of asylum and internally displaced persons from different areas in the country of origin. Integrating return assistance with community-based goals and programs of reconstruction and reconciliation is more likely to contribute to positive community relations. Receiving and returning populations should be involved in the planning and implementation of repatriation, return, and reintegration programs. Projects that focus on individuals or single categories of people can be divisive and exacerbate simmering resentments. Post-return assistance should be directed equitably to all in need and linked to long-term development planning.

10. Following major repatriations, governments in the country of asylum should provide refugees who choose not to return because of having become integrated into the host community, the opportunity to apply for permanent resident status or citizenship. Internally displaced persons who choose to remain in the community where they have settled should have the right to remain.

Without the right to a legal process to apply for permanent resident status or citizenship in the country of asylum, the voluntariness of return may not exist. While changes in the conditions which caused flight in the place of origin and supports for repatriation and return may make it possible for many to voluntarily return, some persons may not want to return for social, cultural, economic or political reasons.

Though governments have the right to decide who is granted residency and citizenship rights within their country, requiring mass returns without recognition of individual choice violates the principle of voluntariness.

Best Practices

■ Ensuring the voluntariness of return

The decision-making process

In any repatriation or return, the displaced persons should decide when return and reintegration are possible and to be initiated. Unfortunately, in many situations, the interests of the country or place of asylum, the country of origin, non-government entities, and/or the assistance community manipulate the nature or amount of information which is provided to emergency populations in order to influence their decisions. These interests may include:

- the concern of governments, donors or international assistance organizations to phase out assistance in a given area
- the concern to improve relations between countries
- the concern of the government in the country of origin to gain political leverage by repatriating its people or maintain or exaggerate the size, as economic or other considerations dictate
- the concern of the government in the country or community of asylum to reduce the size of its refugee population, or the efforts of non-State entities to establish control of a territory.

These interests often govern the development and organization of repatriation or return operations. Misinformation may aim to discourage return. On the other hand, uprooted people who are eager to return
may act on the basis of insufficient or even misleading information that was provided to encourage them to return. They may find that they have returned to an area where water, sanitation or health facilities are insufficient or entirely lacking, access to land is restricted or denied, returnees or employment and economic development opportunities are extremely limited. If returnees are not able to support themselves in their place of origin, they may ultimately regret their decision to return, yet find they can no longer return to their place of exile and refuge.

In reality, the decision-making process is one that involves multiple actors with different and interdependent roles. Governments in both the country of origin and asylum, UNHCR and other UN and intergovernmental organizations, non-recognized or non-State entities, as well as international and local non-governmental and voluntary organizations may be involved. Throughout the process, refugees and displaced persons should have the lead decision-making role about return and international actors should play a facilitating role.

**Informed decision-making**

New refugees or displaced persons, aid workers, traders, scouts and fighters are all sources of information for the emergency population. Uprooted persons are likely to have information sources inaccessible to the international community – they know the land, language, people and culture. People rely on social networks as a source of information and they have their own criteria of evaluation and of what they need to know.

While uprooted persons often have a considerable body of information and they are highly alert to getting more and better information, agencies should be aware that information is often very uneven within and between displaced groups. Humanitarian assistance providers should facilitate as much information-gathering and sharing as possible. One of the most useful efforts is to arrange for family elders and leaders of civic society to visit the home areas. The kind of information that refugees and displaced persons feel they need may be too specific and personal to be provided by agencies: the state of their farm, the distribution of their relatives, or whether their rival has been kicked off the village water committee.

An information campaign must be launched to give complete information about what people can and should expect upon return. This should include not only the distribution of printed information and access to available radio broadcasts, but also a series of public meetings in which potential returnees have an opportunity to discuss the return and integration arrangements with governmental, humanitarian and local leaders who are involved in the planning and implementation of the operation. Though the involvement of rebel groups or non-State entities may be problematic, their information may be accurate and they are an important resource to tap. Local leaders should be involved in organizing and distributing information, but they should not be relied on to provide all information to the uprooted population, because information can be distorted by persons who are motivated to serve their own interests in the repatriation process or persons who do not fully understand the operation.

The spread of false rumors about what to expect upon return is probably inevitable. To minimize their damage and prevent people from repatriating with false hopes based on misinformation, it is advisable to monitor and evaluate the spread of such rumors and to seek to clarify them in public meetings if they threaten to give people false expectations. Uprooted populations and humanitarian assistance providers could collaborate on efforts to monitor rumors and evaluate their accuracy. The triangulation of information – obtaining reports from various sources and conducting comparisons and contrasts of those reports in order to evaluate the validity of the information – is a valuable way for uprooted persons and humanitarian assistance providers to assess the risks and needs involved in return and integration. Through public meetings and participatory evaluations, emergency populations can make informed decisions.

**Voluntary return to insecure conditions**

The voluntariness of return may be compromised by threats, pressure and attacks by the government or factions within the country of asylum or by a reduction in the support services offered to emergency populations. Without adequate protection and support in exile, uprooted populations may be forced to return before it is safe. They may be unable to sustain their livelihoods and establish themselves. Rather than suspending assistance in order to create a push factor, forcing uprooted populations to return, the provision of assistance in potential areas of return can create pull factors which encourage return. Engaging in initial reconstruction efforts, such as clearing mines and establishing safe water and sanitation systems; facilitating the redistribution of land; strengthening health, education and employment sectors in the area of return; and ensuring the availability of essential consumer goods and trade relations so the local economy can be established; not only encourages people to return, but increases the capacity of the area to support returning populations.
While voluntary return is now recognized as the preferred durable solution for uprooted populations, there is a gap between principle and practice relative to voluntary return. Increasingly, involuntary migrants must choose between unsatisfactory options: return to insecure conditions where conflict and poverty prevail or remain in an insecure displacement in exile. A range of actions exist to help returnees: promotion, encouragement and facilitation of return. Stein and Cuny (1994, p. 186) define promotion as “an advocacy role to create the conditions conducive to return.” Encouragement of return should occur only “when there are optimal conditions for return in safety and dignity.” Self–induced repatriation or return is facilitated when assistance is provided to refugees or displaced populations who take it upon themselves to return home even in situations the international community considers highly insecure. Coercion involves force or intimidation. Physical force or severe reductions in support services endanger the safety and lives of uprooted persons.

Emergency populations should not have to choose between hunger, disease, insecurity and inadequate support in exile and a return to danger, violence and instability in return. Such return is not voluntary. However, without adequate support or resolution of the causes of flight, refugees and displaced populations are forced to choose between hunger, insecurity, and danger in exile or in their place of origin.

The return process

Self–organized repatriation and return is the most common and usually the most timely and effective. Refugees and displaced persons evaluate their situation in exile, what is happening in their place of origin and whether or not they can return. They will initiate voluntary return if and when they believe it is possible for them to return and when they believe they will be given adequate protection and support. In some cases, people return prematurely and re–enter the context of crisis and vulnerability which caused their initial flight. For example, in 1992, Angolan refugees returned from Zambia to the on–going civil war and instability which they had fled. With adequate and accurate information involuntary migrants can assess their risks and vulnerability better and participate in return and integration operations. International agencies and governments should focus on assisting in accurate assessment of risk and overcoming the constraints on the efforts of refugees and displaced populations. For example, it is important to waive customs levies, in cross–border returns, so returnees can bring their goods, especially small business inventories, animals, carts, household goods, etc. Sometimes it may be necessary to discourage return.

Phased repatriation and return may be required when working with large uprooted populations. In such cases, the displaced return in smaller groups over a longer period of time. The logistics of registering households, transporting people and their goods, receiving them in reception centers, bringing them to their destinations and providing them with the necessary assistance are incredibly complicated. If too many people return at the same time, pressures for support services may exceed the capacities of humanitarian assistance providers, the government in the country of return and local communities to respond to the demands and meet the special needs of the returnee populations.

Although phased return may be warranted, those involved in providing assistance should be careful to maintain consistency in assistance packages to successive waves of returnees. Communication travels between refugee communities and any differences in aid packages are sure to be noticed and resented. Such inconsistency can result in vocal protests and even violence. It is advantageous to return people together as this serves to maximize their social networks and cooperation.

Transit camps may be necessary to facilitate return, however, there are dangers involved in their development and precautions should be taken to assure they do not negatively impact the returnees or the return process. Transit camps are difficult to set up and supply. They may act as breeding points for communicable diseases; they have a tendency to become the focus of agency efforts and investments, rather than the all–important new home areas; and in many cases, they are not really any closer to their area of return than were their refugee camps. It is critical to develop a plan for departure before moving people into such camps. Transit camps should not be used as a place to put people when they move from being the responsibility of one agency to being the responsibility of another. Uprooted populations are then at risk of becoming the victims of inter–agency gaps and conflicts.

Providing protection

It is commonly recognized that the need for protection by international humanitarian assistance providers does not end when uprooted populations return to their place of origin. Returning to places where political conflicts simmer, cease–fires break down, and violence continues, returnees may require protection assistance throughout the return process and in the initial period of settlement. The form and duration of protection will vary situationally, based on several factors: whether or not a change in political leadership has
occurred and governmental leadership is recognized as legitimate, the vulnerability of cease-fire agreements, who has the upper hand in continuing conflict, the relationship of the returning population to the prevailing power in the country and in their place of origin, their relationship with other warring factions, the power of authorities in the area of return to control and distribute land and guarantee access to other essential resources, and whether humanitarian assistance providers can operate in the area.

When involved in repatriation efforts, UNHCR is mandated “...to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, and to provide for the protection of refugees by assisting governmental and private efforts to promote voluntary repatriation”. Generally, they negotiate tripartite agreements which include the protection provisions of amnesties for political offenses, assurances of safe passage for returning refugees and provisions for an international presence to monitor their safety, in addition to material assistance to help them re-establish themselves.

Ultimately, however, the government in the country of return is responsible for the protection of returnees. Provisions included in tripartite agreements are means by which the UN, other organizations and governments can pressure authorities to respect and protect the human and civil rights of the returning populations. When non-State entities are in control of the area of return, they must be included in the agreement in order to assure the provision of protection.

In situations where there is no functioning government, international humanitarian assistance providers are the only reliable bodies that can be held responsible. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN are the predominant organizations carrying this responsibility. Other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, bilateral agencies of donor governments and outside military forces may also become involved in protection efforts.

International peacemaking and peacekeeping forces are increasingly utilized in the protection efforts of repatriation and return programs in order to stabilize situations that cause flight and create uprooted populations. Complex debates about the utilization of such forces occur among providers of humanitarian assistance. Their involvement is generally not a sufficient guarantee of security and protection and is risky and costly. The “peace” that they create or maintain is rarely sustained and they may be placed in a position where they are forced to act more like soldiers in combat than protection forces.

In situations where returning refugees find that the protection available to them in the country of return is not adequate, they should be allowed to leave again and be recognized as refugees.

The special protection issue of de-mining

When uprooted populations are returning to areas that have been mined, programs of return and reconstruction can be held up because of risks to the returning population and humanitarian assistance personnel. The number and distribution of mines is often highly variable and uncertain. During conflict false information is usually disseminated about the placement of mines. Accurate recording of mine placement is seldom maintained and they are purposely laid in unpredictable patterns. These difficulties complicate programs of return and raise many dilemmas.

However, in areas where anti-personnel mines were scattered in fields – for example, in parts of Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia – they may be a serious constraint to reconstruction and development. Mines, generally, are not the major problem for returning populations. It is important to study how the risk presented by mines is affecting particular populations, for instance, preventing people from planting their fields or using roads or trade routes. This makes it possible to target risk reduction measures, design public education programs for residents or returnees, and promote successful strategies for coping with the risks presented by mines.

Working with local populations, it is possible to identify many of the real or feared mine sites. Local people usually have some methods of their own for detonating mines. They also establish marking systems for suspected mine sites, detour paths and roads to reduce risk, and instructions which they use to educate each other and their children about mine risks. Programs for mine clearance on national scale should retain built—in flexibility to allow for local priority initiatives, aiming at clearing the access to water, fields, and health facilities.

Those who are supporting or facilitating return programs must take responsibility for assessing the extent of mining operations in areas of return and the risks that returnees face. Return to mined areas should occur only after highly trained personnel have identified the extent to which the area has been mined, isolated and clearly marked such areas, and developed information campaigns for potential returnees. Mine awareness
campaigns must include first aid training and safe rescue techniques, for reaching a victim in a mine field is
dangerous. In addition, local health facilities in known mine areas should be strengthened in order to treat
mine victims. This includes ensuring the availability of blood transfusions, surgical and anesthetic capacities.
Health personnel need to be trained to treat mine injuries and amputees, as well as provide training to victims
in the care of their wounds once they are able to return home from the hospital. Means for the evacuation of
seriously injured people to hospitals with better facilities must also be established.

The only long−term solution to the risks of mine injuries is to remove remaining land mines. However,
de−mining is a slow, laborious, dangerous and costly process (one to three thousand dollars per mine). It is a
specialist operation, usually carried out manually. Contracting procedures are problematic. There are few
specialists in the field and they tend to know each other and may disagree on de−mining methods. In
Mozambique nearly a year was added to the de−mining process because of allegations of favoritism towards
Royal Ordinance and/or South African companies against Zimbabwean companies and bid−fixing. Specialists
must be involved in the development of contracts and evaluation of contract bids. In addition a moral dilemma
exists because some de−mining contractors are involved in mine manufacture; they actually may have been
involved in laying the mines they now propose to remove. The quality of work needs to be specified, in spite of
the fact that it is difficult to assess. Contracts need to spell out the level of clearance, for example 97% or
more. In addition, issues of insurance and liability for staff or civilian victims who pass through the area after
de−mining must be specified.

Providing support, settlement and development assistance

Although ensuring the voluntariness of repatriation and return and providing protection for returnees are
critical to successful resettlement, the larger task of ensuring that returnees are able to achieve a degree of
economic self−sufficiency and social integration is the decisive factor in determining the durability of return.
Without development programs that address people's immediate needs as well as longer−term goals, the
prospects for reconciliation and recovery are diminished.

A continued focus on refugees alone will not respond to the majority of today’s uprooted populations or
adequately address issues of safety, settlement and integration of returnees. Displaced populations, refugees
and victims of disasters may all require humanitarian assistance as they seek to establish roots and rebuild
their lives. In addition, stayees may require support and should be involved in resettlement efforts. The
responsibility to improve conditions in the community or country of origin is increasingly recognized.
International humanitarian assistance agencies and organizations are becoming more involved, addressing
socio−economic factors that cause flight.

As the primary international agency responsible for assisting emergency refugee populations, UNHCR
(1993a, p. 112) recognizes “There is a yawning gap between the repatriation assistance made available to
returning refugees and the enormous development needs of the areas to which they return”.
Underdevelopment, chronic poverty and competition for scarce resources can re−ignite conflict, undermine
the achievement of a fragile peace and prevent the successful reintegration of returnees. Governmental and
non−governmental agencies and organizations that provide relief to uprooted populations and those who
promote development must coordinate efforts in order to support returnees and their communities with the
difficult and prolonged process of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development that is involved in
repatriation and return programs.

UNHCR has developed cross mandate programs in an effort to provide a more holistic response to
repatriation and return. Through cross mandate operations they are serving the needs of all uprooted
populations – refugees, displaced persons, stayees, host communities, and returnees – as well as moving
beyond the narrow, emergency relief orientation of assistance towards a more integrated response that
addresses long−term development needs. UNHCR’s quick impact project (QIP) initiative has become a model
for reintegration programs in countries devastated by years of armed conflict and economic decline. Originally
implemented in Central America, the projects are now being established in other settings, including Somalia,
Mozambique and Cambodia.

QIPs are small projects which attempt to address specific, often urgent, requirements
affecting entire communities. They can be completed within a few months at relatively low
cost (about $30,000 average).... On their own QIPs are limited, and local in their effect. They
cannot rebuild shattered economies, but they can play a useful role as part of a larger plan
that aims to do so. They can help meet urgent needs and promote social reconciliation during
the delicate period before the benefits of longer−term development become apparent
(UNHCR, 1993a, p. 114).
However, the conditions of return assistance usually limit such support to a period of twelve months after repatriation. Such limited assistance is not necessarily an adequate response to the needs of returnees and the local community. Returnees and communities may lose their eligibility for assistance before they have been able to establish self-sufficiency.

In Tigray in 1994, hasty determinations of self-sufficiency on the part of the Ethiopian government resulted in premature suspension of services and assistance to returnees. Following the 1993 harvest, the Relief and Rehabilitation Bureau, the regional arm of the government responsible for early warning and provision of relief, was advised that the harvest in Humera had been successful and that self-sufficiency had been reached. When a severe food shortage developed in the Tigayan returnee settlements in March and April 1994, government officials at first refused to take seriously requests for emergency food aid on the basis of the earlier assessment. Several adults in one community died of starvation before limited food aid was eventually provided. The relief grain that finally arrived in the village was too little and too late for most people (Hammond, 1994).

At present there are no guidelines for objectively determining self-sufficiency and successful integration. Is success self-sufficiency, parity with the local population, or the achievement of living standards equivalent to those in exile? Such decisions and priorities are often determined by the external interests of intergovernmental organizations, governments, NGOs and voluntary organizations which establish funding levels.

To take another example from Ethiopia, during the 1993–94 repatriation of Tigrayans from Sudan to the Humera area of Ethiopia, calls were issued by the local hospital and regional Ministry of Health for such items as an electricity generator and blood transfusion equipment, in addition to the supplemental drugs that were already being provided by the UN to the Ministry of Health and an indigenous NGO. Such assistance was denied on the grounds that the rest of rural Ethiopia does not have such advanced health care services locally available, so to rehabilitate the returnee population to a level higher than that of the local population would be indefensible. While such reasoning may be justified, rigid adherence to such practices may result in missed opportunities for development.

Initial assistance should focus on smaller and more immediate measures aimed at rehabilitation, which restores self-sufficiency and reduces both the vulnerability of affected populations and the strain imposed upon the receiving areas. Medium-term assistance should seek to further national or regional development goals. The government in the country of return should be centrally involved in the planning and implementation of assistance to returnees.

Assistance should, at the very least, involve ensuring that returnees’ basic food, land, shelter, water, sanitation, health care, and educational requirements are met. If return involves the establishment of a new community, assistance may include construction of clinics, provision of a regular and reliable water source, assistance with latrine construction, and distribution of food aid for at least the first year. If people return to their home areas, local health, education, water and sanitation services may need to be reconstructed or supplemented to accommodate the returnees. Such integration, while more sustainable in the long-term, requires comprehensive coordination of assistance provision and monitoring activities on the part of all involved actors.

In cases where returnees are agriculturists, it is incumbent upon authorities in the country and community of return to provide the returnees with the necessary land to begin farming or to provide training that will enable both men and women to find suitable off-farm employment. The government should seek assistance from UNDP, FAO and voluntary agencies with expertise in agricultural development to provide the necessary tools, seeds and resources required for agricultural production.

Line ministries, at national, regional and local levels should work together with the international community to ensure that resources are channeled and services delivered to the returnee population in a timely manner. In the long-term, relevant line ministries must carry responsibility for support and development. In the early phases of repatriation and return, such ministries usually require financial and technical support in order to meet the demands of the return and integration. The UN and NGOs should seek to provide assistance, as far as possible and practical, through the line ministries. If the capacity of the line ministries is severely lacking, or if the ministry is not willing to immediately assume responsibility for the returnee caseload, it may be necessary to assign duties to voluntary agencies. In such cases, roles and expectations must be clearly defined and such organizations should work with the line ministries, whenever possible, in order to facilitate a
smooth transition and to avoid duplication of services and ongoing external assistance. When line ministries are required to establish and maintain reporting and accounting records, they should be trained to assume such responsibility.

Local NGOs may be in the best position to bridge the gap between relief and development because their mandates are flexible to address both relief and development activities. In addition, they may have a history of doing development work in the area. They may be limited by their ability to generate funds to support such efforts. However, in some cases, they are remarkably successful in fundraising because of their grassroots linkages and long-term involvements. Post-return assistance that supports and expands projects run by NGOs can be an effective way to promote rehabilitation. The involvement of returnees and communities in the integration and development planning and decision-making processes is critical. Returnees and stayees assume the bulk of the responsibility of reconstruction and community development.

Summary

Repatriation, return, and reintegration is now widely recognized, by the international community, as the preferred solution for uprooted populations. In addition, it is the solution that involuntary migrants increasingly adopt as they seek opportunities for permanent settlement. People are returning to their places of origin, even when the conditions which caused their flight have not changed. In spite of this, it is essential that the voluntary character of repatriation and return is respected. No one should be relocated against their will. Citizenship should be restored to those who return and integration into the area of resettlement should fostered. People should have access to accurate and complete information about their area of origin or other potential area of resettlement that they can use as a basis for informed decision-making about return. All returns and repatriations should be carefully examined for elements of coercion or danger.

Protection to assure safe return should be provided. The country of asylum, country of origin and other involved military and political authorities in the area concerned must agree to clear and unequivocal arrangements for the safe return of persons seeking repatriation. Returnees should be given secure access to land, as well as social and economic support so that necessary basic needs are met and opportunities for future stability and security exist. The country of refuge, country of origin, international agencies, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies should cooperate to facilitate and support returnees. Harmonization of assistance, providing support to the uprooted, returnees, and “stayees”, is most likely to foster community reconciliation, recovery and sustainability.

With most contemporary repatriations and returns occurring in the context of ongoing conflict or under conditions of fragile peace agreements, the implementation of national development plans and long-term development efforts will be difficult. Poor physical infrastructure and a lack of trained personnel, resulting from years of neglect and the destruction and losses of war, have severely limited the capacity of local governments, communities and other institutions to efficiently secure international funding and implement programs. The formation of a new government and internal capacities to plan and coordinate is essential for long-term development planning and implementation.

If reintegration assistance is carried out successfully, the country’s entire development process can be greatly enhanced. Returnees, together with stayees, can develop coping and risk-minimizing strategies that help to reduce their vulnerability to disaster or stress-induced migration. Whenever possible, repatriation and return should be seen as an opportunity for development and rehabilitation assistance and it should be integrated with national, regional and local development plans.

References


**Topic 12 – Phasing Out Assistance**

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*This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.*

**Introduction**
Ending emergency response operations can, in some cases, be as problematic as actual startup. During the course of an emergency intervention, beneficiaries may come to see the free distribution of food or other commodities as their natural “right” even though access to other sources may be available; closure of the program may be viewed as a direct attack on those “rights.” As well, host governments may view the intervention and all of its systems and resources as a “much-deserved” subsidy by the wealthier nations or by donor organizations. Emergency response agency staff may also have an interest in maintaining aspects of the program – aspects which will require their continued employment. In some situations, donors themselves may view continuance of the emergency response as an “opportunity” to ignore calls for “longer-term” development efforts to which they may be opposed for political or commercial reasons.

Despite these pressures, practitioners of humanitarian interventions must consider the potential effects on the target population created by an activity or program that is continued long past the duration of actual emergency need. Such interventions may reduce incentives for productive activity and create long-term dependencies on external resources. Voluntary participation in ongoing development projects may become viewed as less worthwhile. A dependency syndrome may develop among the members of the population who may no longer see the need for the actual work of food production. For these reasons, the emergency response manager must plan, from the outset, the eventual phase-out of the emergency response and ensure that all, from donor representatives to beneficiaries, understand the goals, directions, and planned duration of the emergency response.

Whether or not the phase-out is to be followed by additional, longer-term recovery efforts will depend upon the mandate, political will, and available resources of the agency in question and, of course, the permission of the local authority. In any case, with or without planned, longer-term activities, the phase-out of emergency relief should be an essential part of any emergency response plan.

**Principles**

1. An emergency response program should be planned as a short-term intervention with a phase-out plan conceptualized in advance – that is, at the time the program is designed. The planned duration of the emergency response program should be well communicated to the intended beneficiaries.

Ideally, no emergency response program should last a long time. The actual definition of “a long time,” however, can be problematic. In some cases, people who have fled the scene of a natural disaster can return home quickly, while elsewhere, especially in the case of refugee situations, repatriation can take years.

While many humanitarian organizations have some idea of when a phase-out should begin, few have established standards for phasing out emergency assistance. According to the World Food Programme (WFP): “Large-scale, free, relief distributions of food, where needed, are continued for only the minimum period necessary, and phased out as soon as possible. The phasing out should be planned for from the outset to ensure a smooth transition to rehabilitation and development-oriented activities... Food aid delivered after the emergency is over can promote attitudes of dependence among the affected people, be wasted or misused, or depress prices for agricultural producers... The specific objectives of the assistance and the time period – the limit beyond which the particular form of assistance will not be continued [should be] understood by all, especially the beneficiaries” (WFP, 1991, pp. A4–9 – A4–10).

Humanitarian organizations should heed WFP’s guidance. Free distribution of food should be introduced only when necessary to save lives, targeted to people with no other access to supplies, and discontinued as quickly as possible.

According to WFP (1991), food assistance should not:

- Be a disincentive to local agricultural production or marketing.
- Disturb normal patterns of seasonal migration.
- Undermine traditional coping and sharing processes.
- Undermine ongoing development projects and activities.
- Create dependency.

Indeed, these principles should be generalized to the free distribution of all goods to able-bodied people. After the emergency situation stabilizes, the free distribution of goods to able-bodied people is unnecessary and counterproductive. Programs such as food-for-work should be identified, designed, and implemented by the affected communities. Alternative programs should be created by relief providers, the displaced population, and their hosts prior to the termination of the free distributions.
2. The emergency response should aim to reduce the underlying vulnerabilities faced by the target population; for this reason emergency assistance should be phased out and the transition to longer–term development efforts should be made as soon as possible.

The overriding priority of an emergency response is to save lives. The response often entails a great deal of activity devoted to the import of material assistance. However, emergency operations, except with purposeful intent, do not set in motion the processes of recovery and reconstruction; rarely do they consider the non–material aspects of recovery vital to the restoration of self–esteem and dignity. The emergency response should be a springboard from which the affected population can take charge of its own recovery process using existing skills and institutions. Emergency programs which aim from the outset to increase the capacities of the affected population will often find the phase–out of emergency assistance – and the transition to development activities with longer–term impact – easier to manage.

3. Plans to phase out the emergency response programs should consider the capacity of the affected population and of local institutions to meet continuing needs of vulnerable groups.

Phasing out assistance should be viewed as a process that considers the capacity of the affected population and of local institutions to meet the continuing needs of that affected population. As the phase–out proceeds, the provision of goods and services by local institutions should proceed at an equivalent pace. Those who insist that the phase–out should await a renewed capacity of the host government to meet the needs of the affected ignore the fact that it is often this very outside assistance which lessens pressure on the local government to use its own resources to serve the needs of the affected population. In such cases, local institutions may not give priority to the needs of the affected population until the external assistance has been phased out.

There are instances in extremely poor societies, however, where local institutions may simply be incapable of responding to the additional needs created by the emergency. Outside assistance in the form of targeted food–for–work or income–generating projects may be needed even after humanitarian organizations determine that “lives are no longer at risk” and emergency operations phased out.

4. The affected population should be involved in the planning and implementation of the phase–out.

In any relief or development activity, the chances of success are greatly enhanced when the affected population is an active participant in the decision–making, that is, when the population is given the opportunity to help determine program objectives, allocate resources, and implement projects and programs. The phase–out effort is no different: various representatives of the affected population should be included in the planning process from the outset so they, in turn, can communicate the scope and duration of the response to other members of their communities.

Best Practices

Planning the phase–out

Chances of a successful phase–out of the emergency intervention are maximized when the designers of the intervention plan the details of the phase–out from the outset. To be sure, it is rarely possible to predict the exact duration of needs created by the emergency situation. It is advisable, nevertheless, for planners to estimate the likely duration of those needs and of the intervention, understanding all the while that flexibility is needed as plans may need to be revised at a later stage.

In setting an endpoint – albeit a flexible one – for the intervention, it then becomes possible to communicate to the representatives of the target population that the response is, in fact, a temporary one and will be terminated at a determined point pending a later detailed assessment of need. This communication during the operation’s design phase is crucial. Representatives of the affected population should be made part of the public information campaign to communicate the planned scope and duration of the intervention to members of their community.

As part of the phase–out plan, agency staff must be knowledgeable about the populations with whom they are working (for example, religious beliefs, cultural taboos, labor allocation patterns, etc.) They also must know what is possible in the host country: the type, scope and duration of work that will be permitted. Equipped with this knowledge and determined to work with the affected population, the conscientious planner would seek to:

• Involve program participants in ongoing needs and resource assessments.
• Encourage their participation in planning the transition to development and in assessing the viability of development projects.

• Jointly decide the deadline for transition.

• Make use of existing community organizations as communication channels.

• Gradually decrease the level of service according to an agreed schedule.

Other essential management and administrative considerations in planning for phase-out include the following:

• **Emergency program staff contracts**: In most large interventions, emergency response agencies will almost certainly have to hire additional staff. Even in situations where the agency has a long-established development program in the country and maintains a substantial number of personnel, the hiring of additional staff to handle the emergency – or to backstop the regular program staff in their normal, day-to-day activities – is almost always a requirement. Emergency program planners should be fully apprised of local employment laws and contracts should be written clearly, specifying terms and duration of employment. Ideally, short-term contracts should be written with any renewal clauses subject to agency needs. These terms and conditions should be communicated clearly to new employees hired for the emergency response. Insinuations about “future employment possibilities” should be avoided.

• **Implementing partner relations**: Agency relationships established to respond to an emergency situation should be clarified in contractual terms and conditions. Partners should all be clear about the extent of their relationships. If the relationship is expected to be ended when the emergency operation is phased out, then this should be made clear.

• **Contracts with vendors**: Newly established commercial relationships in response to an emergency such as transport or warehousing contracts should consider as well the expected duration of the response. When the timing of the eventual phase-out is unclear at the time contracts are generated, emergency planners should attempt to write short-term (six month to one year) contracts with renewal clauses in the agency’s favor. Long-term contracts often sought by landlords for office or housing leases should be avoided if possible.

• **Disposition of emergency program assets**: Final disposition of the emergency operation’s physical assets – for example, vehicles, computers, and communications equipment – should be clarified during the planning stages. Host governments often assume they are the natural beneficiary of emergency program assets once the operation has been phased-out. If the donor of the assets has other plans for final disposition of assets, these plans should be specified at the time that contracts, country agreements, or letters of understanding are written.

• **Budgeting for phase-out activities**: Planners should consider up-front the human and material resources that may be required by the actual phase-out. Monitoring, public information campaigns, or other activities may have to continue to ensure that the needs of the affected population are understood. Where such activities are required, vehicles, spare parts, fuel, and personnel costs will have to be budgeted, as will the continuing costs of reporting on the phase-out. If training local institutions to handle a continuing caseload, to make use of emergency program assets, or program leftover resources is viewed as part of the phase-out, then training costs should be considered as well. If local employment laws mandate severance pay for departing personnel, then these costs should also be budgeted.

### Phase-out indicators

As noted in the principles above, the precise point at which the emergency operation should end can rarely be specified unequivocally in advance. Just as emergency managers monitor the early warning signs which may indicate a potential emergency situation, managers should stay abreast of those indicators which may point to a reduction in emergency needs and, consequently, to an acceptable point of emergency intervention phase-out. A list of indicators which might assist the decision to phase-out follows. No indicator is ever a guarantee of a “return to normalcy”, but there may well be some indicators that signal it is time to phase out emergency assistance.
• **Formation of government of national unity:** Where the emergency situation is the result of strife among various factions vying for power, the formation of a government of national unity may be a signal that emergency conditions may soon come to a close. The emergency manager must be the judge as to whether or not the agreement to form such a government is credible and whether or not the government’s formation is likely to have an impact at the local level. Historical precedent and personal experience must guide the manager.

• **Level of public self-confidence:** Self-confidence is assessed by the re-emergence of normal socio-economic behavior such as commercial activity in the public marketplaces, the return to school by the young, and the preparing of land for agricultural uses. Generally speaking, where self-confidence has returned to the population at large, the emergency – defined as conditions in which lives are at risk – is almost surely past and the phase-out of emergency assistance, except, perhaps, for select vulnerable groups, should have already commenced.

• **Capacity of local institutions to respond to needs:** Capacity alone, without the political will to act, is insufficient. Emergency managers must make a determination that local institutions – host government, religious, or other – have gained both the capacity and the will to address the continuing needs of vulnerable groups in the population affected by the emergency. Capacity is measured in terms of available resources: skills, knowledge, physical assets, trained personnel, functioning management systems, etc. Political will is demonstrated by the local institution’s actual commitment of those resources to the situation.

It is important to make a clear distinction between needs and vulnerabilities. Needs, as used in the context of an emergency, refer to the immediate requirements for survival. Vulnerabilities, on the other hand, are long-term factors that affect the ability of a community to respond to an event or that make it susceptible to calamities. Vulnerabilities precede disaster, magnify its severity, impede effective disaster response, and are likely to continue afterward. Needs, on the other hand, arise out of the crisis and are relatively short-term. The host government may, in fact, be capable of responding to emergency needs but incapable of addressing long-term vulnerabilities. International agencies should be clear about this distinction.

• **Donor interest:** Emergency managers should be aware that the donor community is usually more interested in emergency assistance than in development assistance. A significant reduction in donor interest in the emergency – and the likely reduction in available resources – is generally one of the most obvious indicators to the emergency manager that a phase-out is imminent. Conversely, an increase in donor interest in emergency intervention may signal that a phase-out, which may in fact be warranted in terms of the current level of need, is unlikely. The degree to which donor interest guides the decision to continue the emergency assistance is usually a direct function of the emergency response agency’s financial independence (or, at least, of the diversification of the agency’s funding sources.)

• **Harvest conditions:** In chronically food-deficient areas, one successful harvest does not establish a trend towards recovery. Phase-out based on such an indicator alone would be premature. In areas not generally characterized as food-deficient or famine-prone, a successful harvest can in fact be a signal of the re-emergence of “normalcy,” of the return of public self-confidence among the members of the affected community.

• **Host population willingness:** A reduction in the willingness of the host population to permit the relief effort to continue should not, in itself, be an indicator that the time has come to phase-out assistance. It may signal, however, that a change in program targeting is warranted, especially if the host population views the assistance as discriminatory in favor of a newly resident (i.e., displaced) beneficiary population. Obviously, if there are vulnerable groups among the host population, it makes no sense to exclude them. If such an approach is adopted, the host population will probably allow provision of emergency relief. (In reality, the host population is often overly supportive of the relief effort as it may generate employment and various other sources of income.)

### Implementation of the phase-out

Once it is determined that emergency assistance should be phased-out, there are a number of actions to take. These include the following:
• **Public information campaign:** Ideally, the emergency response agency has carried out a public information campaign since the beginning of the emergency response. Beneficiaries have been informed directly or through their representatives about the program’s scope and duration. Whether or not this has in fact been done, the emergency manager must now make a concerted effort to inform all concerned about the agency’s intention to phase-out emergency assistance. Reasons for the phase-out must be clarified and communicated. The campaign should be carried out in cooperation with local institutions and community representatives and should be conveyed in the language(s) of the beneficiaries. Planners should follow up on the transmission of the information to ensure that the affected population has, in fact, understood what the phase-out will entail. Use of local media should be considered if appropriate and available.

• **Coordination activities:** Of particular importance is the need to spend time with all implementing partners and other organizations active in the affected area to ensure that the plans for phase-out are communicated and clearly understood. Ongoing development projects may suffer serious negative impacts if some groups maintain their activities of free distributions while others agree that the need for free distributions has passed.

International emergency response agencies at times are prone to disregard the directives of the host government during the emergency phase. International relief workers, however, must bear in mind that it is the host government, whether good or bad, that will have to carry on after the international groups have departed. International agencies need to find common ground with local agencies concerning the needs and priorities of the affected population and the process of phasing out the relief program.

• **Monitoring:** The only certainty of an emergency is that the situation will change. The emergency manager must take the necessary steps to stay abreast of changes in the level of beneficiary need, the availability of resources, the capacity of personnel, etc. For these reasons, the monitoring program should be continued even after the last bit of emergency assistance has been programmed. The emergency response agency must ensure it has the ability to stay abreast of changes and detect possible declines in the health or nutritional status of vulnerable groups served by the emergency program. Presumably, by the time a phase-out is being considered, morbidity and mortality rates should have long since stabilized. Some pockets of deep need may, however, continue. Relief agencies should maintain monitoring systems to detect these conditions or at least make use of others’ information. Resources should have been budgeted up-front for these continuing activities.

Generally the best monitoring device is open and frequent dialogue between the target population and agency monitors. Such dialogue requires an ongoing commitment – and frequent visits to the affected site – by the relief agency.

## Transition to development efforts

**Complexity of the continuum:** The “emergency continuum” is a useful theoretical model which describes the linear transition from emergency to relief to recovery and development. In reality, this transition from emergency relief activities to longer-term recovery efforts is a complex one, with overlapping phases and significant differences in beneficiary needs. Recovery efforts may have already been started in some locations affected by an emergency while, at the same time, emergency needs may be increasing once again in neighboring locations. Depending upon the scope of their mandates, some emergency response agencies may be called upon to program simultaneously free emergency relief distributions for some target groups, food-for-work or seeds and tools for the rehabilitation of other affected populations, and longer-term agricultural development schemes for still other groups.

The transition from relief to development efforts is both conceptually and pragmatically simpler if the emergency response actors have been operating under the guiding principle that emergency relief programs should be held to developmental standards; that is, relief programs should aim to minimize the vulnerabilities and maximize the capacities of the affected populations. Under such a principle, the affected population participates in the planning and implementation of the relief program, the program builds upon the skills of this population, and the members of the population are not viewed as simple victims but rather as program partners with much to offer.
A relief program that seeks to make use of developmental concepts in its work with the affected population would:

- build on the capacities of the survivors as well as addresses their vulnerabilities.
- identify the needs and capacities of the diverse groups of disaster survivors.
- include disaster survivors in the decision-making process.
- be accountable downwards – to the survivors – as well as upwards.
- base strategies on specific disaster – whether it has been triggered by natural events, those which develop slowly, or those caused by civil war or economic collapse.
- seek to decentralize control of the program.
- demonstrate a concern for sustaining the livelihoods of the survivors after the relief program has ended.
- build on, rather than undermine, local institutions.
- set sustainable standards for such services as health, education, and water so they can be continued after relief ends (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 1995).

Traditionally, relief and development efforts have been viewed as separate activities. Indeed, whole agencies have been created around what many are beginning to view as a false dichotomy. The work – the very mentality! – of emergency managers is often viewed by “the development set” as humanitarian at best and, at worst, “short-term and dependency-creating.” Conversely, concepts such as those of the IFRC listed above have too often been viewed as the jurisdiction of the “development” worker: anything with the tag “long-term” belongs to “the development set”, anything with the tag “short-term” is the purview of the “relief” worker.

This professional dichotomy has resulted in an unacceptable lack of coordination between these two “worlds” with the consequence that the transition from emergency relief to development has been problematic. Development workers have planned and implemented long-term programs without adequate consideration of the potential effects on their programs of likely emergency situations. Logistically-minded relief workers have responded as if the emergency were the only concern of the affected population, as if the beneficiaries possessed no history or future aspirations.

As managers begin to realize the limitations of this dichotomy, they should focus on the following question: “Do my efforts really aim to decrease the vulnerabilities and increase the capacities of the affected population?” Once this question guides the emergency response, the transition “from relief to development” should become less problematic.

Criteria for transition: Managers must be aware of changing conditions affecting the target population. Criteria which might guide the decision to phase-over to longer-term solutions include the following:

- **Degree of peace and stability:** A lack of peace and stability may clearly inhibit certain types of development activity; individuals are unlikely to make substantial material investments in an area where conflict may destroy those investments at any moment. Other forms of long-term efforts, however, may be possible (for example, leadership and/or conflict resolution training.)

- **Level of household food stocks and other assets:** Obtaining this information from program participants who may have a vested interest in ensuring that relief distributions continue is often problematic. This requires extensive monitoring and assessment of current conditions as well as a good relationship – based on trust – with the affected population.

- **Existence of a government disaster management strategy:** The existence of such a strategy may assist the relief/development community to better coordinate their efforts. Longer-term recovery activities may begin to be encouraged (rather than discouraged) by those with a vested interest in continuing the inflow of relief goods.
- **Degree of environmental degradation:** Severe environmental degradation may require that some aspects of the relief program continue for a longer period than would normally be considered desirable. If the level of degradation is such that once-productive people cannot carry on with their traditional livelihoods, a relief program may have to continue until the affected population can be moved and/or trained and otherwise employed.

- **Coping mechanisms of the affected population:** The degree to which the traditional coping mechanisms of the affected population have been destroyed/restored should be a major concern of emergency managers. Questions for assessing this include: Are traditional social security systems functional? Has the previous flow of remittances been restored? Do the people have access to their traditional food sources?

**Transfer of responsibility:** Transitional problems in meeting recurrent and replacement project costs represent major obstacles for international assistance agencies. When these agencies discontinue humanitarian assistance, the beneficiary communities and host/home governments are often caught unprepared to handle needs. International agencies should seek relationships with local counterparts; if local organizations are currently incapable of taking on responsibilities, then the international agencies should contribute to the development of these local agencies.

In addition, if emergency response agencies have involved the affected communities in planning and implementing the response, then the affected population should be better prepared to carry on these programs. This method of operating requires a concerted effort on the part of international agencies from the outset – that is, from the initial needs assessment – to identify actual or potential leaders and local institutions in the affected population and give high priority to ensuring that these leaders and organizations are capable of serving the real needs of the emergency-affected population. The effort should always be made to identify the institutions which existed prior to the emergency and then to assess their capacity to respond. The assessment team must give high priority to the identification of these local institutions and skills. (Of course, the determination must also be made as to whether or not these organizations and their leaders are, in fact, willing to serve the needs of their communities.)

In planning the transfer of responsibility for services, international agencies should bear in mind that it is the host government (assuming, of course, such an entity exists) that should take over responsibility for formal education, health care, water supply, and special programs designed to serve vulnerable groups. It is important, however, to involve local agencies and non-governmental organizations representing the affected populations in needs identification as well as in designing and implementing targeted programs of community development.

**Standards**

**Timing of phase-out:** Generally, the phase-out of free distributions should take place at the point when lives are no longer threatened or at risk, that is, when the emergency period is over and individuals can take back complete responsibility for their own families. Admittedly, free distributions to some targeted vulnerable groups may have to continue as is the case in any society with individuals who are incapable of seeing to their own needs. Humanitarian organizations should ensure that some form of sentinel surveillance system is in place to ensure that the mortality rate has declined to “normal” rates for the particular locale.

**Frequency of coordination meetings:** The phasing out of emergency relief requires open dialogue among the displaced population, the relief agencies, and the people who will carry on the recovery effort after the relief programs are ended. This dialogue must begin with initial needs assessment and continue throughout the response. During the initial period of needs and resources assessment, coordination meetings to share information on the emergency response may have to be conducted on a daily basis. Once response agencies have determined what their responses will be, weekly or biweekly meetings may be sufficient during the emergency relief phase to ensure that phase-out programs are understood and coordinated.

**References**


Theme THREE: Basic Assistance Needs

Topic 13 – Site Selection, Planning and Shelter

This paper was prepared by James Good of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:


Cyrus Mechkat and Hossein Sasrem–Kalali – with the Institute Universitaire d’Etudes du Developpement.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

The issues of site selection, planning and shelter for emergency settlement communities are so central to a comprehensive plan or emergency response that all other aspects of community life are affected by them. Early decisions regarding selection of sites and shelter options will have marked long–term effects on the provision of assistance as well as the development of the community.

Traditionally, in the international community, there has been considerable focus on the best practices for the selection and design of rural sites for emergency settlement. Much of this work has been done in the area of refugee camp planning which are the basis for many of the guidelines for humanitarian response in programatically similar areas including camp planning for the displaced, those fleeing natural disasters, and, to some extent, for temporary emergency response to storms and earthquakes, even in highly developed countries.
In the last few years, more emphasis has been placed on non–camp emergency situations, such as urban and rural disbursed settlements, and situations of urban mass shelter in times of conflict and urban flight. These situations may quickly become the norm rather than the exception for physical planners involved with emergency settlement. Therefore, guidelines and best practices for improving responses in these areas are needed.

**Principles**

1. Access to basic, contextually appropriate shelter is an essential human right. This applies to uprooted urban communities as well as to rural settlements although the contextually and culturally appropriate shelter standards may differ considerably.

   - Internationally recognized, quantitative standards can be established as useful minimums for site selection, planning and emergency shelter. Many of the existing standards are used for the design of refugee emergency camps and housing, and may be applied to all similar populations in need of emergency shelter and settlement regardless of the cause of their displacement or the legal status of the uprooted community.

   - In urban contexts, emergency settlement is often facilitated through the use of abandoned buildings or those otherwise available for mass housing. In this case the contextually appropriate minimum basic requirements should include other dimensions beyond those required for rural camps or new settlements, such as privacy, internal temperature, safety, exiting, and ventilation requirements.

In addressing these minimum standards, attention must also be given to the cultural acceptability of the designs and the various programs to be implemented.

2. Help decrease the vulnerability of communities needing shelter through provision or use of safe sites and sound structures.

   Structural assessment of buildings must be carried out to avoid use of unsound buildings (where better options exist) for mass shelter or individual family housing. Especially in urban areas suffering the effects of earthquake, flooding, or warfare, careful consideration must be given to the safety and utility of existing structures.

   Site selection for rural settlements must be similarly assessed. Some sites are naturally vulnerable such as steep slopes in landslide areas and low lying areas within known flood plains. Typically, this very vulnerability or unsuitability for human habitation is what makes these sites available as potential locations for emergency settlement. These inherently vulnerable sites must be avoided, even when the predicted duration of the emergency settlement is short–term. Typical site–related vulnerabilities include: prevalence of hazards such as landslides, flooding, or erosion; high prevalence of vector–borne diseases and other human–made risks such as pollution of various types.

3. Provide privacy and security for the smallest cohesive unit in the community, the family where possible, and in some cases for the individual.

   Individual family shelter is preferable to combined family shelter, which is preferable to mass shelter, which is preferable to no shelter at all. In cases of mass shelter, means for the provision of privacy must be found to protect family social structures and to protect the psychological well–being of the occupants. Provision must also be made for adequate public and community areas to be used for the benefit of the community as a whole.

4. Use long–term planning practices even when the settlement is expected to be temporary.

   Emergency settlements often remain occupied for long periods even though they may be designed for temporary use only. Services will be better provided and community systems will be better maintained if the settlement is planned as a town, rather than as a temporary refuge.

   “Camps should be seen as small new towns, with the potential for self–government and with a supporting economic base. The goal of self–reliance implies an independent free–standing community, dependent on its own resources in future endeavors. Land allocation becomes important, since all land not assigned to refugees becomes a future maintenance burden for the community. The more land deeded to refugees, the
5. Design emergency settlements with the community rather than for the community.

Planning input should come from the community itself, especially in those cases where the emergency settlement design and planning is to be managed by those unfamiliar with the community norms and social functioning of the group. Including community inputs will help to build self-reliance through community participation and will foster greater acceptance of the planning by the emergency settlement residents. Three likely areas for resident participation are:

- planning
- implementation (construction)
- repair and maintenance

6. Design site layout around a sanitation and services plan.

Site planning for rural settlements must be based on adequate sanitation and services planning. These elements are completely integral and cannot be designed well if viewed as being independent from the overall site planning process.

7. There should be designated environmental preservation areas – respected and protected from the effects of emergency settlement

Preserve ground cover and perimeter vegetation to the extent possible. Protect forest preserves from intensive fuelwood gathering and other foraging pressures. Especially in situations where public or preserve land has been made available for emergency settlement use, precautions must be taken to protect the original use restrictions on the land. In areas where there are environmental agencies or ministries, those bodies must be partners in planning for the development and use of the site.

8. The design of emergency settlements must be developed taking into account who comprises the uprooted community and how they live.

Site and shelter planning must respond to the particular culture of the people involved and the shelter types to which they are accustomed. Shelter is often thought of as a technical sector for which technical solutions must be found, but the basis for acceptability will depend as much on sociological factors as on technical functioning. Shelter for nomadic herders, for example, will not be appropriate for urban factory workers.

There are numerous examples of housing schemes which have been implemented at great cost, and ultimately abandoned or never accepted due to inappropriate siting, poor design, or complete ignorance or inattention to lifestyle and culture of the intended beneficiaries.

Best Practices

The following are the priority recommendations for implementing the principles of site selection, planning and shelter.

- Preventive measures

  - Implementing preventive and preparedness measures, including contingency planning, in disaster prone areas (both human-induced, and natural) can reduce the vulnerability of the communities to emergency conditions and will facilitate emergency operations after disaster. Preparations for shelter needs in view of possible emergencies include:

    - preparation of risk maps of the natural or human-made disaster prone areas
    - campaign to raise awareness of the possible emergency situation and appropriate community and personal strategies for mitigating against damage
    - organization of training programs for specialists (architects, urban planners, engineers) on emergency operational issues
• establishment of rapid appraisal techniques or protocols for assessing building safety for different building types in the region which might be useful for lodging displaced people

### Camps

Physical planners responding to situations of emergency settlement need to understand the difference in the usage of the terms camp and settlement. While a camp can be considered a short-term settlement, many practitioners use the term “camp” distinctly to mean “not a settlement.” While this usage is common and denotes a distinct difference of intent, there are numerous examples of camps which have existed for years and even decades. The underlying premises and attitudes toward settlements and camps vary in the following fundamental ways:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlements are planned to be durable, self-sufficient and an integral part of the local community, spatially and economically.</td>
<td>Camps are planned to address basic survival needs, local integration is a low priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They generally take more time to plan, for they must consider a broader range of issues, with a longer time horizon.</td>
<td>They may require less political support, because of their intended temporary nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They require long-term planning which is dependent on host country political support</td>
<td>They may require less political support, because of their temporary nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They require the involvement of development agencies</td>
<td>They involve relief and protection agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They assume the affected population is there to stay</td>
<td>They assume the affected population are short-term and temporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Goethert and Hamdi, 1988a, pp. 17–18)

For the practitioner, it is important to keep in mind the differences between political and operational or analytical reasons for determining whether to establish an emergency settlement or a camp. Even when the parameters in the table above are not met and operational or analytical analysis indicates that the population will be a true long-term settlement, there may be strong political reasons for the local community and/or the host government to insist on the status of a temporary camp. While this political reality exists, camp planners, designers, and shelter specialists must address the operational realities of the situation as well as the political.

### Site selection

Site selection for emergency settlement will depend largely on the nature of the emergency causing the original displacement or loss of shelter by the affected population. For non-repetitive, or low frequency disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and various types of industrial accidents, resettlement will be on or near the disaster site, with an immediate outlook for re-establishing the previous settlement.

For emergency situations resulting from habitual emergencies or for which the frequency of occurrence is actually increasing, new sites in less vulnerable areas or other means of mitigating against the recurrent hazards must be found. In some limited cases, such as the seasonal flooding which typically occurs in Bangladesh, sites may be improved by elevation of housing sites or other mechanical or engineering approaches carried out in situ.

For situations of conflict or other gross human rights violations resulting in the flight of persons from their habitual area of residence, whether internally displaced or refugees, negotiations for sites must be made with the controlling authorities in the areas or countries into which the displaced community flees. These situations are the most difficult since the humanitarian actions to “settle” those in flight are often not seen as positive developments, but rather as an unwanted burden by the local host community or government. In these cases, the political aspects discussed above may become the most serious issues.

Given the above constraints, the following general guidelines are useful for selecting sites when options exist, and for arguing for additional choices when no satisfactory option has been offered.

- **Area** – 30 sq.m./person gross site area.
- **Slope** – about 2% for good drainage.
Ground cover and native vegetation should be present in adequate amounts to control erosion from wind and water and to keep the formation of dust and mud to a minimum.

Free access to the site should be available for monitoring and for the delivery of assistance and administrative services to the community.

Sites should be elevated above low-lying areas subject to seasonal flooding or cut off from assistance by flooding.

Sites made environmentally unhealthy due to radiation contamination, chemical or biological pollution, or other toxic sources should not be accepted.

Sites should have reasonable access to water and, where possible, should have independent self-supplied water in suitable quality and quantity for daily use (approximately 20 liters/person/day).

A workable sanitation scheme must be implementable on the site selected.

Special care must be taken to protect the environment from the negative effects of emergency settlement. The concept of environment in this sense must be expanded beyond the usual considerations of air, land, and water to include the built environment as well. In urban situations the impact on infrastructure (especially fuel, electricity, water, and sanitation systems) may be great and programs of response must address these issues as well as those of individual and mass shelter.

### Appropriate specialist profiles

Urban planners, environmental engineers, sociologists, architects, and engineers with appropriate backgrounds and with a clear understanding of environmental impacts of emergency settlements may all be needed for their technical and management expertise. The exact profile needed will depend on the nature of the emergency and the particular area and context that the emergency settlement population finds itself.

For example, a survey of damaged buildings to determine their safety for use as mass shelters may require a structural engineer or architect. Provision of shelter materials to dispersed populations may require sociologists and logisticians. Planning for self-built shelter in rural areas might require input from an environmental engineer. In all cases, however, expatriate specialists should only be used if required. If they are necessary, expatriate resources are best used when working with local specialists with a knowledge of local building norms and procedures.

### Design approach

The planning and design process for the emergency settlement should be progressive in its approach. Designing for an ability to upgrade or improve shelter responses over time will mitigate against unforeseen political and social pressures on the evolution of the settlement. Such an approach is designed to:

- permit better control over development of the settlement over time.
- reduce unnecessary costs in the emergency phase.
- respond better to long-term needs should the settlement remain in place for an extended period.

The emergency settlement should be able to adapt to radical change, either through incorporation of more people on an emergency basis or the ability to disappear with minimum detrimental effect on the local environment. Therefore the design process should plan for change – especially growth of the settlement population.

### Community input

Especially in rural situations where settlement is likely to be long-term, one of the primary inputs from the emergency settlement community can be the construction of their own shelter. It is the view of Habitat, for example, that emergency shelter is most productively self-built, with external involvement best limited to enabling the community to meet this challenge (Habitat, 1995).
For the designer of emergency settlements the most important questions should be:

- How can the self–build process be best facilitated?
- What materials have proven to be suitable for self–built shelter programs?
- How can environmental degradation best be avoided in self–build programs?
- What technical assistance is needed?
- How should training best be organized?

Realistic determination of the amount of input required and or desired from the emergency community will depend on the situation and the extent of needs of the community – both physically and mentally. Emergency conditions will exist in some extreme circumstances where the primary necessity is to provide shelter and other basic services in the most efficient and fastest way possible – with or without community input. This situation, however, is much less common than generally perceived; and in almost all disasters resulting in emergency settlement, there are many useful ways to incorporate input from the community. Not to do so in all but the most extreme situations is to devalue the ability of the community to cope, to provide disincentives for positive development, and to promote dependency on outside aid.

In the past, community input has largely been seen by physical planners as a source of unskilled labor. It has not been unusual in refugee situations, for example, to hire the refugees to build roads and other infrastructure, and certainly to construct their own shelter as discussed above. What is needed is a larger involvement in the actual planning and allocation of shelter assistance, and representation from the community leadership (where such structures exist) in the decision–making process. In such instances the physical planner may have to be a group facilitator as well as designer in order to keep an inclusive process such as this on track and on time.

### Materials and prototype shelters

The use of wood for building shelter, along with collection of firewood, is a major cause of environmental destruction related to emergency settlement. The energy issue is discussed in more detail in the topic 16 Emergency Settlement paper “Household Needs”. Even in situations where prefabricated shelters or plastic sheeting is provided for emergency shelter, local deforestation is often a result of collecting wood for building purposes.

In post–emergency situations, prefabricated housing is often proposed as a quick and superior emergency response. However, one must use extreme care in injecting completely alien technology and or forms of shelter into emergency settlement situations. Such interventions often are too expensive to be sustainable, and are often ill–suited to the use or environment in which they are placed.

“Obviously, the pursuit of improvements in housing technology is an important and worthwhile activity. The various research programs should be encouraged and the results disseminated as widely as possible. The point to be made here is simply that the solution to the housing problem for lowest–income people will not be found on the drawing board. The gap between standard housing and what lowest income people can afford is simply too great. The real benefits in improved technology will flow to people further up the income curve” (Van Huyk, 1971, pp. 9–10).

Tents or other structures should be produced from locally available materials where possible. Tents are problematic for medium and longer–term use as they are not very suitable for upgrading or expansion and also often constitute a severe fire risk. Tents do not offer much protection from the elements in harsh climates (although military style “winterized” tents which offer an improved insulation rating are available for cold climates.) In very cold climates, shelters should be constructed from materials with a high thermal insulating value.

### Rural dispersed settlements

Assessment of shelter options for populations that have been dispersed into a large region or area is a very different exercise from the selection of a single site or sites for a refugee or displaced persons’ camp. In many such cases, the displaced persons move in with relatives or other willing hosts who can take them in (at least for the short–term). In situations where the cause of the emergency situation is short lived, no outside assistance may be required. In situations where the initial cause of displacement proves to be long–term, assistance programs may be necessary for the emergency displaced population, for the hosts or for both.
One solution may be the distribution of shelter packages. Pre-portioned or formula-rationed packages of building materials of various types may be distributed on a per family basis to those requiring new or replacement shelter. This system has been used widely in rural situations especially in Africa for refugee populations as well as for repatriation and resettlement programs.

In many places around the world, such systems have been implemented to assist local populations in replacing housing destroyed by natural disasters such as storms and earthquakes. In these situations, assessment of the local housing stock, material, and construction technology is made, and a simplified “package” or collection of building materials is distributed to the families qualifying for assistance. Distribution may be based on a per family basis, adjusted for the size of the family, magnitude of need as illustrated by total holdings of the family, and in some cases based on the size of the structures that have been lost. In any case, an important aspect of such distributions is that they are seen to be “fair” and non-biased, and that they actually serve the target group of those most needy. All such programs, due to the relatively high value of the commodities distributed and their durability (non-food items), are subject to corruption and misapplication by certain sectors for profit rather than humanitarian assistance.

### Repair packages

Especially in situations of large-scale conflict where shared homes may also be war-damaged, repair programs may be required to meet the shelter needs of both the “host” and “guest” populations. These types of programs are also common after storms, earthquakes, and for returnees to war-torn areas and villages.

**In post-storm situations** the simplest and most expedient repair packages consist primarily of plastic sheeting with which to cover damaged roofs. Subsequent, and more sophisticated repair packages often consist of corrugated metal roof sheeting, lumber suitable for rafters, and roofing nails.

**Post-earthquake** repair packages often contain the same lightweight roofing materials as those provided after storms. The failure of heavy roofs is often a central issue in repair as well as in mitigation against future earthquake damage. In addition, some schemes include cement and steel reinforcing bars for the repair and retrofitting of walls with a reinforced “ring beam” at the top perimeter of the walls.

**War damaged areas** can often be helped through the provision of repair packages as well. The first priority in areas where large numbers of people are living in damaged urban structures (and in smaller villages as well) is to stop penetration of wind and rain into the structure. In these situations, plastic sheeting for roof and window repairs along with the required materials for attaching them to the damaged structures are often provided. These additional materials may be nails, tacks, or staples and thin battens or other wood strips to be used as cleats for the attachment of the plastic sheeting. In colder climates, additional provision must also be made for heating and insulating damaged structures.

“During sieges, most people from within the enclave who lose their homes will take shelter with friends and relatives. Only when housing losses reach more than about 25% will there be a need to find other forms of shelter. If building materials can be imported by relief agencies, it may be important to set up a program to distribute materials to repair houses that have received minor damages. The most useful materials may be thick plastic sheeting, corrugated roof sheets, wooden beams, and wood planks. It may be possible to purchase cement locally (it is normally a restricted item and is difficult to import during the siege) and distribute it to help repair concrete buildings. Salvaging materials from damaged buildings can be one of the best sources of materials for repairing homes; the government authorities should set up a formal salvage program to strip damaged buildings and ensure that the people who need the materials most get them before scavengers take them away” (Cuny 1994, p. 156).

### Distribution of shelter materials in urban situations

Distribution of repair materials is often more difficult than the distribution of food since the materials are bulkier, more expensive, and importantly, may not be allowed passage as humanitarian assistance in areas of conflict. The following short account from Sarajevo illustrates this difficulty.

“MSF has begun a building rehabilitation program as implementing partner for UNHCR. The program includes rehabilitation of the old school building (500 persons) and the gymnasium (300 persons) to move the 800 refugees out of the new school building (so school can start). The plan includes the construction of mezzanine floors in the gym and other rooms which allow the increased efficiency of the space. The plan also outlines collective kitchens in
several areas in the buildings utilizing wood burning stoves also constructed by MSF. In addition the rehab program plans to adapt two rooms in the old cinema to accommodate 250 persons. Additional buildings are also being looked at throughout the town. The difficulty and setback to the program is the reluctance of Bosnian Serb authorities to allow passage of material which is not considered humanitarian assistance, such as cement” (Lorance, 1993, p. 4).

### Urban mass shelter – determination of capacity

“When refugees from outside seek protection within the enclave, it may be difficult to lodge them with families, so public shelters will have to be found. In most cases, the most appropriate forms of shelter are public buildings such as schools, unused government buildings and public sports stadia. This is because those buildings will offer some protection from shelling and will have facilities for water and sanitation, even though they may be minimal. In the winter they will be easier to heat and can retain heat longer than many other types of structures” (Cuny 1994, p. 157).

The types of buildings most often available for (and suitable) for this type of use are:

- abandoned factories
- warehouses
- gymnasia and sports stadia
- schools
- government-owned hostels or flats
- hospitals and sanitoria
- churches and other religious structures

The decision to use such structures depends primarily on the tenure or ownership of the structures and their capacity to shelter large numbers of people. The determination of capacity of a large structure for use as emergency shelter should be based on assessing the adequacy of several factors:

- **area** – 3.5 sq. m. minimum floor area per person (the density may be increased by use of multiple level bunks or mezzanines in some cases)

- **sanitation** facilities

- **exit ways**, stairs, corridors and other physical constraints to emergency exiting in case of fire or other emergency

- administrative and logistical ability to provide other services such as food, water, and basic health care in the structure selected

In cases of extreme emergency, the most critical of the above factors is simply gross area of the structure as this will have a direct effect on the comfort and health of the occupants. In the use of mass shelter, a separate issue to be considered, aside from the effect of the structure on the inhabitants, is the effect of the inhabitants on the structure. Preparation for use of a building or facility in a way other than intended by design (that is, for mass shelter) may require modification to the structure itself or removal or relocation of moveable assets and furnishings.

“When we worked in China, we met school board officials who had allowed schools to be used in 1992 – in the worst floods for 200 years. The families wrecked the chairs, desks, etc. so the policy now is to have a specific room into which all furniture is placed before the headmaster hands it over to the Civil Defense Office” (Davis, 1995).

### Determination of safety

Inspection of large structures for use as emergency shelter must be made by qualified engineers or architects who can pass professional judgment on the soundness and safety of damaged structures. This can be a very complicated task and the decision to prohibit the use of (or demolish) unsound buildings in the midst of great need for shelter is a difficult one.
Generally speaking, buildings that are a public safety hazard, even though they may be attractive to homeless shelter seekers, should be demolished. This must be carried out in a safe and efficient way, so that the materials from the damaged structures can be salvaged for use in repairing other damaged but still structurally sound buildings.

- **Provision of privacy and security in mass shelter situations**

Mass shelters should be provided with some form of temporary prefabricated partitioning which has good acoustical insulation properties. Such dividers can then help to transform the large areas into a number of smaller “plots” or accommodations which will be beneficial in allowing the occupants to have some control over their own space. This type of subdivision also will provide some privacy and overall reduction of stress induced by continuous noise from the larger group such as crying babies and other noises generated by children.

- **Individual security**

One of the primary needs of people in mass shelter is that of security both for their person as well as for their possessions. To meet this need some demarcation of the space will be required. Sexual assault of women is a particularly great concern for which protective measures must be taken.

- **Sanitation services**

Reuse or adapt existing municipal water service and sewer systems to the extent possible. In these situations it will usually not be possible to provide family/private toilet facilities, so extra care must be taken in the maintenance and cleaning of communal toilet and bathing facilities.

- **Urban shelter exchange**

The term “urban shelter exchange,” as used in this paper, describes an approach to providing housing. During armed conflict, forced realignment of state borders, or forced policies of ethnic cleansing and consolidation, populations (especially urban) are forced to move within or between urban areas; the families, in essence, exchange housing with other groups who have similarly been forced to vacate their homes.

One example of this was the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 which internally displaced nearly 40% of the entire population of the island (some 200,000 Greek Cypriots and 50,000 Turkish Cypriots). “A large number of the more than 7,000 housing units, vacated by Turkish Cypriots in the process of reverse forced migration, were gradually occupied by the Greek−Cypriots displaced from the north (Zetter 1987:1992; Kliot and Mansfield 1994). The Government institutionalized this process by establishing a sophisticated registration system of all the properties. Temporary occupancy licences were granted to regularise the situation and to ensure the inalienable rights of the Turkish Cypriot owners should they return” (Zetter, 1995, p. 61).

“On the Turkish Cypriot side a similar process of occupation and rehabilitation took place. Given the vastly different numbers involved in the transfer of populations ... there was far less pressure to adopt emergency solutions. The rehousing process was conducted more systematically with well developed administrative procedures (Morvaridi, 1993; Kliot and Mansfield, 1994). Uprooted villagers were often resettled in their original groups. Housing (and land) was allocated on the basis of family size and a points system in order to compensate the loss of immovable property from the south” (Zetter, 1995, p. 61).

- **Constraints in Shelter: Differences in Refugee and Natural Disaster Contexts**

The following table helps identify important differences in shelter issues between natural disasters and refugee influxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints in Shelter</th>
<th>Shelter in Refugee Context</th>
<th>Shelter in Natural Disaster Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Can be indeterminate</td>
<td>Final end in sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Constraints</td>
<td>Heavily politicized</td>
<td>Political need to satisfy in a major disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to improvise own shelter</td>
<td>Applies, but scale of event may cause “environmental shadow.”</td>
<td>Applies, particularly for low−income groups in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options for shelter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a) tents
b) ex-buildings a), b), c), d) All options normally in place
c) improvised shelters
d) voluntary evacuations
e) donor provided shelter

Links to existing housing & construction

Function of shelter

| a) Protection of property/Storage of property | a), b), c), d), f) All options |
| b) Territorial claims to land | a), b), c), d), f) All options |
| c) Place receipt services | |
| d) Emotional value | |
| e) Transition to full-scale reconstruction | |
| f) Protection from elements | |

**Source: Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies**

**Standards**

While the application of humanitarian standards are often called for in the provision of sites and shelters for emergency settlement populations, the agreement on such standards has proven more difficult in this area than for other sectors such as health and nutrition. This is largely due to the great variance among cultures and in the ways people live and build. Even so, it is clear that there are, in fact, minimum standards that can be quantified and used as tools to monitor the adequacy of shelter responses for emergency communities. These standards should correspond to:

- local conditions
- variance in economic situations and constraints
- local building materials (resources and practices)
- phase of the emergency (minimum acceptable for survival at the earliest stages and improved performance and standards in successive phases)

In emergency settlement situations, setting standards is also difficult because there is almost always an underlying sense that the emergency response may become the basis for a long-term or even permanent settlement.

Adherence to minimum physical standards on the basis of promoting health, psychological and social well-being has long been a widely held notion by physical planners. The fact that these standards must vary from situation to situation makes them less usable. There are still many practitioners who argue that standards cannot be drawn up for all situations, especially in light of emergency situations where standards are often unmet due to the short-term demand being greater than short-term supply of shelter materials and options. The following short statement sums up the dilemma as it exists for the physical planner:

“Revision to the codes and standards poses a dilemma for policy makers – the classic dilemma experienced in all planning systems. To accommodate the pressure of rapidly increased demand by refugees [or other affected populations], one response is to reduce standards... On the other hand, there is a long term price to pay in terms of degraded built and natural environments and their impact on the physical and social well-being of refugees and their hosts. This is an argument for holding standards or at least to evaluate carefully the long term consequences of not doing so” (Zetter, 1995, p. 65).

The issue of standards was also raised at a major workshop on emergency shelter issues. The following is the summary of a group deliberations report relating to standards from “Group B – Shelter Coordination” (UNHCR, 1994)
- Encourage Standardization

- UNHCR and ICRC should act as principal agencies and their roles will include enforcement of minimum standards taking into consideration geographical location (final destination), life span/time scale of shelter and ease of transportation of shelter/shelter materials (compact or bulky).

- UNHCR should develop pre-negotiated contracts for key emergency shelter items to save time.

- NGOs and other organisations should assume supporting positions and their roles would be to provide input and information about local conditions. Manufacturers/suppliers would also be involved by providing their expertise.

- Key suppliers should be involved in the development of new relief items, prior to the conflict (if possible).

The following table of “rule of thumb” standards has been compiled for UNHCR – Programme and Technical Support Services (PTSS).

**Rule of Thumb Parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>minimum 3 m above water table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 sq. m total site area per person minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Supply</td>
<td>100 m maximum walking distance to water point from any shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–20 liters per person per day (see Environmental Health topic 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minimum of 1 standpipe tap per 200–250 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrines</td>
<td>between 6 and 50 m from user’s shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minimum 1 seat per 20 people for public latrines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 m distance from water source (30 m preferable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>3.5 sq.m. floor area/person minimum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Standard Damage Categories for War – Damaged Urban Buildings**

| Categories 1–2 | Minor damage resulting from small arms fire such as broken windows |
| Categories 3–4 | Partial destruction resulting from shell damage |
| Categories 5–6 | Totally burned out or destroyed |

There are other standards which might usefully be compiled for non-camp situations. Some of these might be:

- minimum maintained temperature inside buildings (particularly where buildings are served by central heating systems in cold climates)

- safe (non–hazardous) heating/cooking stoves and fuel where central systems do not exist or are not working

- safe emergency exits (adequate dimensions and safety of hallways, stairs, doors, etc.) in case of fire, shelling, or other cause for emergency evacuation

**References**
Davis, Ian, 1995, personal correspondence.


UNHCR. Summary of Proceedings – First International Workshop on Improved Shelter Response and Environment for Refugees.


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**Topic 14 – Environmental Health: Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, and Vector Management**

*This paper was prepared by James Good of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:*

- **Eduardo Perez** – is Technical Director for Engineering and Technology of the Environmental Health Project of the US Agency for International Development in Washington, DC.

- **Claude Rakotomalala** – is a senior sanitary engineer for the Professional and Technical Support Services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

- **Gary Shook, MPH, Sc.D.** – has been a health specialist for the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand, and is currently at Boise State University in Idaho.

- **Richard Swenson** – is a co–founder of Public Health International in Roseburg, Oregon, US.

*This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.*

**Principles**
1. Environmental health planning must be held as the highest priority in the design of and programming for emergency settlements. No amount of curative health measures can offset the detrimental effects of poor environmental health planning for communities in emergency settlements. Well-integrated environmental health programs, which include the provision of sanitation, water, and drainage systems, play a major role in protecting the health of those in emergency settlements.

2. Environmental health begins with site selection. Site selection must be an integral part of the overall planning process. When multiple sites are available – even when none of these are deemed desirable – the criteria for selecting the best one must include the potential for good environmental health systems. Site planning must be integral with the environmental health plan, including the collection, disposal and treatment of excreta and other liquid and solid wastes. The physical characteristics of the site (vegetation, topography, nature of the soil and subsoil, and other attributes) together with the socio-cultural profile of the beneficiary community are determinant factors which must be taken into account. To expect that sanitation issues can be addressed at a later stage (once emergency settlement has become “permanent” and other basic systems are in place) is a false hope, which has often led to complex problems and the expansion, rather than the control, of emergency situations.

Access to adequate sources of potable water is a key component of site selection for emergency settlements. The most desirable water source is ground water, which is often more desirable than surface water, which in turn is more desirable than rain water. Trucking water from remote locations should be considered only as a temporary measure only unless it is demonstrated that it is the most practical and least expensive method to provide adequate quality and quantity of water to the settlement.

3. Access to a minimally-acceptable amount of safe drinking water is a basic human right. Accepted, quantifiable standards should be applied in the provision of water to emergency settlements. However, a universal pre-determination of such quantities is not appropriate for all situations. Factors such as climate, prevalent diseases, and types of facilities needing water will all affect the basic planning criteria. Proposed values for different climatic situations are listed in the Standards section of this paper.

4. In cases of extreme emergency where minimum standards cannot be adequately met, a large quantity of reasonably safe water is preferable to a smaller amount of relatively pure water. Especially in emergency conditions, water quantity will be more important than water quality. In the most extreme case polluted water is preferable to no water at all. In less severe situations it is advisable to focus quickly on provision of an adequate quantity of water well in advance of upgrading water quality, especially in cases where it is possible to manage good sanitation programs as adequate excreta sanitation is the best way to control water borne diseases.

5. Water sources must be protected from pollution. The impact on the local or regional water source (watershed areas of rivers, lakes and aquifers) must be considered in the planning for an emergency settlement. Runoff from the emergency settlement site including waste water and sewage must not pollute water supplies. Once a water source has been selected, direct access to it should be strictly prohibited except for authorized persons only. A means of protection against access (and therefore contamination) must immediately be installed. Some options are; fencing, cut-off trenches or other drainage works to protect water sources from site run-off, vegetation planting, guards, and public information along with enforcement.

When using ground water, the question of how to raise the water is the main issue. There are numerous alternatives for this operation depending upon resources. It is better to expend resources to obtain water in the most reliable and sanitary manner than to pay to clean it up after it is contaminated in the raising process.

6. Environmental health planning should be designed with input from the emergency settlement community. In emergencies the general rule regarding environmental health systems is “act now – improve later”. This is a strategy put into place under emergency conditions in order to avoid, for example, the rapid pollution of an entire site with human excreta. Nevertheless, issues related to cultural norms, traditions and religion(s) of the resident community are still essential. Environmental health strategies, to be effective, should be tied to cultural norms and traditions. As such, the environmental health program should be designed with input from and understanding by the emergency settlement community. Failure to do so may lead to a disruption, or failure, of the environmental health program and an increase in the very health hazards that were targeted by the initial response.

It is recognized that emergency settlements are atypical communities which may require services different from the experience of the residents. The emergency nature of such settlements may also limit wider input. For example, nomads without knowledge of pit latrines may, nonetheless, be served best by their use of them.
in high-density camps. Urbanites from developed countries will have to use non-flush facilities until damaged municipal systems are restored to service. It is imperative that public information and education campaigns accompany the introduction of systems which are unfamiliar to the community. In such cases there must be a distinction made between those aspects of the water supply and excreta disposal systems which are simply different from those previously used by the community and those which are inappropriate as emergency responses.

7. Environmental health programs must insure an adequate number and location of sanitation facilities, solid waste disposal points, and water distribution points. Sanitation, waste disposal, and water distribution systems within the emergency settlement community must be equitable for all residents. This is achieved through installation of an appropriate number of suitably located; excreta disposal facilities, such as toilets, latrines or defecation fields; waste pick-up points, and water distribution points. Coordinated scheduling of water distribution, where required, and dissemination of public information to the community regarding the environmental health service facilities of the settlement may also be necessary.

8. Both local and technical expert advice must be sought for planning and implementing water and sanitation systems. Many of the issues surrounding the suitability of water supply and sanitation are technical in nature and require expert technical advice. Expert local knowledge of the area, the people and their traditional customs is also essential. While expatriate technical advice may be required for development of new, rural sites, it may be generally presumed in urban situations that those involved in the day-to-day operation of the local urban water and sanitation systems can provide the best expertise, as they have intimate knowledge of the workings of these systems. It is essential that consultants, advisors, or others leading the environmental health programs have people, management and administrative skills as well as technical skills.

9. Good water, sanitation, and hygiene education practices in emergencies should be no different from those in “regular” development programs. The basics of community education and information campaigns are the same regardless of the “emergency” element of the community’s situation. Those practices of personal hygiene which are promulgated in developmental campaigns aimed at reducing morbidity are exactly the same as those recommended for emergency settlements. The only difference is that the results of failure to change behaviors in the community will be far worse for an emergency settlement community than for a “normal” developing community. Hygiene education and information programs, where required, are at the center of environmental health management. The aim of all such programs must focus on changing behavior of the community members in their homes as well as in the community.

Best Practices

Overall Approach to Environmental Health Management

Environmental health provides the best approach to the technical issues of water provision and excreta disposal. Control of the environmental pathways in which pathogens and other agents may harm the inhabitants of emergency settlements must be maintained through an integrated and effective environmental health management system. All services that protect the settlement inhabitants from environmentally-borne disease are interrelated and must be managed in an integrated way, giving priority to those services most needed but without exclusion of the others. Provision of potable water; adequate shelter; suitable sewage and waste disposal; protection from vectors, pests, and damaging air pollutants; delivery of clean food stocks and protection from noise and physical hazards must all be coordinated in an integrated manner which optimizes health.

For more than two decades, it was thought that the best approach to “environmental health” (usually not using this terminology, however) was to combine environmental sanitation and water programs. In fact, especially where resources were lacking, priority was given in most cases to water at the expense of environmental sanitation. Also, the users’ willingness to participate in sanitation programs was traditionally very low. Making this even more difficult was the fact that there was very little political will for the funding of such activities, since sanitation activities were never very highly regarded.

It is therefore recommended that environmental health planning be an integrated system of activities. The management of sanitation, and especially excreta management systems, must be treated as a priority topic in its own right and not simply as an add-on component of a water supply program. Sanitation – although integrated with the whole program – must have its own dedicated resources and time-frame if the best results in the overall environmental health system are to be achieved.
The following points are the key recommendations for achieving implementation of the principles of environmental health.

1. Getting it done

The first activity is to take a skills and knowledge inventory of the affected population. Teachers, public health officials, and business leaders often provide excellent resources to be used in the promotion of an environmental health program. Identify local leaders who will be able to introduce the program to the community or to gain acceptance of the program by the community. Explain to people that the point of such programs is primarily for the protection of the community, especially for those most vulnerable to environmentally–borne disease and infection, i.e. the elderly and the young. When it is understood that programs are for the benefit of the children, then community support should be forthcoming. Organize the community into blocks or groups to be responsible for their own areas.

2. Education programs

Before designing any emergency environmental health education program, one must first determine what is important to that particular community. Only after this step can one engage the community in a meaningful environmental health education program. It doesn’t work to teach people things they don’t care about. Leadership will develop and the local community will teach themselves only if they are motivated by interest or because the subject satisfies a felt need.

The outside expert can act as a trainer of trainers and a catalyst for environmental health education programs. Education is central to many aspects of managing the day–to–day functioning of an emergency settlement, and this education must be carried out simultaneously in many ways. For example, if people want to learn English, teach them English, but use environmental health topics for reading material as well.

“General hygiene, as a component of environmental sanitation ... involves specific considerations. As a matter of fact, habitat hygiene, food hygiene and personal hygiene, while being integral parts of environmental sanitation, are more a matter of health education and community sensitization than of sanitary engineering as such.

It is nevertheless worth underlining that education in general and health education in particular are to be sustained by visible and concrete activities in the field – what sanitary engineering precisely aims at. As for community participation, it will remain only an interesting concept as long as the community is not provided with the necessary resources – human, institutional and material – for members to be able to assume their responsibilities in this domain” (Rakotomalala, 1994, p. 41).

3. Vector Control

The control of disease vectors such as mosquitoes, flies, and rats and fleas is an important part of an environmental health approach to protecting community members from disease. There has been a tendency to use poisons for the control of all of these vectors. Especially in emergency situations, the rationale exists for using those programs or approaches with the fastest short–term results. The problems with these approaches are twofold. First, they are dangerous to the human population as well as to the vectors they target, and mistakes and accidents often occur in the application of the poisons. Secondly, even when short–term successes in the control of vectors are achieved, it is common that longer–term environmental control approaches are not put into place. The result over time, therefore, is to endlessly resort to short–term measures.

Plainly, in an environmental health approach to vector control, the environment must be manipulated for vector proliferation to be controlled on a lasting basis. Managing the environment in this way, however, takes more work and is not as quickly rewarding as insecticide spraying operations. Community involvement is also a prerequisite for the success of such activities and community members must be sensitized to the value of such programs.

4. Site drainage

Drainage from newly developed sites for emergency settlement is a critical aspect of environmental health which must be considered at the time the initial site development decisions are being taken. If left unattended, the lack of forethought about natural drainage patterns will result in impassable roads during rainy periods; stagnating ponds and pools which present many problems including mosquito breeding habitat, unsanitary
latrines and other facilitates; and the general advancement of disease throughout the community. Drainage must be assured around all water using or water producing facilities such as washing/laundering areas, water supply points, latrines, schools, clinics, markets, and individual family shelters. Families can and will generally provide their own small scale drainage network around their own houses for the control of limited amounts of water, however the provision of network drainage systems into which these small drains can lead must be planned out ahead of time as it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to move individual, family, and community structures once they are set in place. Especially in situations where there is a marked wet season/dry season cycle, emergency settlement populations may not be able to predict the seasonal increase in drainage problems when they begin to settle in a previously unoccupied site (these sites are often unoccupied precisely because they are difficult to use, are prone to seasonal flooding, or are inconvenient for development for some other reason).

The water drained away from heavily used facilities may be removed to surface water sources such as rivers, lakes, or the sea. In cases where, due to topography, it is not possible to drain wastewater to safe areas away from the community, it may be necessary to use soak pits or soakaways. These are simply drainage areas with gravel beds or other porous material which are designed to facilitate the soaking of water into the ground. The planting of water−thirsty trees such as bananas or papayas at the edges of these soakaways (in those regions in which they thrive) has also been found to be extremely beneficial.

In areas of high rainfall and relatively flat sites, the improper construction of roads often aggravates poor drainage systems. Due to the muddy conditions during rainy periods the roads are typically elevated on a compacted base to raise them out of the mud and to allow year−round vehicular access. When this is done without adequate consideration for site drainage, the roads act as dams holding water within the network of elevated roads. This causes water to stay longer and increases problems for the developed areas of the site. Overall site drainage must be considered before the improvement of access roads so that culverts or other drainage devices can be installed as the road improvements are developed. To correct problems afterwards is much more expensive and disruptive to the overall functioning of the community.

Water Provision

5. Setting and Meeting Water Supply Standards

The priority goal of water provision systems is to get a large supply of reasonably clean water to the emergency settlement community for drinking (potable water), cooking, washing, laundering and other uses. The determination of “reasonably clean” and “large amounts” are to be found in the Standards section of this paper and in the following general discussion. The supply of potable water must be considered as a component of total water supply to emergency settlements. However, where a distinction is made, the listing under the Standards section of this paper is proposed as a useful guideline for quality and quantity standards for various situations.

6. Treatment

Surface water should always be assumed to be contaminated. Except when settlements are located upstream from sources of contamination, treatment strategies are a major consideration. In some cases infiltration galleries, using natural sand and soil as filters, provide adequate protection from mass pathogenic concentrations. Chemical contamination may require activated charcoal, coagulation, precipitation/filtration or other chemical treatment systems. In any case, sedimentation should be the minimum treatment for surface water, followed by chlorination or other disinfection. Depending on the raw water characteristics, it might also be advisable to install coagulation/flocculation basins above the settling tanks. In this instance plans must also be made for the disposal of the sludge resulting from these basins.

“The objective of any treatment system is to bring the water to an acceptable level of clarity so that the chemical used to disinfect it can be as effective as possible. The overall aim of the process is to kill pathogens in the water and thus minimize the risk of transmitting disease through the water supply. Particulate matter can encourage the growth of bacteria and protect pathogens against the effects of disinfection. The simple chlorination of cloudy (turbid) water, for example, will require more chlorine than clear water and even then the water may still not be safe to drink. Water treatment, therefore, aims first to remove pathogens and particulate matter by mechanical and biological means (settlement, filtration, etc.) before relatively clear water can be finally treated by disinfection” (Chalinder, 1994, p. 40).

Even when the water source is good quality, chlorination is recommended, especially in cases where water is collected at communal tapstands and carried and or stored in containers. The point of such chlorination is to
achieve a level of active chlorine available in the water at the collection point so that it can disinfect the (often) contaminated containers. The provision of clean water is useless if in the final instance it is contaminated by poor hygiene practices such as dirty water containers. This illustration also points out the need to maintain public awareness and education programs relating to environmental health issues.

7. Protection of Water sources

Prevent human and animal access to surface water sources. Sources should be fenced and protected by means of drainage ditches against contamination by site run−off water. The specific nature of the protection required for the water source will depend on the configuration of the water shed as well as other factors. In addition to fencing and ditching, vegetative plantings, catch dams and terraces may also be employed. Any communal activities such as swimming, laundering, bathing, etc. should take place downstream if using river sources, or at designated areas if using other large surface water sources such as lakes.

Hand dug wells should be properly covered, provided with drainage facilities, and fenced. Where water is collected by means of a bucket and rope, users should not be authorized to dip their own buckets into the well, but rather, should use a communal bucket instead.

8. Delivery and Distribution Systems – “Hardware”

Hand pumps may be preferred in smaller settlements (<5,000 people) with modest densities. Pumping water to overhead storage tanks with at least a 6−12 hour reserve capacity is usually best done in concert with piped distribution to designated tapstands or distribution points.

When long−distance hauling of water is required due to lack of other more economical and sustainable options, lorries with bladders or water tankers can be used to transport water. In order to use maximum truck capacity, metallic tanks with baffles are typically a better option. When transporting water, additional issues such as the following must be considered:

- number, capacity and durability of tankers
- length and safety of travel routes
- adequacy or roads (and bridges) for sustained heavy usage
- road maintenance and repair
- installation and maintenance of off/on−loading facilities
- organization of water disinfection within the carrying containers while they are being filled to ensure proper retention time and mixing
- contingency plans for logistical failure or breakdowns

For emergency settlements requiring development of new water systems, centralized water supply systems should be installed comprised of a pumping station, storage facilities, chlorination system, and a gravity distribution system through a series of standposts (one for approximately each 250 users.)

A basic part of the water delivery system is the container in which water is collected from the public access point (a tapstand or other water point). As such this element of the system must also be adequately planned for and not left to chance. Appropriate containers (preferably jerry cans or other durable, easily cleaned containers with tight fitting lids) are to be provided to each household for the collection and storage of water. A combination of 10 and 20 liter jerry cans may be considered adequate for these purposes.

Storage requirements for individuals in emergency settlements may be considered to be on average 20 liters/household/day. The target for individuals should be 10 liters/person/day as the ultimate goal. Low storage in houses is important to minimize long−term storage where water can become contaminated or result in mosquito breeding.

Once total requirement standards are met, equitable distribution is almost always problematic: corruption, control of resources by those with social status, or military power, and simple mismanagement due to lack of training and public education all contribute to poor distribution. The “software” component of the system should include (among other things), a water committee whose members are designated by the larger emergency settlement community. Such committees should have the full power to recruit, post or dismiss water attendants, to set up tariff and collection systems as appropriate, to decide upon the use of available resources, etc. Through this committee, responsibility for managing the system can be gradually transferred to the community. Sufficient outside technical assistance to insure proper maintenance and support may be required if it is beyond the means of the emergency settlement community.

10. Monitoring Water Distribution and Quality

The minimum quality monitoring parameter for a water supply system for an emergency settlement should address pathogenic or indicator bacteria. In urbanized areas, a strong investigation for heavy metal and organic chemical should be conducted. The particular technical methods for analysis of water quality are not addressed in this paper, as they should be determined with appropriate field expertise given the context and resources at hand. However, ground water quality should be monitored regularly at least weekly, and primarily for bacteriological tests for E. Coli.

“Biological and physical indicators can easily be monitored using simple analysis methods and kits. Portable kits specifically designed for this purpose are available. Reliable and relatively inexpensive water test kits such as the Delaqua, which was developed jointly by the Roebens Institute at the University of Surrey, UK, and OXFAM specifically for use in emergencies will cost from $1,500, and are widely used.

“A more contentious aspect is that of who has responsibility for water quality monitoring. Regular monitoring is very important. Frequently it is the agency providing the water which, for its own reasons, takes on the responsibility for reporting on its quality; this can be acceptable to other agencies when there are no problems, but if outbreaks of water−related diseases occur it will cause considerable friction. It is preferable that a third party should have responsibility for monitoring, recording and reporting on biological quality concerns. Local water departments may have this capacity; failing that, another agency with no direct interest in health service provision for the emergency should be used” (Chalinder, 1994, pp. 34−35, emphasis added).

Aside from monitoring for quality, it is often necessary to monitor the quantity of water actually being used in the household. It may be difficult to accurately measure this for the amount taken from the water source as waste through spillage and leakage may be considerable. One way to assess the amount of water actually used by an emergency settlement community regardless of the system type (centralized distribution through standposts, motorized− or hand−pumps, or other systems) is to check the storage capacity at the household level and then to establish how many times each day these containers are filled.

11. System Management

Policies affecting the overall maintenance and use of the water distribution system which have been set by the system users have proven effective. Community−run systems have helped to eliminate abusive control of water systems by gangs in some camps for Vietnamese Boat People.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of these systems should be organized through the community structure as soon as possible, through O&M teams or committees.

Contingency arrangements should always be made for unavoidable breakdowns and repair periods. Stand−by pumping equipment should always be provided as an integral part of any system. In cases where wells are equipped with hand pumps, spare parts should be stockpiled together with the necessary tools for their replacement. Additionally, identification, recruitment and training of the water attendants, mechanics, and others on the O&M committee are an integral part of any emergency settlement water provision strategy.

12. Urban Systems

Especially during and after conflict situations with active shelling and as well as with earthquakes, urban infrastructure systems for the delivery of water and the disposal away of sewage may be damaged beyond use. In such situations entire populations of such towns or cities may be considered as emergency
settlements. In these cases the urban dependents on piped systems are likely to be even more vulnerable than their rural counterparts to water borne diseases and other effects of the lack of clean water. The most vulnerable people are the elderly and infants, and children who may already be weakened due to other effects of the conflict or emergency situation.

Water systems have long been military targets due to the very debilitating and demoralizing effect that the destruction of such systems have on communities. “During the Gulf War (1990–1991), air strikes rendered Iraqi hydroelectric plants and water pumping stations totally inoperative. In Afghanistan, the traditional irrigation infrastructure was demolished at the outset of the conflict. Fourteen locations in Bosnia–Herzegovina had had their water supply cut off in July 1994. Three of the cases were caused by deliberate destruction of water facilities. ‘Today’s armed conflicts are essentially wars on public health,’ comments Dr. Remi Russbach, the ICRC’s Chief Medical Officer” (Poklewski–Koziell and Dorais–Slakmon, 1994, p. 10).

In these situations, the two aspects of water provision programs figure prominently. Water quantity is diminished or lost entirely due to breakdown of piping and pumps, or the loss or damage of water towers or other elevated sources. Secondly, even piped water sources may become contaminated due to damage to the system lines. In many urban areas water supply and sewer lines may lie side by side underground. When the lines are damaged, it is very possible that water supply sources can become contaminated from sewer pipes. This is especially so when water pressure in the mains fluctuates due to power failures. In addition to the direct threats of lack of water or water of poor quality, secondary urban systems may also be affected by lack of water pressure, including district heating in some urban centers, and even systems for factory and plant operations.

Urban water systems are complex. In all such cases the specialists best suited to correct the problems, and to repair and rehabilitate theses systems are those national or municipal engineers who have built and maintained the systems and who have access to and a working knowledge of the system diagrams, drawings, specifications, as well as its performance history. It is generally the case that in such instances what is needed most is money, equipment, and materials, rather than expertise.

In some cases, especially for hospitals and other critical urban facilities, hauling water from outlying areas has been required to maintain the functioning of key facilities. The Red Cross/Red Crescent, among others, have at times shipped, bagged and/or bottled water for such situations when need is extremely critical. In such cases the military, civil defense, or other large and well-funded organizations may be required to mobilize this type of cost and labor-intensive response.

Immediate response may typically include the installation of unitized local treatment units to clean polluted water supplies, or equipment to augment or replace damaged pumps. Additionally, the distribution of quickly dissolving water purification tablets (chlorine) for home use with container storage can be used. In situations of active conflict where repairs to centralized facilities may in fact attract further attacks and damage, it may be necessary to construct decentralized service points, such as wells with smaller pumps, and/or rerouting of water service to local distribution points.

### Excreta Management

#### 13. Locating Appropriate Expertise

UNHCR is often the lead agency in determining which sewage management systems are best or most applicable to the situations involving refugee camps or other emergency settlements of refugees. This determination is made with or without the advice of local NGOs. UNICEF also has developed expertise in this field, although their aim is more developmental and less emergency-oriented. The minimum qualifications for consultants in this area, whether agency specialists or private consultants, should be that the individuals are experienced environmental health specialists, sanitary or environmental engineers.

The specialist hired for this task should be pressed into service from the outset of the emergency if possible to allow him or her to participate in the preliminary work/survey, such as identifying suitable sites for emergency settlement. From this basis the expert can better contribute to the development of these sites and help in the organization and management of programmes for the monitoring and surveillance of the quality of the settlement’s environment.

#### 14. Sustainable Steps in Implementing an Environmental Health Plan for emergency settlements.

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The settling of people in an emergency situation will often take place while the site is being developed. Therefore, a sector-by-sector or block-by-block approach is recommended for such situations. This applies both at the household level as well as the community level for schools, markets, clinics, etc. The installation of different facilities for managing excreta disposal, domestic garbage collection, and wastewater drainage should start where physical conditions such as soil, and topography present fewest difficulties for the installation of the system “hardware”. Also useful in determining where to start are the attitudes of the people in various sectors, their willingness to participate, and their awareness of the issues surrounding environmental health.

Designing a management scheme for the disposal of human excrement in large scale emergencies is critical. Improvements to the scheme should be approached incrementally, working towards small, lasting improvements that are sustainable at each step, rather than the wholesale introduction of new systems.

For a rapidly growing emergency settlement population there must be both a long- and short-term plan. The short-term plan must address the inevitable lack of time and resources but still adequately manage wastes without spreading contamination. The timeframe for the environmental sanitation response is usually climate dependent. It takes only about 1 week for flies to emerge from wastes in warmer climates. Therefore a good system must be put into place quickly. For a rapidly-settled emergency-displaced community, one such incremental sanitation plan might include (in chronological order) the following:

a) A site survey of its sanitary disposal needs must be conducted immediately.

   All of the following steps (2-4) must be carried out in concert with a public awareness/education campaign on the proper use of the current system or strategy including the formation of environmental health committees to assist in the design, implementation, operation and maintenance of the systems.

b) Demarcate fields for controlled defecation areas and install temporary trench latrines (as deep as the soil, subsoil and water table will allow).

c) Next, (or simultaneously with # 2 if resources allow) construct a sufficient number of pit latrines for families (private family-held units) and for public facilities such as schools, markets, and clinics. Both types of latrines should be installed in such a way that they can be provided with ventilation (i.e. VIP latrines) at a later stage without having (for example) to construct new squatting slabs. In this respect and given the various nature of site specific constraints, the siting of these different facilities must be well thought through before the implementation of the latrine program.

d) Improve latrine facilities by transforming them into VIP, VIDPs (ventilated improved double pit), or pour-flush toilets if water is available, and the excess water is not deemed to be a problem for the proper functioning of the latrines. Small bore piped sewer networks are also appropriate where topography is favorable.

15. Planning for Emergency Settlement in Urban Situations

In urban situations served by piped sewer systems it can be assumed that approximately 1 liter of waste per person per day will be produced and will need to be removed or treated in the emergency settlement every day. This figure is exclusive of the water used to carry it. In the immediate response to an emergency situation, on-site sewage storage may suffice. However, off-site facilities will be required, either through trucking such wastes from holding tanks or carried away by water in piped systems. The repair and restoration of pre-emergency services is the preferable solution, even if inadequate in the very short term.

In many cases in urban settings people will be housed in public buildings and community facilities such as schools, churches, universities, gymnasiums, stadia, community centers and so on. In such cases, previously functioning sewage systems may become quickly overtaxed and fail. Such facilities may already be using latrines or small localized systems not connected to the municipal sewerage system. In this case the waste holding facilities (especially the latrine pits) quickly become full, and overflow. This must be avoided at all costs. There are three options available:

a) abandon the over-stressed latrine facilities for newly installed units
b) initiate a system of routine pumping or desludging to keep (primarily) water volume down to a manageable level

c) convert pit systems to sewered systems by extending municipal systems to these facilities where topography and other concerns allow.

The “best practice” to recommend from these options can only be determined by site investigation into the costs, reliability, and viability of the various options proposed. As a generalized best practice, however, it can be said that planning immediately for the implementation of one or more of these solutions must be taken at the time the use of such facilities is identified as a response to emergency settlement.

16. Community Toilets Don’t Work

In any type of system, rural or urban, wet or dry flushing, latrines or toilets should be assigned on a family basis wherever possible. These units must be easily cleaned, located, and identified as belonging to a particular family group. Only in cases of very short term, or transit situations can public toilet facilities be made to function well. This strategy should only be employed where there is no option for individual family assignment, or as part of community facilities such as schools and clinics. In any case, full–time maintenance is required.

17. Involvement of the Community in System design and Management

All segments of the community – religious and political leaders, women, and other active or influential groups – should be involved in the design and operation of the emergency settlement’s environmental health systems.

The community should be solely responsible for the operation and maintenance of its own environmental health systems. This will take training and time – up to a year. However, it should not take longer in order to avoid development of dependence on outside assistance providers.

As with environmental health services, health education must be integrated with other aspects: maternal and child care, immunization, family planning, nutrition and common sense use of curative care. It must start immediately, is often required to effect use of new types of water or sewerage disposal systems, and is critical in getting good solid waste disposal and vector control. Women should train women. Religious or community leaders must also be convinced of the need. Political will get almost anything done in cases of emergency settlement. NGOs such as IRC, ARC, CARE, SCF, and MSF have extensive backgrounds and experience in emergency health education.

18. Technology and Latrine Types

Although there are improved types of latrines now widely used (VIP and improved VIP for example), the final decision on which type to use and where they should be located should rest with an experienced professional who is knowledgeable in the community norms, local conditions, and environmental health, regardless of the expressed preferences of the community.

Standards

The following set or proposed standards incorporates the two headings Absolute Minimum Acceptable and Preferred Minimum. There are two reasons for this determination of multiple minimums. The first is the time element of applying the standards – the lower or Absolute Minimum Acceptable applies to those situations of short duration (a few days or two–three weeks), the Preferred Minimum applies to all other situations. The second reason is that while it is important to recognize the Absolute Minimum Acceptable standards listed, lessons learned from past situations have taught us that the Preferred Minimums proposed are in fact good practice, and should be held by implementers as the minimum acceptable standard of performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Supply</th>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
<th>Preferred Minimum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Quantity, minimum liters per person per day (l/p/d) – general population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold dry climate</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold wet climate</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot dry climate</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot wet climate</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water Quantity, minimum liters per person per day (l/p/d) – hospitals**

| Cold dry climate | 14.2 | 27.2 |
| Cold wet climate | 13.6 | 26.6 |
| Hot dry climate  | 18.1 | 37.8 |
| Hot wet climate  | 15.8 | 30.9 |

**Water Quantity, minimum liters per person per day (l/p/d) – feeding centers**

| Cold dry climate | 7.3 | 15.9 |
| Cold wet climate | 7.0 | 15.7 |
| Hot dry climate  | 11.3 | 22.0 |
| Hot wet climate  | 9.6 | 18.4 |

**Water bacteriological quality**

| Fecal coliforms, maximum per 100 ml water | 31.0 | 0.0 |
| Total coliforms, maximum per 100 ml water | 53.0 | 1.8 |
| Fecal streptococcus, maximum per 100 ml water | 5.5 | 0.0 |
| Heterotrophic plate count, maximum | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Enterococcus, maximum per 100 ml water | 20.0 | 0.0 |

**Water chemical and physical quality**

| Total dissolved solids, maximum mg per liter | 2300.0 | 540.0 |
| Salinity, as chloride, maximum mg per liter | 475.0 | 41.02 |
| Nitrates, as Nitrogen, maximum mg per liter | 40.0 | 50.0 |
| Fluoride, maximum mg per liter | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Organics, including pesticides, max mg per liter | 1000.0 | 1000.0 |
| Odor, maximum | palatable | none |
| Taste, maximum | palatable | none |
| Turbidity, maximum NTU units | 1.00 | 5.0 |
| Color, maximum | – | none |

**Excreta Disposal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depth of effective soil, minimum meters</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil infiltration rate, minimum liters per square meter per day</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Type</td>
<td>clay or sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth to groundwater, minimum meters</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to wells, minimum meters</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to surface water, minimum meters</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to dwellings, minimum meters</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Solid Waste Disposal – Landfills**

| Soil infiltration rate, minimum liters per square meter per day | Absolute Minimum Acceptable | Preferred Minimum |
| 30.0 | 61.0 |
| Soil Type | sand | clay or loam |
| Depth to groundwater, minimum meters | 8.6 | 9.8 |
| Frequency of covering, minimum days | 4.4 | 1.0 |
| Depth of soil cover, minimum days | 0.4 | 0.9 |
| Distance to wells, minimum meters | 28.3 | 74.0 |
| Distance to surface water, minimum meters | 36.0 | 144.0 |
| Distance to dwellings, minimum meters | 217.0 | 366.0 |

**Drainage**

| Slope of entire camp, minimum percent | Absolute Minimum Acceptable | Preferred Minimum |
| 1.6 | 3.7 |
| Maximum soil infiltration rate, liters/sq. m./day | 77.0 | 100.2 |
| Minimum soil infiltration rate, liters/sq. m./day | 12.5 | 29.5 |
| Elevation above 10 year flood plain, min. meters | 2.5 | 5.7 |
| Elevation above 100 year flood plain, min. meters | 3.5 | 6.6 |

**Vectors and Pests**

<p>| Distance to mosquito–breeding areas, min. meters | Absolute Minimum Acceptable | Preferred Minimum |
| 179.0 | 632.0 |
| Distance to fly–breeding areas, min. meters | 187.0 | 719.0 |
| Distance to endemic pests, minimum meters | 310.0 | 770.0 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance to noise sources, minimum meters</th>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
<th>Preferred Minimum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>190.0</td>
<td>350.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance to natural polluters, min. kilometers</th>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
<th>Preferred Minimum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance to transportation routes, min. kilometers</th>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
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<th>Distance to industrial zones, min. kilometers</th>
<th>Absolute Minimum Acceptable</th>
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* Information in this table is adapted from “Developing Environmental Health Criteria for Locating and Assessing Disaster Relief and Refugee Camps, Using a Multi Attribute Utility Rating Technique” – G. Shook, Dissertation Dec. 1990. Published Elsewhere

### Environmental sanitation guideline standards

A latrine should be provided for every 20 people or ideally 1 per family sited not farther than 50 m from the users’ accommodations and not nearer than 6 m.

Provide at least 1 100 liter refuse bin for each 50 people.

Provide at least 1 wheelbarrow per 500 people.

Provide one tip–truck (1–2 ton capacity) per 5,000 people.

Provide 1 communal refuse pit (2 m × 5 m × 2 m) per 500 people.

Provide water taps at a rate of 1 per 200 people sited not farther than 100 m from user accommodations.

Especially where sedimentation tanks are needed, site storage capacity should equal at least one day’s supply of water

### Resources

**CEFIRE** (International Training Centre for Water Resources Management)
P.O. Box 13
06561 Valbonne Cedex
(water supply and sanitation)

**CEHA** (Centre for Environmental Health Activities)
World Health Organization
P.O. Box 926967
Amman Jordan
(All aspects of environmental health, with emphasis on water supply and sanitation – CEHANET information system)

**CEPIS** (Pan American Centre for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences)
Casilla 4337
Lima 100, Peru
(all aspects of environmental health – REPIDISCA information system)

**ECO** (Pan American Centre for Human Ecology and Health)
Apartado Postal 105.34
Mexico 5, Mexico
(Human ecology, health aspects of environmental pollution)

(EHP) Environmental Health Project
1611 N. Kent Street, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia, 22209–2111
USA
(water supply, sanitation, environmental hygiene)

(ENSIC) Environmental Sanitation Information Centre
Asian Institute of Technology
P.O. Box 2654
Bangkok, Thailand
(Emphasis on water supply and sanitation, environmental engineering – SENSIC database)

(ITDG) Intermediate Technology Development Group
9 King Street
London WC 2E 8HN
England
(low cost appropriate technology, emphasis on water supply and sanitation)

(IRC) International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation
P.O. Box 93190
2509 AD, The Hague
The Netherlands
(tel. 31–70–814–911)
(water supply and sanitation)

(REDR) Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief
The Director – Institute of Civil Engineers
1 Great George Street
London, SW1
tel. 44–171–233–3116
(specialists in engineering support for water and sanitation systems for emergency response)

Ross Institute of Tropical Medicine
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Keppel Street
London WC 1E 7HT
England
(environmental health, water supply, sanitation, vector control)

(UNEP) United Nations Environment Programme,
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya
(environmental pollution, overall aspects of environmental protection)

(UNESCO) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, Place de Fontenoy
75007 Paris, France
(Environmental Education)

(UNHCR) United Nations high Commission for Refugees
Centre for Documentation of Refugees
Case Postale 2500, CH–1211 Geneva 2
Depot
Switzerland
(PTSS provides expertise in water and sanitation and other aspects of environmental health for refugee camps and other situations requiring external assistance)

(WEDC) Water, Engineering and Development Centre
Loughborough University of Technology

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Topic 15 – Food, Nutrition and Medical Care

This paper was prepared by James Good of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:

Dr. Brent Burkholder – is with the Refugee and Disaster Section of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dr. Peggy Henderson – is a Doctor of Public Health working as a health project officer for UNICEF in Harare Zimbabwe.
This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

**Principles**

1. **The first priority is to bring the crude and under-five mortality rates down to levels comparable to those existing before the emergency situation.**

The primary indicators for monitoring overall health situations in emergency settlements are the crude mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate. In all communities some percentage of the population will be ill. Nevertheless, the rates in an emergency settlement should approximate the rates of nearby established settlements and that of the country. This information may be available from the national Ministry of Health, or census bureau, and in many cases the national rates will have to be used.

To compare these rates, an understanding of the emergency settlement demographic structure must be known. If the age and sex distribution of the emergency settlement population is significantly different from that of the reference country (or community), some differences will be inherent in the data.

2. **The health of the emergency settlement population is best maintained through a community-based preventive approach which is dependent on the satisfaction of other vital needs beyond curative health services: security, food, water, shelter, sanitation, and preventive health care.**

Disease transmission in emergency settlement situations results from overcrowding, poor access to adequate amounts of safe water, poor sanitation, and insufficient or inappropriate food resulting in poor nutritional status. (Refer to the topic 14 Emergency Settlement Paper “Environmental Health” for more on this area.) Curative medical care alone cannot offset shortcomings in security, food, water, shelter, sanitation, hygiene and education. Efforts should be made to integrate emergency settlement health services with local and national health systems and promote the capacity and sustainability of these systems. In case of extreme emergency, when health needs are much greater than local capacities, it may be necessary to expand and extend the existing health systems, or even to establish new structures and programs – usually through external assistance. This solution should always be seen as a short-term measure, and should be accompanied by capacity-building activities to strengthen the local systems.

3. **Appropriate decision-making relating to health and nutrition in emergency settlement populations is dependent on reliable information.**

Trustworthy data are required for appropriate decision-making in emergency situations. Rapid, methodologically appropriate, and reliable collection of basic data is an absolute necessity in any health or nutritional emergency. Useful guidelines and shared knowledge relating to the primary reasons for excess mortality and morbidity in emergency settlement populations are the result of historical collection and documentation of these data. Ongoing data collection informs decision-making for the immediate situation and the formulation of more general principles and “best practices.” It is imperative that a basic health information system (HIS) be established to help determine priorities during the initial phase of the emergency and for efficient monitoring of the on-going situation.

Reliable information for decision-making in health and nutrition programs also presumes in-depth information which conveys the essence of the situation at hand. It is beneficial to consolidate this information from several viewpoints in order to gain a clear understanding. The host government or local institutions as well as the emergency settlement community must be involved in the information gathering (as well as decision-making process) as each brings critical information to the discussion. Information from women should be included in decision-making as well. This is especially important for food distribution planning as it has often been shown that households headed by women receive inadequate distributions in systems where the distribution is primarily designed and carried out by men.
4. The most widely prevalent diseases in emergency settlements affect mainly children and are readily preventable or treatable.

The greatest health concerns in emergency settlements (apart from injuries sustained by the victims of conflicts or other hazards) are preventable, or at least easily treatable. In refugee emergencies, five main killers have been identified and documented:

- diarrheas
- pneumonia
- measles
- malaria (in some areas)
- malnutrition

The priority response of a coordinated health program for emergency settlements should therefore include:

- provision of adequate and appropriate food for all
- immunization against measles for children 6 months–14 years (6 months to 5 years at a minimum, but preferably to 14 years)
- provision of adequate shelter, fuel, clothing, and blankets
- provision (and protection of) reasonably clean and sufficient amounts of water, and provision of sanitation facilities
- early detection and appropriate treatment for malaria patients, where indicated, along with complementary environmental vector controls

5. Protein–energy malnutrition is prevented by ensuring adequate food intake and good health status which requires proper inter–sectoral management

Protein–Energy Malnutrition (PEM) is one of the five major killers in emergency settlements. It results from inadequate food intake, often compounded by intercurrent diseases such as diarrhea or measles. Although food constitutes the proper prophylaxis and treatment for this condition, in some emergency settlements, malnutrition rates soar despite adequate bulk food deliveries. The community’s nutritional status is influenced by a wide complex of factors, including the rationing and distribution systems; the methods, utensils and fuel available for food preparation; access to safe water; and the levels of sanitation and hygiene (prevalence of diarrheas) prevailing in the settlement.

Although adequate food, logistical support and proper inter–sectoral management are all necessary for food security, they are not necessarily sufficient for the prevention of PEM. It is well documented that nutritional status is as dependent on disease as it is on food intake. A recent study from Zambia showed that children’s weight for age status improved during drought years (and therefore during likely food shortages), possibly because there was less malaria and diarrhea (Henderson). Whatever the exact relationship between disease, nutrition and overall health, it is plain that the three are inextricably related and must be treated in an integrated fashion. Thus, a well–rounded public health approach is the best way to prevent malnutrition.

6. Food distributed in emergency settlements should match the community’s traditional food. It should also ensure an adequate intake of micro–nutrients.

Food types, amounts consumed, and preparation techniques are inherently part of a community’s culture and tradition. Despite extreme food shortages, the acceptance of unfamiliar or non–traditional food types by a community will be very low. On the other hand, the introduction of certain new foods, if not taboo or otherwise unacceptable, may be of high value to the health of the community in emergency situations. Blended foods are an example.

In those situations where the community is totally dependent on external relief food, rations must include adequate quantities of micro–nutrients (vitamins and minerals) in order to prevent deficiency diseases such as pellagra, scurvy, avitaminosis A, etc.

7. Where the community surrounding the emergency settlement is also impoverished, in poor health, and lacking sufficient food, distributions should be made to all persons so affected, both within the
settlement as well as in the surrounding community.

Provision of food and health services to emergency settlements can result in inequities between the residents of the settlement and the local host or non-targeted population. In cases where the resources of the local population are below the minimums required for maintenance of health, distribution programs should serve that population on self-evident humanitarian grounds. This should avoid exacerbating tensions or conflict between communities. As there will always be an interaction between the emergency settlement community and other populations in the vicinity, it is critical that coordination with local and national authorities be routinely carried out.

It may be politically difficult to include “non-emergency” populations in assistance programs because, in the long term, such inclusion may actually foster dependency and normalize expectations of outside aid. Establishment of effective development programs, improvement of infrastructure systems or other such projects to indirectly help the surrounding non-emergency communities are alternatives.

8. Community participation in a coordinated overall health program is always an advantage in the efficient provision of health and nutritional support services.

Coordinated programs must include coordination of all outside responders as well as the participation of the emergency settlement population itself, particularly women, as they “play the central role of primary care providers for the whole family.... Refugee health care can only be delivered effectively if the specific needs of refugee women are met. These must be considered as an integral part of all aspects of planning, including the physical layout of the camp and its security, the design of health services in full consultation with refugee women, their employment as health care providers, and the training of health staff, including refugees, to identify and address problems of sexual abuse and gender-based violence” (UNHCR, EXCOM, 1995, pp. 4–5).

Community participation in the health program is critical as it will be the day-to-day activities and practices of the community as a whole which have the greatest effect on overall health. Community outreach programs – often coordinated through community health workers – should be a basic part of any emergency settlement health program.

Best Practices

Health

- Implementation of integrated health programs – a comprehensive public health approach

Natural and human-made disasters causing emergency settlement have tremendous health effects on the affected communities. There may be large numbers of deaths, injuries, and/or illnesses which exceed the therapeutic ability of the local health infrastructure. Local facilities may be destroyed or, conversely, whole communities may be separated from their traditional health care infrastructure systems as a result of forced migration.

Loss in continuity of routine health services and preventive activities resulting from catastrophic disruptions may lead to both short- and long-term health consequences resulting in increased morbidity and mortality. Apart from the primary need to prevent further displacement, the first step in the process of establishing health and nutritional security for an emergency settlement should consist of an inter-sectoral exercise for proper physical and socio-economic planning since health services alone cannot contain high morbidity and mortality. In the case of emergency settlements one must ensure:

• protection from natural and human hazards

• establishment of census/registration systems

• provision of adequate quantities of reasonably clean water

• provision of acceptable foods with recommended nutrient and caloric composition. Where it is difficult to assure that vulnerable groups have access to rations or where high rates of malnutrition exist, supplementary feeding programs should be established.

• access to adequate shelter
• well-functioning and culturally appropriate sanitation and hygiene systems: i.e. latrines, and buckets, chlorine and soap

• education: primary and kindergarten

• family tracing (essential for mental health)

• access to land, seeds and tools

• access to commerce

• information and coordination

• monitoring and evaluation, prompt problem-solving

• provision of medical/health services
  
  – epidemiological surveillance (including nutritional surveillance as a part of the Health Information System (HIS))

  – coordination with other vital sectors

  – information on the health services that are available

  – measles immunization

  – vitamin A provision

  – nutritional screening and selective feeding (supplementary and therapeutic) when there are problems of malnutrition

  – basic curative care especially for acute respiratory infections (ARIs), diarrheas, and malaria

  – referral, supervision and supply systems

  – training and retraining of health workers from the emergency settlement community to provide basic health care and preventive services

  – promotion of health education activities including, education about AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases

While it is important to base the provision of an integrated health system on an understanding of the community profile, it is equally important to note that this profile may not remain static. Many emergency settlements tend to have a changing population. The day-to-day workers in the health program must keep two major categories of the population in mind:

• those that they already know, who have been registered, screened, immunized, given soap, buckets etc.

• the new arrivals, who must receive initial assistance in their turn

### Implementing an effective health information system

As soon as possible, a health information system (HIS) should be started (or extended) to collect and record data about the emergency settlement population. This data should provide information on the overall health status of the community based on both routine monitoring and surveillance procedures and intermittent survey sampling of the population. The HIS must be simple – sensible to major diseases only – segregated by age (<5 and total) and sex, and collect information for the purpose of taking action.

“The use of health information to guide program decision-making will be facilitated if targets and critical indicators are established at the beginning. For example, a measles incidence rate of 1/1,000/month might be
an indicator that would initiate specific preventive actions. Similarly, during a cholera outbreak, a case fatality ration of 3% in a given week might stimulate a critical review of case management procedures” (MMWR, 1992, p.40).

Summary of key steps in the development of a health information system:

1. Ensure the involvement of all relevant partners from the start of the process.
2. Define the objectives of the disease control program and quantify the targets.
3. Identify the essential categories of data (demography, mortality, morbidity, nutritional status), program indicators, and appropriate cut–off values.
4. Develop and test case definitions.
5. Assign primary responsibility for coordination to a precise focal point in one defined agency.
6. Design and test simple forms for data collection.
7. Define the methods for registration, data compilation, entry and analysis.
8. Establish a chain of information transmission and means of communication.
9. Ensure the provision and maintenance of essential stationery, materials and transmission/communication equipment (e.g. radios).
10. Develop feedback mechanisms such as newsletters.
11. Train the personnel involved in data collection.
12. Ensure the circulation of regular information among health structures, other sectors and the community.
13. Evaluate and adapt the system periodically (adapted from MMWR, 1992, p.41).

Preventive measures

Most health care needs arising from emergency settlement can be met by preventative measures. Information and technical advice from the health sector to the other sectors (especially those delivering water, food, materials, and tools for latrines, blankets, soap and buckets, etc.) is the most important. Community health workers play an important role in providing hygiene education, and other preventive educational outreach services. Immunization, ante/prenatal care and supplementary feeding also need to be implemented.

Recently, UNHCR and WHO have stressed the value of an immediate minimum package for HIV control: condoms, safe blood transfusions and other medical practices – especially injections and education. The issues surrounding HIV/AIDS require substantial discussion among agencies involved in emergency response. Sexuality of the population in emergency settlements is often ignored, either for cultural or political reasons, or because these health issues are considered less of a priority (Henderson).

Regardless of prevention measures there will still be diarrheal disease outbreaks, pneumonia cases (especially in small children), child–birth complications, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and malaria. Therefore reasonable access to basic curative services inside the emergency settlement will always be required. Emergency obstetric care and other hospital services will also be necessary, but may be located outside of the immediate emergency settlement community.

Immunization programs

It is necessary to implement as soon as possible an Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) in all emergency settlements. This program will target all the major vaccine–preventable diseases: measles, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and tuberculosis. The program can start with a mass immunization campaign, that will usually be against measles, but as soon as possible it must become a routine activity,
along with the administering of all other antigens to the target groups. This can be done either through setting in place a fixed cold chain station and regular services in the emergency settlement, or by covering the emergency settlement with regular EPI outreach activities from the closest cold chain station. All children and all women of child-bearing age should be checked for their immunization status and vaccinated accordingly whenever they come in contact with the health services.

As a tool for controlling epidemic outbreaks, measles immunization is always recommended for displaced populations living in crowded conditions. The decision to immunize against other vaccine preventable diseases in response to outbreaks should be taken on a case-by-case basis. Immunization campaigns are appropriate for the control of Polio outbreaks and are recommended by WHO. Immunization is also effective in the control of epidemics of meningococcal meningitis. Apart from these cases, and especially concerning cholera and typhoid outbreaks, immunization campaigns are not an infallible way of controlling disease outbreaks in emergency settlements. Surveillance, case detection and effective treatment may be better options.

In situations where routine immunization is not possible but resources are available, campaigns for all EPI diseases for children either under 1 or 5 can be conducted either monthly or 3 times per year, for example. While measles is often considered the major disease to manage through immunization, the other EPI diseases also kill children and are an important part of any comprehensive preventive health program.

Medical quarantine is hardly ever indicated for epidemic control, especially in the case of refugees and displaced populations. It simply does not work, encourages discrimination, and fosters distrust in the medical/health services and the host authorities.

New vaccines have been developed against cholera, but they are either not yet fully tested, or not suited for mass immunization in emergency situations where emphasis may better be placed on the control of diarrheal diseases. These new vaccines cannot substitute for current standard cholera control measures. In this regard the WHO gives the following recommendations:

During the acute phase of the emergency, when crude mortality rates exceed 1–2/10,000/day, cholera immunization is not recommended either to prevent outbreaks or to control the cases that may be underway.

In a stable emergency settlement, when crude mortality rates fall below 1–2/10,000/day, and the refugees/displaced come from or are located in a cholera endemic area, cholera immunization may be indicated (WHO, 1995).

In general, to be effective and safe, immunization demands sound management, a high level of professionalism, and some degree of infrastructure. Possible constraints to mass immunization programs in emergency settlements are typically:

- difficult access to emergency settlement populations
- unreliable or constantly changing population data
- contrasting criteria for the identification of target groups
- maintenance of cold-chain requirements, poor equipment and fuel shortages
- poor sterilization equipment and or unsafe practices of inoculation
- large personnel requirements, training and management needs
- overall lack of resources and diversion of resources to other important activities
- mistrust and resistance on the part of the emergency settlement community (sometimes for cultural or religious reasons)
- difficulty with local coordination and government policies
- difficulty in recording and maintaining individual vaccination records
In complex emergencies, accessibility is the primary constraint. One guideline which proved effective in Mozambique in 1988–1992 was that any contact between health services and any internally displaced person was to be considered a unique and not-repeatable occasion. Therefore, measles immunization was routinely given to all children by the first health team that contacted a new emergency settlement.

### Measuring the success of immunization programs

In the short-term, the success of an immunization program in an emergency settlement can only be measured in terms of the percentage of coverage of the estimated target group. In the longer-term success can be measured by reduced incidence of disease in the population determined through surveys or reports based on a functioning disease reporting system. Charting outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases and conducting investigations to find pockets or areas of unvaccinated are essential activities of such a system. Both UNICEF and WHO have standardized information on such reporting systems.

There are multiple manuals and computer programs available to assist in the implementation of Expanded Program of Immunization cluster surveys which can be adapted for emergency settings. One such program is Epi-Info, available from the Centers for Disease Control. Another computer application is the COSAS (Coverage Survey Analysis System) issued by WHO, UNICEF, and EpiCentre.

### Reproductive health

The UNFPA and UNHCR organized an InterAgency Symposium on Reproductive Health which was attended by 50 agencies in June of 1995. The conclusions and recommendations of that symposium maintain that for too long there has been no systematic strategy for comprehensive reproductive health care in refugee or refugee-like situations. Among other recommendations, it was concluded that “Essential minimum reproductive health services should be made available at the outset of all refugee operations through the Minimum Initial Service Package” (see below).

1. At the outset of all refugee operations, a Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) should be made available and the following actions implemented immediately:

   - safe delivery practices
   - free availability of condoms
   - prevention and treatment of unsafe abortion
   - application of universal precautions against the spread of HIV/AIDS
   - contraception on demand, including emergency contraception
   - identification of appropriate sites
   - gathering of basic health and socio-cultural data on the country of origin
   - identification of a Reproductive Health focal point

2. As soon as feasible and based on an appropriate needs and resources assessment, a comprehensive and culturally sensitive reproductive health project should be executed and should include the provision of counseling and clinical services in the following areas:

   - prenatal, delivery and postnatal care
   - family planning or child-spacing
   - prevention and management of sexual and gender-based violence
   - prevention and control of STDs including HIV/AIDS

### Curative care

The basic curative care requirements for responding to emergency settlement situations are typically:

- oral rehydration,
- treatment of acute respiratory infections
- treatment of other prevalent conditions (e.g. malaria)
- therapeutic feeding
- care of wounds
- psychological counseling or the equivalent
Each epidemic will bring specific needs that must be addressed. In some cases, mass disinfection of external parasites (such as lice) was required as in Ethiopia in 1991, and in Zaire in 1994 (Loretti).

It is critical that the emergency settlement community, especially the newest arrivals, receive complete information regarding available services and are afforded effective channels for accessing those services, for example through the work of community health workers. Outreach programs and participation by the community are, therefore, an essential element of community health.

The basic model for organizing health service systems is a three-tiered structure:

- **Primary Health Care** – This level of health services includes under-five clinics, routine immunization, rehydration centers, malaria screening and treatment, diagnosis and treatment of pneumonia, outreach programs, ante-natal and delivery care, training and supervision of community health workers, traditional birth attendants and traditional healers who can play an important role, especially for collective health awareness and notification of cases during epidemic outbreaks.

- **Secondary Health Care** – This level provides in-patient services for severe cases requiring triage and surveillance, for example treatment for complications of child birth.

- **Tertiary Health Care** – A system of referral hospitals for surgery, very severely ill patients, and a reference laboratory. Arrangements and payment for transport and other logistical details will need to be agreed upon in advance by the administrators of the emergency settlement community health program and the hospital administration, usually through the MOH.

![Managing medical supplies](#)

Although other information on primary logistics systems is included in the topic 17 Emergency Settlement Paper (“Logistics”), there are some schemes which have worked particularly well in the management of medical-relief supplies for populations in emergency situations. One of these is the PAHO-issued software SUMA (Supply Management System Following Disasters.) This is a software system designed for the management of donated relief supplies.

A critical but often overlooked issue in emergency situations is that of standardization. It is seldom worth the effort to accept small donations of mixed drugs. Sorting these contributions take too much time and often the drugs are expired, inappropriate, or have instructions printed in the wrong language for local use. For example, in Goma, Zaire in 1994, bags of IV fluid were received in boxes containing 20 one-liter bags, but the sets for administering the fluid arrived in boxes of 12 sets (note: in some cases this arrangement will be appropriate since one patient may require several liters of fluid). Also, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) came in many different packages requiring different handling or mixing instructions – some to be diluted in 1 liter of water, some in 0.5 liters and some in 0.25 liters. The Emergency Action Section of WHO is currently looking into this situation in order to prepare standard guidelines (Loretti).

New emergency health kits have been designed by WHO, NGOs, and UNHCR, they offer various advantages in terms of planning, selection, shipment and deployment of medical supplies for emergency situations. The kits are typically designed for modular unit use for 10,000 people for 3 months. They have proved extremely useful for the emergency period but must be quickly replaced by a more specifically targeted drug management system. UNIPAC also keeps standard kits in its warehouse in Copenhagen. Many NGOs have also developed standard vaccination kits as well as standard supplementary feeding, sanitation, and hygiene kits.

![Health staff requirements](#)

Health staff requirements can be calculated by human instrumentation techniques based on the types of activities that various staff will undertake, the length of time of each activity, and the estimated number of times such actions will be required based on the population total, demographic breakdown, and other factors:

- each health/medical act takes a standard amount of time: for example, one immunization takes three minutes, one medical consultation in the out-patient clinic takes fourteen minutes.
• the most prevalent diseases and conditions tend to occur along foreseeable patterns: for example, one can presume one case of diarrhea per month per each child less than 5 years old; during the first months (3–6) of existence of the emergency settlement, one can roughly calculate one out-patient consultation per each member of the settlement

• under field conditions, each worker represents seven person–hours of work per day

• different types of services need different type/level of health worker

• once there is an estimate of the population of the emergency settlement and of its distribution by age and sex, the preventive and curative activities that are needed can be estimated

Thus one can calculate which type and how many human resources (i.e. person–hours) are needed on the basis of the acts that have to be carried out and the number of populations to be serviced. Allowances must be made for more general activities, that is, field reconnaissance, meetings, training sessions, paperwork, etc.

Such calculations confirm the standards adopted by UNHCR, of 35–40 health workers for 10,000 (refugee) population, 50% of them community health workers and traditional birth attendants. Of course, these general rules will have to be readjusted on the basis of local conditions, phase of the emergency, baseline health status of the community, mortality trends, presence of epidemics, access to referral systems, need for surveys etc.

Food and Nutrition

■ Implementation of emergency food/nutrition programs

For displaced populations, general rations and selective feeding policies and programs should aim to match the food intake of the emergency settlement community to that of the host community. If the host community’s food intake is inadequate even under “normal circumstances,” the problem will have to be addressed through a specific area–based, integrated program of food aid. Although newcomers fleeing disaster may have greater immediate need for therapeutic feeding, this service should be extended to those in similar need in the host community. For management and medium–term planning purposes, it may be useful to keep separate records of program utilization for the two communities.

The most difficult issue associated with the provision of food to emergency settlements is meeting minimum caloric standard requirements in spite of budget, supply, and logistic constraints. Other difficulties arise from contradictions between macro–planning at the national level which is typically based on gross estimates of beneficiaries, availability of supplies and logistical capacity, and management at the sub–national or local level which is based on identifying and reaching a specific number of people in need.

Confusion between the different scopes and objectives of general ration systems and selective (that is, supplementary and therapeutic) feeding can also cause problems. The Basic Food Ration should be provided in such quality and quantity that the whole population receives what they need. Additional selective feeding programs should be exceptional and “surely cannot substitute or replace the need for an adequate Basic Food Ration” (Malé). Supplementary feeding is a preventive measure to cover the additional needs of vulnerable groups (children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and chronic patients). Therapeutic feeding (also called Nutritional Rehabilitation) is the treatment for severe PEM. Each type of intervention is needed for different people and purposes and none of them can adequately substitute for the others (Loretti).

■ Food distribution systems

The distribution period will depend on the type of feeding taking place and storage availability (both at the settlement as well as the household level). It also depends on the particular food types included in the ration, the distances traveled to the pick–up site, the skill and or experience of the beneficiaries in budgeting the ration between distributions, how many staff are available for distribution, and whether or not local people will be able to distribute the food. Also, the security situation in the area may determine period or method of distribution as, in many conflicts, warehouses tend to be military targets. A more detailed discussion of best practices for designing and implementing food distribution systems can be found in the topic 18 Emergency Settlement paper “Population Estimation, Registration and Distribution.” More frequent distribution causes more work for the distributors but may make it easier for the beneficiaries to transport the food. If fresh foods are provided, short distribution periods will obviously be necessary. Less frequent distribution is easier for the
distributors, but monitoring becomes more important to ensure against long-term shortages. Whatever schedule is adopted it should be followed strictly.

Efficient targeting of beneficiaries of food aid programs is also difficult, especially when budget constraints preclude the option of "erring on the safe side." A typical and wrong solution in case of shortage is to cut all rations below the minimum standard requirements. The basic standards must be met taking into consideration climate, activity level, general health status, and other factors. A prolonged diet at the full minimum standard requirements will still result in loss of body weight for the beneficiaries if they have no access to complementary foods. Everyone involved (the beneficiaries as well as the providers at all levels) should be fully aware that each cut below the minimum standard represents a health hazard. In fact, whenever food relief does not reach the minimum requirements per person per day, the cost-effectiveness of the entire operation should be questioned, as an inadequate Kcaloric intake cannot sustain the life of the beneficiaries.

Even when the decision to reduce rations is based on the belief that the beneficiary numbers have been falsely inflated, it is still important to keep distributing to everybody since even in cases of over-registration there will be those without other food support beyond the basic ration. In this case, it is imperative to address the root problem of the over-registration rather than to cut ration levels for all.

Food aid does not always have to be considered a "must". Cash is preferable to food in many long-term situations, where appropriate food is available locally in sufficient quantities and the emergency settlement population’s purchases would not disrupt the local economy. Nutritional surveillance in such cases would still be necessary to make sure that the cash is being spent on food, and that vulnerable groups are not being disadvantaged. Monitoring could be done through anthropometry and health reporting systems just as when a food disbursement program is operating. Food availability in the household could also be measured, although this may prove difficult where household members resist being surveyed (Henderson). The best way to monitor the food distribution system is through monitoring of the food basket and nutritional status of the community. This can be done by monitoring vulnerable groups, low birth-weight (where this can be accurately recorded) or reported cases of nutritional diseases and deficiencies. If nutritional status is not as expected, a household level check on food availability may be desirable.

Inappropriate food types

Emergency responders should consult data on food habits from the home region of the emergency settlement population. However, care must be taken to ensure that food preferences do not relate to only specific sub-groups within the population. The urban elite and the rural poor from the same country will often have very different food and food preparation habits.

Foods which are plainly inappropriate are:

- foods which are patently offensive due to religious or cultural practice (for example, pork for Muslims)
- unhealthy, toxic, or spoiled foods
- foods which require extensive post-distribution processing before eating or extreme amounts of fuel for cooking (for example, certain types of beans)
- Completely unfamiliar foods (for example, tinned cheese for Somalis)

Even totally unfamiliar foods may be accepted if there is a local market for the food, if no other food is available, or if the food can be made acceptable by modification or addition of other foods or supplements. While the need for appropriate and culturally acceptable food and for local and regional procurement is widely acknowledged, cases of grossly inappropriate foods are often quoted but, in fact, rarely occur. The more common occurrences are typically:

- provision of the right cereals in the wrong form: for example, unmilled grains to settlements without milling capacity. Foods that require further mechanical processing before consumption are inappropriate rations in emergencies.
- provision of other appropriate commodities in unmanageable amounts or inappropriate conditioning: for example, whole powdered milk where water supplies (for mixing the powder)
are unsafe. UNHCR has explicit guidelines on the use of powdered milk which require that, among other things, powdered milk should only be distributed under appropriate supervision and never as part of the “general distribution.” Promotion of breastfeeding is generally considered a “must” in emergency settlement situations.

• provision of food of dubious quality or suitability for human consumption which cause undue delays in delivery while lab examinations are being carried out (for example, Mozambique in 1989)

• provision of foods lacking required micronutrients for health even in the presence of adequate k calories.

The most common repercussion of inappropriate foods is that beneficiaries sell or exchange them if they have access to a market and there is demand for the items. This, in itself, is not necessarily bad as long as long as food of an approximately equal nutritional value replaces that which is sold. When agencies realize that foods distributed to emergency settlement populations will be sold in local markets, the replacement cost of more suitable foods, the trade or exchange value and associated market effects of this possibly large-scale selling should be taken into account.

The use of military style rations, especially meals-ready-to-eat (MREs) for large scale emergencies and those of medium term duration contradicts the principle of supplying populations with familiar foods. In many cases, large amounts of these rations have been discarded, sometimes because receivers did not recognize the contents as edible. In well organized reception and transit centers, military style rations such as Humanitarian Daily Rations (HDRs) might be useful as a first stopgap measure and as a curative action for new arrivals that are severely malnourished. The HDRs do not provide adequate weaning foods. If they are to be the primary source of food for a population, even for a short period, other foods for weaning should also be included. Similar to high protein biscuits, HDRs can be a way of providing immediate food supplies to a community in need before the establishment of other longer-term logistics systems.

### Nutritional surveillance and monitoring

An effective Health Information System will include the collection of nutritional status information as well as other health statistics. The nutritional status of under-5 children is representative of the status of the whole population and an important indicator of trends as children are the first to suffer from malnutrition. Adult malnutrition signals a particularly severe situation. In the case of severe nutritional emergencies, it is important to understand that the comparison of data between surveys may be misleading. Malnutrition rates, for example, may remain unchanged or even improve, as severely malnourished children die and are replaced by new malnourished. An epidemic of measles and/or diarrhea implies that the ration is not being fully utilized by the sick children.

Epi-Info and Epinut are the most widely used software tools for nutritional surveillance and sampling. The software does not enhance information, but does facilitate analysis and reporting based on information gained through surveys. The “garbage-in–garbage out” rule applies to all such survey sampling and reporting programs.

The primary nutritional status indicators for emergency settlements are:

- Middle Upper Arm Circumference measurements (MUAC) for the first rapid screening of acute PEM.

- Weight for Height index, which remains the most precise measurement for acute PEM.

- Weight for Age is also a useful index, but only if measured regularly in the same groups of under 5 children, in order to monitor their growth.

- Weight at birth can be also be useful (although less specific) as it addresses the general living conditions of pregnant women in the community.

- Occurrences of clinical acute PEM, as recorded in clinics and hospitals, is another useful index, although much less sensitive, as the more severely malnourished tend to be those who do not reach the clinic. There will always be an inherent survey bias resulting from taking samples at clinics only.
• Occurrence of mass intoxication by consumption of “crisis foods” (e.g., poisonous cassava neuropathy, in North Mozambique, 1985−90) is considered a proxy indicator.

• Occurrence of Pellagra is another proxy indicator, as it reveals that a community is totally dependent on donated maize, with no capacity for local supplementation.

• Occurrence of infectious disease epidemics, measles and diarrheas, indicates that children under 5 (at least) may need greater food intake through pro−active application of wider supplementary feeding programs, for example.

The advantages and disadvantages of the various methods for assessing different types of malnutrition given different staffing levels and various stages of emergencies are well discussed throughout the available literature on this topic. For a long−term settlement where the health of the individual child is in question, monitoring his or her growth (weight for age index) on a child health card and giving appropriate counseling and support is the most appropriate method. To assess whether there is a nutritional problem in the emergency settlement at any given time, however, weight for−height surveys (using the National Center for Health Statistics chart) are considered the best way. If a spot assessment is needed and many inexperienced people need to be trained rapidly, then a MUAC survey may be the best way. In the acute emergency phase, routine MUAC screenings of all newly arriving under−5s, and periodic Weight for Height sample surveys are the basics of nutritional surveillance. When the settlement is more stable, general under−5 growth monitoring, integrated with other services and programs is the most cost−effective method.

Micro−nutrient deficiencies

The major micro−nutrient diseases are anemia, Pellagra, Avitaminosis−A, Scurvy, Iodine deficiency, and Beri−Beri (frequent in South−East Asia). These may be discovered through clinical examination, although only severe manifestations of these deficiencies will be detected. At this point supplementation with the appropriate micro−nutrients may not treat the problem, but rather, prevent the appearance of new cases. One of the most common of these problems – goiter, from iodine deficiency – for example, cannot normally be reversed.

With the possible exceptions of goiter and anemia, the treatment is fairly straightforward; that is, supplement the lacking nutrient to the standard ration. Problems typically arise when one has to decide whether to apply such nutrients individually or collectively. In Malawi, in 1990−91, in order to deal with widespread Pellagra in the refugee camps, UNHCR resorted to local contracts for the industrial fortification of maize flour with Niacin.

There are accepted Recommended Daily Requirements for micronutrients which should be followed. The best method for delivering these nutrients is through a balanced food basket made available to all members of the emergency settlement community. It is considered a best practice to supplement vitamin A artificially for children under 5, iron for pregnant and lactating women, and iodized salt for the entire community.

Standards

Standards represent general theoretical guidelines that need to be re−examined each time they are applied to a specific situation. From this perspective, issues concerning medical care, nutrition and food in emergency settlement situations require constant discussion and open debate. What follows are some basic guidelines which have been taken from various sources.

LIFE THREATENING CONDITIONS and EMERGENCY INDICATORS
(adapted from UNHCR − EMTP Workshop Notebook Materials)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROSS MORTALITY</th>
<th>rate 0.3/10,000/day in many developed countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RATE</td>
<td>rate 0.5/10,000/day in many developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1/10,000/day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

188
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relief Program under Control</th>
<th>Relief &gt;1/10,000/day Program in Serious Trouble</th>
<th>Emergency: Out of Control</th>
<th>Famine: &gt;2/10,000/day Major Catastrophe</th>
<th>Rate: &gt;5/10,000/day in Many Developing Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNDER 5</strong></td>
<td>Emergency: Under Control</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;2/10,000/day Phase</td>
<td>Emergency: Out of Control</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;4.0/10,000/day Phase</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;2.0/10,000/day Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mortality Rate</strong></td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;1.0/10,000/day Phase/serious situation</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;2.0/10,000/day Phase/serious situation</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;4.0/10,000/day Phase/out of control</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;2.0/10,000/day Phase/out of control</td>
<td>Emergency: &gt;2.0/10,000/day Phase/out of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of Clean Water</strong></td>
<td>Minimum Survival Allocation (only for a few days) 7 liters/person/day</td>
<td>Maintenance Allocation (few weeks to months) 15−20 liters/person/day</td>
<td>Minimum Survival Allocation 1,900 kcal/person/day</td>
<td>Maintenance Allocation: 2,200 kcal/person/day</td>
<td>Normal Population Distribution 2,200 kcal/person/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of Food</strong></td>
<td>Minimum Survival Allocation 1,900 kcal/person/day</td>
<td>Maintenance Allocation</td>
<td>Normal Population Distribution 2,200 kcal/person/day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| MALNUTRITION | more than 1% of the under five population of children severely malnourished or more than 10% moderately malnourished presence of scurvy, pellagra, beri–beri and avitaminosis–A outbreaks for children under 5 the indicators for severe malnourishment are:  
- MUAC less than 12.5 cm  
- WFH or WFL ratios less than 70%  
- WFH or WFL Z-score −3 standard deviation for children under 5 the indicators of moderate malnourishment are:  
- MUAC between 12.5 and 13.5 cm  
- WFH or WFL ratios between 70% and 80%  
- WFH or WFL Z-score −2 through <−3 standard deviations below reference mean |

**LACK OF APPROPRIATE**

"Appropriate" shelter is dependent on the immediate environment. However, protection from wind, rain, freezing temperatures, and direct sunlight are universally applicable.

**SHELTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum shelter area</th>
<th>Minimum total site area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sq. m/person</td>
<td>sq. m/person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LACK OF SANITATION**
Poor excreta and waste disposal (latrines either non-existent, not used, foul-smelling or full, swarming with flies) garbage everywhere

Source: Compiled by Disaster Management Center–UNHCR Emergency Tools Series draft #2, 1992

### Preventive Medical Management Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>PREDICTIVE INDICATORS</th>
<th>PREVENTION STRATEGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diarrheal diseases</td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contamination of food and water</td>
<td>• public health education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• adequate personal and food hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor personal hygiene</td>
<td>• clean water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contaminated water supply</td>
<td>• functioning sanitation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor sanitation</td>
<td>• provision of soap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typhoid and cholera</td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contamination of food and water</td>
<td>• Clean and sufficient water supply and soap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Functioning sanitation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor personal hygiene</td>
<td>• Public health education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contaminated water supply</td>
<td>• Prepositioning of drugs and supplies (cholera, typhoid, some dysenteries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor sanitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measles</td>
<td>• unimmunized and susceptible population</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• immunization of children aged 6 months to 14 years or MOH policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respiratory infections</td>
<td>• Overcrowding, inadequate shelter</td>
<td>• Adequate living space (for particular environment and climate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• adequate clothing, and blankets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malaria</td>
<td>• Known strain of malaria for which refugees have no immunity esp. falciparum malaria</td>
<td>• Destroy mosquito breeding areas, larvae, and adult mosquitoes through environmental measures (fill small depressions in terrain, proper garbage management, clearing of bushes, etc.) Use insecticide spraying as a last resort (specialist advice required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stagnant, standing water</td>
<td>• Ensure adequate drainage of site to eliminate breeding areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Distribute mosquito netting with or without impregnated insecticide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Chemoprophylaxis of vulnerable groups (specialist advice required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Adequate treatment of malaria cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meningococcal meningitis</td>
<td>• Overcrowding in endemic area (may have local seasonal pattern)</td>
<td>• Adequate living space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Immunization only after expert recommendation at site, (see guidelines – Intl J. epi 1992; 21: 155–162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuberculosis</td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Adequate treatment and control of active cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• immunization of new-borns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worms esp. hookworms</td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor sanitation</td>
<td>• Functioning sanitation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scabies</td>
<td>• Overcrowding</td>
<td>• Adequate living space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor personal hygiene</td>
<td>• Enough water and soap for washing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Insufficient amount of water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Corrective Medical Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diarrheal diseases</td>
<td>10% or more of population exhibiting signs of diarrhea</td>
<td>Oral rehydration therapy (ORT) for all cases (mainly children under 5) bloody diarrheas also require antibiotics and supplementary food some countries recommend vitamin A supplement for diarrhea cases encourage exclusive breast feeding of infants to 6 months of age, and continue partial breast-feeding up to 2 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
<td>Any confirmed case</td>
<td>Vaccination for surrounding population, the spread of the disease is fast, especially in malnourished or stressed populations, It has been established that in large populations it is more effective to vaccinate those in immediate areas to the reported outbreak rather than the outbreak population itself as the intent is to stop the spread of the disease rather than to cure it. There is no cure for measles. some countries recommend vitamin A supplement for measles cases Treatment of secondary infections for affected population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory infections</td>
<td>Any severe case</td>
<td>Treatment with antibiotics improve shelter/blankets/clothing deficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td>Confirmed cases of malaria mosquitoes</td>
<td>Treatment of those exhibiting fever with chloroquine, or Fansidar or other drugs if strain is chloroquine resistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meningococcal meningitis</td>
<td>Overcrowding in endemic area (may have local seasonal pattern)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>Overcrowding</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worms esp. hookworms</td>
<td>Overcrowding</td>
<td>Medical treatment through drugs as recommended by medical expert on site poor sanitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*adapted from UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies – 1982

UNHCR Emergency Tools Series draft #2 – 1992 for the UNHCR Emergency Management Training Program
### Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies

#### The Role of Health: elements for planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vital Needs</th>
<th>The role of the health sector (MOH and NGOs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
<td>Keeping record of war casualties and mine injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special care for unaccompanied children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>Providing technical guidelines on standards of quantity and quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating community mobilization for local projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food &amp; fuel</strong></td>
<td>Providing information on needs by nutritional surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing technical standards for general food rations and selective feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying vulnerables for supplementary feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributing dry rations for supplementary feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing therapeutic feeding and/or micro–nutrients against malnutrition and deficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shelter &amp; sanitation</strong></td>
<td>Providing advice for site planning and technical standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting with health education and environmental supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing information on needs by epidemiological surveillance (e.g. on diarrheas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soap, buckets, pots</strong></td>
<td>Advocating for minimum hygienic and household needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting with health education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health care</strong></td>
<td>Ensuring: Upgraded health units and essential drugs, Immunizations and MCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparedness against Measles, Cholera, Dysentery, Meningitis, Education, diagnosis and treatment against ARI, Malaria, STD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condoms and education against HIV infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Activities</strong></td>
<td>The role of the health sector (MOH and NGOs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>Ensuring epidemiological and nutritional surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring mortality rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*adapted from UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies – 1982

UNHCR Emergency Tools Series draft #2, 1992 – for the UNHCR Emergency Management Training Program
Providing indicators for monitoring and evaluating operations in other sectors

**Logistics & communications**
Ensuring that emergency medical supplies are selected and properly conditioned for easy transport and storage

**Coordination**
Ensuring sectoral coordination and providing technical inputs

**Mobilization of resources**
Identifying needs and projects in support of the health sector
Providing the baseline data on human suffering that justify funding for other sectors

### Health Issues in Emergency Settlements: A Matrix for Inter-Sectoral Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POPULATION</strong></td>
<td>Refugees and internally displaced are forced migrants</td>
<td>Displacement is</td>
<td>Define the case</td>
<td>Identify flows, points of passage, sources of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Displacement cannot be permanent</td>
<td>a) a factor of vulnerability</td>
<td>Figures and trends</td>
<td>Grassroots records, information systems, materials, equipment, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Host populations are affected too</td>
<td>b) a hazard for the hosts</td>
<td>Plans for medium term</td>
<td>Hazard mapping, contingency plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New arrivals overload the resources and services of the host area</td>
<td>Figures are needed for planning; “to be counted” is a human right</td>
<td>Coordinated advocacy</td>
<td>Area–based projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop host areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assist new comers and hosts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECURITY</strong></td>
<td>“Security from violence and preventable diseases”</td>
<td>Health is one priority of humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>Early and constant inter-sectoral coordination</td>
<td>Epidemiological surveillance of war casualties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence is one cause of illness and death</td>
<td>Involve defense in planning and monitoring</td>
<td>Mine clearance, disarmament, demobilization</td>
<td>First–aid training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landmines are “vectors” of disability and death</td>
<td>Health must support conflict resolution, peace–building, demobilization</td>
<td>Mine–awareness</td>
<td>Safe transfusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational and health staff and structures</td>
<td>Neutrality and protection of health</td>
<td>Special training and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health care for demobilization programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WATER</strong></td>
<td>Water is a vital need</td>
<td>Ensure 20 liters/person/day</td>
<td>Adequate number, protection and distribution of water points</td>
<td>Health education and <strong>Buckets and Spades</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Quantity before quality”</td>
<td>The more the users, the easier the contamination of the source</td>
<td>Use data on diarrheas for inter-sectoral decisions</td>
<td>Chlorine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use sustainable technology</td>
<td>Use local staff, local solutions and local materials</td>
<td>Pumps and tanks for health units, feeding centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The community must share responsibility, and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots attendants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD</strong></td>
<td><strong>SHELTER &amp; SANITATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>HEALTH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are more directly interested. Dirty buckets contaminate the water.</td>
<td>All programs must have a training component. Funds for local purchases, spares and technical advice. House visiting; education at the water line/point.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD</strong></td>
<td><strong>SHELTER &amp; SANITATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>HEALTH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diarrheas, ARI, Measles, Malnutrition and Malaria

If the other vital needs are not satisfied, health services alone cannot save lives

Refugees and displaced are especially vulnerable

Survival and health are the objectives of humanitarian assistance

Preventative and basic curative care

Referral systems

Baseline data, case definition, forms, flow, training

Adocate for holistic approach

Supplies and logistics

Monitor deaths

MOH is responsible for refugees’ and IDPs’ health

Inform the community on the services available

Immunizations and Vitamin A

Liaisons with NGOs

Strengthen the health network

MCH, supplementary feeding

Circulate national guidelines

Feedback and circulation

Treatment for “Big 5”

Therapeutic feeding

Inform the community on the services available

Ensure supervision and exchange of information

Nutritional Standards

WHO has issued a definitive statement that:

- **1,800 – 2,000 Kcal/person/day**, represents the “minimum amount of energy required to sustain life” for protracted periods. “...temporary maintenance for many months”.

- lower standards 1,500 – 1,700 (but 1,900 for pregnant women) are acceptable on a short term basis (emergency subsistence, for a few weeks).

A general standard minimum ration which is widely accepted is **1900 Kcal per person per day** (UNHCR, WFP, WHO). From this total at least 10% of the calories should be derived from fats and at least 12% should be derived from proteins This standard is based on the following demographic assumptions regarding the population:

- 20% are children below 5 years
- 35% are children from 5–14 years
- 20% are women 15–44 years of age (40% of whom are pregnant or lactating)
- 10% are males from 15–44 years
- 15% are adults over 44 years

If the population demographics are substantially different from these assumptions, adjustments need to be made in the basic ration. Also, provision should be made for calorie loss due to milling, transport, and food preparation. Furthermore, caloric requirements are higher in cold climates and when activity levels of the population are higher. When the mean daily temperature falls below 20°C, the ration should be increased by 1% per degree which the temperature falls below 20°C.

Below these levels, cuts in the ration can be justified only when field evidence indicates that the beneficiaries are able to supplement the basic ration and meet the minimum standard requirements through foraging, farming, trade, or wage labor.
HEALTH SCREENING OF NEW ARRIVALS – RECEPTION ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUTRITIONAL SCREENING</th>
<th>CHILDREN 1 TO 4 YEARS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take survey of mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC). Any with MUAC below 12.5 cm should be immediately referred to health or nutrition services.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASLES IMMUNIZATION</th>
<th>CHILDREN 6 MONTHS TO 14 YEARS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immunize entire group and issue “Road to Health” or other immunization record card.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VITAMIN A PROPHYLAXIS</th>
<th>CHILDREN 0 TO 14 YEARS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give preventive dose of vitamin A to entire group, can be given at time of measles immunization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ages 0–11 months need 100,000 international units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ages 12 months and older need 200,000 international units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat dosage every 3–6 months.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC CURATIVE CARE</th>
<th>AS REQUIRED:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On-site first-line care for dehydration, respiratory infections, presumed malaria, trauma, and other life threatening conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referral to existing health care facilities.</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC SCREENING</th>
<th>EVERYONE:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimate total population and numbers of vulnerable persons/groups such as children 0–4 years old, pregnant/lactating women, handicapped, female heads of households, single women, and unaccompanied minors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled from draft of new UNHCR handbook 1991

UNHCR Emergency Tools Series draft #2, 1992

Staffing Requirements

Approximate Staffing Levels For Refugee Health Services For A Population Of 10–20,000

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Worker</td>
<td>10–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Birth Attendant</td>
<td>10–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic Nurses/Midwives</td>
<td>3–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors/Medical Assistants</td>
<td>1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Attendant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory Technician</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressers/Assistants</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: draft of UNHCR Emergency Handbook 1991

References


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WHO. Revised 1992b. *Division of Diarrheal and Acute Respiratory Disease Control–Guidelines for Cholera
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**Some Useful Addresses for Emergency Food and Health Issues**

Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches, PO Box 66, CH−1211 Geneva−20, Switzerland. Telephone 41.22.7916111; fax 41.22.7910361.

Emergencies and Refugee Program, International Health Program Office of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Mailstop K01, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Atlanta, GA 30341−3724, United States. Telephone 770−.488.1089; fax 404.488.1003.

International Committee of the Red Cross, 17 Avenue de la Paix, CH−1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Telephone 41.22.7346001; fax 41.22.7332057.

International Dispensary Association, PO Box 3098, 1003 AB Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Telephone 31.2903.3051; fax 31.2903.1854.

League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, PO Box 372, CH−1211 Geneva−19, Switzerland. Telephone 41.22.7345580; fax 41.22.7330395.

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London WC1E 7HT, United Kingdom. Telephone 44.1.6368636; fax 44.1.4365389.

Médecins sans Frontières, 8 Rue Saint−Sabin, 75011 Paris, France. Telephone 33.1.40212929; fax 33.1.48066868.

OXFAM, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, United Kingdom. Telephone 44.865.56777; fax 44.865.57612.


UNICEF (UNIPAC), Arhusgade 129, Freeport, DK 2100, Copenhagen, Denmark. Telephone 45.31.262444; fax 45.31.269421.

UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA Telephone 212 326−7000

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Palais des Nations, CH−1211 Geneva−10, Switzerland. Telephone 41.22.7398111; fax (general) 41.22.7319546, (supplies) 41.22.7310776.

World Food Programme, 426 Via Cristoforo Colombo, Rome, Italy. Telephone 39.6.522821; fax 39.6.5127400.

World Health Organization, Avenue Appia, CH−1211 Geneva−27, Switzerland. Telephone 41.22.7912111; fax 41.22.7910746.

**Topic 16 − Household Needs**

*This paper was prepared by Lynne Bethke of InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:*

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Mary Myers – is a programme director for the Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre in England.

Mohammed Omer Mukheir – is a research associate at the Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre in England.

Matthew Owen – is a biomass energy consultant working in Nairobi, Kenya for Intermediate Technology.

Daniel Van Lehman – formerly with UNHCR is a graduate student at Cornell University participating in the Institute for African Development’s Working Group on Refugees. He is currently working as a consultant for CARE International in Burundi.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

This paper is one of six related to the theme of “Basic assistance needs.” The other papers are: Site Selection, Planning and Shelter; Environmental Health; Health, Nutrition and Food; Logistics and Procurement; and Population Estimation, Registration and Distribution. This paper is meant to draw specific attention to the provision of household goods in emergency settlement situations – deciding what, how and to whom to distribute. Readers of this paper are encouraged to also read the papers which are referred to in the text to achieve a broad understanding of the “basic assistance needs” that are part of emergency settlement situations.

In the first section five “principles” are proposed with regard to household goods. These principles are offered for consideration as a starting point when responding to emergency settlement situations. The “best practices” section offers some specific practices that may be useful for practitioners interested in responding in a manner consistent with the principles. The final section is a first attempt at developing specific standards related to the provision of household goods. These standards are offered for purposes of discussion in the hope that emergency responders from different backgrounds and agencies may informally be able to agree on a baseline related to the provision of household goods in emergency settlement situations.

Although established standards for the provision of household goods may be helpful, it is also important to recognize that no two emergency settlements are exactly alike and that the affected people are resourceful and creative. Despite the best intentions of humanitarian aid agencies, culturally inappropriate goods may sometimes be provided. Especially in the initial phases of an emergency, provision of domestic items and related procurement activities often have a very short implementation period. In these situations, available quantities, delivery lead time and logistic capacity are often the deciding factors in what, when and where to buy. Fortunately, the beneficiaries may often be able to sell or barter inappropriate or unnecessary goods in local markets in order to meet their needs. Despite this reality, the provision of household goods will be more efficient and effective if emergency responders work to understand the needs and preferences of the people they are trying to assist.

Principles

1. There are quantifiable minimum standards to be followed when providing household goods to emergency settlement populations. These standards will be dictated by local rather than universal norms.

Just as adequate shelter, water, and food are essential elements of settlement, access to basic household items must also be considered a basic human right. Soap for hygiene and the prevention of disease, blankets, cooking utensils, water containers, matches and cooking fuel must be considered essential in the provision of humanitarian aid to emergency settlement communities.

The issue of a minimum standard for provision of household goods in emergency situations addresses the question of what is essential. A strict definition of essential is simply that which is required for survival. According to this definition, one proposal for a list of “essential” items is as follows:

- Shelter
- One blanket per person (two in cold places)
• Cooking utensils – two cooking pots per household (with lids), one wooden stirrer
• One water container per household
• Soap
• Cooking fuel or system (may be found locally, or may have to be supplied)
• Matches

It is possible to debate items that are included and excluded from the above list. For example, some may argue that cooking stoves are essential either for safety or fuel efficiency reasons. In the case of stoves, however, many individuals who are faced with an emergency settlement situation may be unaccustomed to the specific technology of the stove provided or may lack the appropriate fuel for the stove. In such a situation, the recipient may be prone to either not using the stove or to selling the stove and its fuel on the local market in order to obtain cash. In some urban situations where central heating systems have failed, however, provision of safe stoves for inside heating and cooking use may be considered essential. In settlements where cooking over an open fire is an option, the stove is not essential. Even so, the promotion of user–built modifications to the open fire should be encouraged as they can provide fuel savings of up to 50% (Owen).

Based on the above list, many “non–essential” items would be quite beneficial in an emergency situation. These may include eating utensils, bowls and cups, a cutting tool such as a panga or machete, and clothing. Although perhaps not necessary for survival, none of these items are luxuries. While it is true that people can eat out of a communal cooking pot using only their hands, not every cultural group may be comfortable with this practice. Many may be more at ease with individual bowls, cups and spoons. Similarly, unless there is an unlimited supply of fuel and shelter, those individuals who are forced to settle in an emergency situation may desperately need a cutting knife either to collect fuel or to build or improve shelter. Clothing is also an essential item, especially in cold climates and in conflict situations. For example, in Southern Sudan where market systems are not functioning effectively, many people flee the fighting without additional clothing.

At a minimum, those goods included in the list of essential items should be provided as soon as possible after emergency settlement. After the initial phases of an emergency, it may be useful to provide certain non–essential items as well.

2. An assessment of the emergency settlement population and surrounding environment must be conducted to determine the quantity and type of needed household goods.

To determine the necessary type and quantity of household goods, an assessment of the emergency settlement population should be conducted. It is necessary to determine both the total number of people and the number of households affected by the emergency. It is important to have an accurate estimate of the number of people in order to determine the total demand for those items allocated on an individual basis (e.g. blankets). Determining the number of affected households (and thus average household size) is important for estimating the total demand for those items allocated on a household basis (e.g. water containers, soap, etc.)

In providing household goods, the household members who will actually use the goods should be considered to ensure appropriate size and design of the goods to be distributed. For example, it is necessary to determine which household members will be primarily responsible for such activities as water collection. If children are responsible, it will be necessary that water containers are of a size that can be easily handled by children.

In addition to a household–level assessment, an assessment of the surrounding natural environment should be conducted to determine the most likely fuel source and most appropriate methods for cooking and heating in order to avoid undue pressure on fuel wood resources. Cooking fuel supply is an issue rarely addressed until the consequences of destructive fuel procurement become apparent. Yet cooking is an essential household activity which will take place at least twice daily, and requires significant energy inputs. Per capita demand for fuelwood normally approaches 350 kg per annum (Owen), making it one of the most significant requirements of the settlement population. Knowledge of the average household size is important for estimating fuel consumption, procuring fuel and developing a strategy to meet the demand through reliable, non–destructive and sustainable means.

Finally, if time and resources permit, an assessment of the host community should be conducted. This assessment of the host community and its markets and services may be useful for determining whether local businesses can provide necessary supplies for the emergency settlement population.

3. Cultural factors should be considered in the provision of household goods.
The provision of certain household goods should be tied to cultural norms and traditions. As such, an understanding of these norms, particularly the gender roles associated with different household functions and goods, is an essential product of the community assessment.

Culture is important in deciding which utensils, bowls, and cups should be provided. When emergency responders do not consider the cultural preferences of the emergency settlement population, adaptations are often made by the target population. For example, in Somali refugee camps, refugees sold the metal spoons which had been distributed and used locally–made wooden stirrers instead. In addition, a small metal, aluminum and wood manufacturing industry produced household utensils for sale in Somali camps so that refugees had access to culturally acceptable items.

Culture should also be considered with regard to provision of fuel. In some cases, the affected population will traditionally be used to cooking with biomass fuels such as firewood, charcoal, agricultural residues or cow dung. In other settings they may have used fossil fuels or electricity. Traditional fuel use is fundamental to the way cooking is considered, and it is difficult to change traditional practices. Therefore, the settlement population may experience the least disruption if they are able to continue with their traditional cooking system. Changes in customary cooking practices are more likely to be successful if the alternative method has considerable perceived benefits to the cooks who are usually women.

4. The quality and type of the household items supplied is an important consideration in emergency settlements.

The quality and type of the goods is often as important a consideration as price. It is inadvisable to procure low quality items based on the assumption that the emergency is short–term, the population is in–transit or the camp is about to close. Especially in the case of refugees, emergency situations often out–last all estimates, and it is a cumbersome and costly procedure to re–allocate items which break or wear–out, especially when some do so before others.

Also, to the extent possible, goods should be supplied based on local preference and local or regional markets – not driven by the need to dispose of donor surpluses. Providing inappropriate items in order to eliminate surpluses can generate problems which range from changing local people’s tastes to creating dependencies on outside agencies.

5. Procurement and distribution standards must be set for the equitable provision of household goods.

To avoid inequities in the emergency settlement, household goods should be purchased according to established standards. Although it may not be possible to set a specific set of standards that will apply to all household goods distributed for every emergency settlement situation, relief agencies should be able to establish a detailed and descriptive set of guidelines which can be adapted to specific emergency situations.

Where multiple agencies are responding to the same population, relief agencies should collaborate on procurement standards to ensure similar type and quality of household goods. Differences in the type of goods provided and distribution methods between different emergency responders, especially if more than one agency is working in the same area, may lead to tension among those affected by the emergency especially if one group receives more items or items of a higher quality than another group.

Best Practices

Those providing household goods to an emergency settlement population should strive to meet the basic non–food needs of the affected population. To do this requires an understanding of the needs of the emergency settlement population as well as knowledge of culturally appropriate responses to meeting identified needs.

Assessment

In conjunction with determining which goods and how many to provide, emergency responders must conduct an assessment of the emergency settlement community in order to acquire some knowledge of the affected population. The overall topic of needs and resources assessment is discussed in the Topic 2 Emergency Settlement Paper, issues pertaining to assessment for household goods will be discussed here. At a very minimum, emergency responders must know:
1. How many households are involved, and
2. How many individuals have been affected by the emergency situation.

With knowledge of the above, emergency responders can provide items such as water containers and cooking utensils for each household and blankets for each person.

Although this basic level of assessment may be appropriate for distribution of household goods in the initial stage of an emergency, the reality that a given emergency settlement situation may be long−term must be recognized and planned for – even in the early stages of an emergency. Accordingly, it is appropriate to conduct an assessment to determine more than just the number of households and the number of individuals. Knowing which household members are responsible for which activities, which household goods are already possessed by individual households and the natural characteristics of the settlement site is also valuable information.

In order to conduct a thorough, complete assessment, certain skills are required on the part of emergency responders. Most important, emergency responders need to be sensitive to the culture and background of the people involved in the emergency. While it is important to understand the types of questions that need to be asked and the specific skills that an interviewer needs to have, the basic abilities to listen and observe are necessary skills for anyone doing an assessment. In addition, previous practical experience in similar situations is helpful as is an awareness of gender issues. Local staff/institutions (government, NGOs, research/academic) and individuals affected by the emergency (displaced/refugees) should play significant roles in planning and implementing the assessment, as well as in analyzing the results and drafting the recommendations. It is also important to have women on the assessment team to overcome any cultural difficulties in gaining access to women since the needs and resources of women may be substantially different from those of men.

### Provision of household goods

Non−food needs can be divided into four categories: *food/water preparation*, *hygiene*, *warmth/comfort*, and *shelter/tools* which can each be examined to determine what household goods may be necessary to satisfy needs within each category. Some or all of these goods may be provided depending on the type of emergency (natural disaster, refugee movement, etc.) and available resources – both those of the emergency settlement population and those of the emergency responders.

This paper is concerned only with the *household goods* that are essential for emergency populations. Other *Emergency Settlement topic papers* also address meeting needs with the four categories identified above. For example, the Environmental Health paper covers various aspects of hygiene and water preparation; the Site Selection paper focuses on shelter; and the Logistics paper discusses procurement, distribution and reporting.

Any attempt to clarify the type of household goods needed in for emergency settlement situations illustrates the overlap between the different categories of household goods. Not only is a sharp ax useful for gathering fuel, it may also be helpful for preparing food or maintaining a shelter. Clean water is necessary for food preparation, drinking and hygiene purposes. Fuel that is important for cooking may be equally important for keeping warm. The following figure illustrates the interdependence of the four areas.
If many humanitarian agencies are responding to the same emergency, there may be overlap of services. Although coordination of services may seem more of an ideal than a practical reality, the concept is one which all emergency providers should work toward. Establishing joint criteria and procedures for providing domestic goods to emergency settlement populations is one important way of coordinating services. In addition, establishing a joint forum may facilitate the process of identifying roles of the various agencies. For example, one agency may be responsible for distribution while other forum members may help with needs assessment, provision of technical staff, provision of resources, and monitoring and evaluation. The overall topic of Interagency Coordination During Emergencies is discussed in the Topic 5 Emergency Settlement Paper.

The types of goods that may be supplied for each category are described in the following four sections. In general, provision of household goods is necessary only in situations where people have been displaced and separated from their homes and personal belongings.

**Goods for food/water preparation**

Proper food preparation is essential to everyone’s health. In emergency situations which affect a whole community’s ability to prepare their own food, there are various options for food preparation. In some cases, the best option may be a communal kitchen in which relief providers and/or those affected by the emergency prepare food for the entire group. The advantages of this type of food preparation are that fewer cooking resources such as stoves and pots are required and less time is spent procuring and distributing cooking utensils to the emergency population. While the amount of time committed to preparing food may be longer, it may or may not represent a disadvantage to the emergency settlement community. Since communal kitchens enable people to rotate food preparation responsibilities, individuals may spend less time overall on food preparation. Disadvantages include constraints on what is available for eating and when. In addition, communal cooking may be resisted by the people themselves (except in the first stages of transit camps) since they may lose control over their key tradable asset, food. In 1993, elders from the Sudanese refugee communities in Kakuma, Kenya refused to allow communal catering except to orphaned minors in only 11 out of 17 camp sections.

Another option is for each family unit or individual to prepare their own food. This may require that emergency responders distribute cooking and eating utensils, matches, fuel and/or stoves. Cooking and eating utensils will vary based on the emergency situation and the culture of the affected population. In terms of cooking utensils, a pot with a lid or a flat frying pan will satisfy most people. In addition, most people will also need a
sharp knife for preparing certain types of food (and for other household purposes) and some type of utensil to stir the food while it cooks.

In every situation where food is provided, perhaps the most important element with regard to food preparation is fuel for cooking. Even in emergencies, some individuals may bring a tea pot or a few cooking utensils with them. Bringing fuel, however, would be very difficult in most emergency situations. In large-scale emergencies, acquiring fuel can have serious environmental effects and may result in hostility between the emergency settlement community and the local population. Therefore, the issues around fuel must be examined carefully.

**Fuel**

The fuel demand of emergency settlement populations is likely to be substantial. To cook each ton of wheat and beans provided by humanitarian agencies requires three tons of firewood (UNHCR, 1992c). For a family of five or six, daily consumption of firewood may approximate 5 kg (UNHCR, 1986). An assessment of existing fuel resources and of the approximate demand for fuel is therefore extremely important. Demand for cooking fuel must be known in order to establish which supply systems will be most appropriate since fuel collection has potentially damaging environmental implications. Assessment of fuel needs is best carried out at the household or family level through a simple survey of consumption rates per given length of time.

After assessing the demand for fuel, it is necessary to consider how the demand will be met. If wood is generally the type of fuel that is used in the local area, emergency providers should forecast the effects on local forestry if wood is collected by members of the emergency settlement community. In addition, the assessment team should inquire about local tree management systems as well as government policies and laws regarding tree ownership. Disregard of existing local systems will create hostility between the emergency settlement population and the local community. In most cases, members of the emergency settlement will acquire wood from the closest, most accessible source which means that the dead and/or fallen wood nearest the settlement will be collected first. After this wood is exhausted, trees nearest the settlement will be chopped down. Especially if women are the fuel wood gatherers, they will resist going too far to collect wood because of child care responsibilities or for fear of assault. Furthermore, daily wood collection may prevent women from attending skills training or adult literacy classes and may keep young girls away from school. For these reasons, agencies responding to emergencies should consider the implications of providing or not providing fuel to emergency settlement populations.

At times, even in places where wood has not been the usual fuel, emergency situations may mean that individuals are forced to burn wood for cooking and/or heating. In Sarajevo, for example, the war resulted in massive deforestation of the hillsides around the city – even trees in the parks were chopped down by people anxious for fuel.

Past experience, particularly in refugee camps, indicates that deforestation occurs rapidly when fuel is not provided. If wood is the only option that is considered feasible by the relief experts, then those experts should try to determine alternative methods for acquiring wood. For example, one proposal for a refugee camp in Kenya was to hire old trucks from local residents, hire the Kenyan police to guard the trucks, and obtain 10–12 male volunteers from each section of the refugee camp. This group would drive several miles away from the refugee camp into the bush where the group, with the assistance of a trained forestry expert, would collect dead wood and identify trees that could provide wood without damaging the environment. Thus, with some cost and effort, the refugees would have access to wood, the women would be protected from assault when collecting wood too far into the bush, the trees immediately surrounding the camp would be protected, and the local population would feel that their local resources were being less threatened by the refugees. Another option might be to hire contractors to supply firewood.

To reduce the negative impacts of using fuelwood, the following range of options may be considered:

- **Reducing firewood demand.** This can be done through the promotion of improved cooking hardware, energy saving cooking methods and changes in food being cooked. Because of fuel shortages, it is likely that the settlement population is already making efforts to conserve energy. Therefore, changing the food ration is often the most effective means to reduce firewood demand. For example, supplying maize in ground rather than whole form has an enormous effect on energy saving since cooking ground maize requires over 70% less fuel than whole maize (Owen).
If everything possible is already being done to make the food ration energy effective (at the same time as being acceptable to the population), then a program of awareness raising in energy conservation may be worth considering. This is best done through group discussions involving women and follow–up with extension workers – posters, cards and other supporting materials can also be useful. The program can include a variety of locally–built mudstoves and various conservation techniques such as using lids, drying fuel and pre–soaking foods. If cutting wood is necessary, good, sharp axes are important because the use of hooks and blunt instruments can kill trees which would otherwise survive, if properly pruned or coppiced.

- **Substituting firewood with other fuels.** An assessment of other available fuel sources may be necessary especially if the emergency population is not accustomed to cooking with wood. The type of fuel and stoves (if any) provided will vary from place to place depending on:

  a) what the women of the community are used to,
  b) the type(s) of fuel locally available,
  c) what local materials/craftsmen/manufacturers exist, and
  d) the type of food distributed.

If people are used to a particular type of fuel for cooking and heating purposes, it is difficult to change to new cooking systems. Changes will be more readily accepted if they offer considerable perceived benefits to the users. It may be possible, for example, to replace some firewood with compressed fuel briquettes made of sawdust, rice husks, or other wastes if they are available in sufficient quantity. Availability of these briquettes will likely be perceived as beneficial by the community, but the briquettes are also likely to be costly for the supplying agency. In Southern Bangladesh, UNHCR supplied rice husk briquettes to Burmese refugees from 1992–95. This was not cost–effective compared to supplying firewood, but made political sense as there was a perception that refugees were chopping down the local forests for fuel.

Emergency responders should be cautious when introducing new technology such as solar ovens. Before new technology is introduced, surveys should be conducted among the emergency population to determine the appropriateness of the technology and women should be thoroughly trained in use and maintenance of such systems. Supplying unsustainable and unaffordable types of fuel should be avoided since it creates dependency among the emergency population and will probably be difficult for the emergency population to acquire once aid has been stopped. In addition, cookers should be appropriate for the food rations. That is, if a cereal requires long periods of boiling, fuel–efficient stoves are particularly important.

Kerosene or other fossil fuels are an option, but will have to be imported if not easily available locally. Specialized stoves would also have to be purchased and distributed. If stoves are distributed, they should be of an “improved” type, that is, fuel–efficient, smokeless, easily repairable, and child–proof. When stoves are distributed, emergency responders should work to inform and educate the recipients on both the safety and environmental friendliness of the stoves and fuel. In some situations, the main problem with non–biomass fuels (besides the inherent unsustainability of the use of imported fossil fuels) is the likelihood that the population will sell such fuels and stoves directly to the local community and revert to cooking with biomass fuels over open fires.

- **Establishing re–forestation programs.** Tree seedlings can be grown or procured on a large scale and then replanted in forest areas which have been damaged or destroyed by settlement populations. Seedlings can also be given to local smallholders whose trees have been destroyed, but there is no guarantee they will be planted. While re–forestation programs are technically very simple, they are labor intensive. The main difficulty with re–forestation programs – besides protection and management of the seedlings after planting – is the scale of these projects. In Burundi, a French volunteer initiative to plant 400,000 seedlings per year from 1994 onwards would meet only 4% of demand even if it was continued for the next five years – that was with a relatively small refugee population of 150,000. Also, host governments may oppose such programs because they represent tacit recognition that the emergency settlers are not leaving soon, which may be difficult for local people to accept. In Ngara and Karagwe, Tanzania, no reforestation projects were authorized by the government.
even one year after the Rwandese refugees arrived and despite the fact that nearly 1,500 tons of wood were being burned daily.

Water carrying and storage

Proximity to water sources also affects household needs. Light and easily transportable containers are needed, particularly if water is far away. Consideration needs to be given to the way in which the community carried water before displacement. For example, if water was previously transported on horse/donkey–back, will the community easily adapt to head– or back–loading when animal transport is not available? It is also important to determine who is responsible for water carrying – women, men or children – in order to determine the appropriate size container to distribute. If responsibility has changed since displacement, are the utensils appropriate, both physically and culturally? For example, if yokes were previously used by men, but now children are the main water carriers, yokes will probably no longer be appropriate. If the water is delivered by tanker to households, do households have sufficiently large, covered receptacles to receive and safely store the water? A clear distinction should be made between the containers used to obtain and transport water from distribution points and those used for storage. Storage containers should hold at least 20 liters. UNHCR recommends that household storage containers should ideally hold enough to meet the guideline of 10 liters of water per person per day (UNHCR, 1992c). It is necessary to ensure adequate enclosure of the containers to prevent contamination from humans, animals, dust or other sources. A tight cover and dark storage also help to prevent algal growth and the breeding of mosquito larvae. Disinfecting storage containers once a week is recommended (UNHCR, 1992c). At a minimum, each household should receive one 10 liter jerry can. While rectangular cans will prevent water gatherers from rolling the cans back to their shelters, if weaker members of the population are responsible for water collection, emergency responders should consider the additional burdens they will face – they may have to pay someone else to collect water or make several trips. In addition, jerry cans should have small openings so that people will not dip directly into the water. This, in addition to water and hygiene campaigns to educate people about how to treat water and water sources, should limit the possibilities for contamination.

Environmental factors related to the cleanliness of the water source will also affect whether or not water filters or purifying equipment are needed at the household level and whether training is needed in the use of such equipment. For health reasons, quality should not be sacrificed with regard to water storage and water boiling utensils. (For a more detailed discussion of water and sanitation issues see the Emergency Settlement Paper on Environmental Health.)

■ Goods for hygiene

While water is important for food preparation and drinking, it is equally important for hygiene. People need water for bathing, and for washing clothes and eating and cooking utensils. If appropriate washing/laundry facilities are not provided as part of the infrastructure of the emergency settlement, emergency settlers will devise their own methods for washing which may be more wasteful or less sanitary. It is important to consider cultural and religious practices when designing or constructing laundry or bathing facilities.

Care must be taken to ensure the privacy and security of women while bathing. Low, wide metal/plastic basins are often appropriate for private bathing for women and girls. Also, sanitary napkins or their equivalent must be provided. Consideration should be given to the need for women to wash and dry menstrual rags, which are often subjects of taboo; lengths of string or twine to enable thorough drying would be useful for this, as well as for other household purposes. Also, in many societies individuals use water to clean themselves in the latrine. In such settlements, it is a good idea to provide each family a 5 liter container for this purpose.

Soap should be accessible to all households. If soap is not provided, people will generally sell a portion of their food to buy soap. Depending on the nature of the emergency, other hygiene items that may be provided include toilet paper, combs, shaving and hair cutting implements, and toothbrushes. Scissors or new razor blades are essential for birth attendants. In some hot and humid climates, ironing facilities should be available to ensure clothing is free from parasites such as mango fly. Local pests and insect populations need to be considered in case households need mouse traps, rat poison, insecticide, mosquito nets, etc.

■ Goods for warmth/comfort

Emergency assistance providers should have a thorough understanding of the physical environment of the emergency settlement area. Knowledge of average temperatures for each season is important for deciding the type and number of blankets to distribute and for determining if any kind of clothing distribution is necessary. One of the main ways to keep emergency settlers protected from the environment is through the
provision of shelter. This topic is discussed in the *Emergency Settlement Paper on Site Selection, Planning and Shelter*. While a proper shelter is certainly crucial, a structure alone will not provide the necessary amount of warmth and comfort. In addition, emergency settlers need blankets, at a minimum.

Factors affecting the choice of bedding include:

- climate
- the number of vulnerable people in the settlement (elderly, pregnant or lactating mothers, very young, sick, disabled) for whom bedding is important for survival
- household pests – rats, snakes, and scorpions may make beds essential
- local norms and traditions – in some cultures people do not normally use beds
- availability of resources within implementing agencies – in some cases distribution is not based on actual needs, but is driven by availability
- what items have members of the displaced community brought with them – as noted above, if an agency determines that a certain list of goods are essential, then it is desirable to distribute these essential items to everyone regardless of their individual personal possessions.

Care should be taken when making assumptions about displaced people’s ability to supply bedding for themselves either through the local market by selling their labor or some of their assets, or by acquiring bedding supplies through local social systems or kin. Particularly, when people have settled far from towns and cities, this assumption may be wrong and should be carefully examined.

Other items that should be considered in this area, depending on the situation, are beds, sleeping bags, floor mats, clothing and stoves for heating. Clothing requirements will be different based on the geographic region of the emergency. Required clothing for emergency settlers in former Yugoslavia in December will certainly be different from those required by emergency settlers in warmer climates. Despite geographic differences, agencies involved in emergency response can develop guidelines for the appropriate type of clothing to distribute based on the geographic location and socio-cultural context of the emergency.

### Materials for shelter and tools

One of the first priorities in an emergency settlement situation is providing shelter for the emergency settlers. On a temporary basis, tents can be provided. If tents are provided, it is important to give emergency settlers items for repairing the tents. Plastic sheeting can be very useful for this purpose. In Dagahley camp, UNHCR distributed empty grain sacks to refugees to use as replacement material for their homes and latrines. Other shelter items, such as traditional grass mats may be available in camp markets. (For a more complete discussion of physical shelters see the *Emergency Settlement Paper on Site Selection, Planning and Shelter*.)

While most tools may not be absolutely essential at the onset of an emergency, providing agricultural implements or tools for maintaining a shelter may help encourage self-sufficiency on the part of the emergency population. Tools provided for the household should include some sort of ax, panga or sharp instrument for chopping wood or meat. The locally used version is usually most desirable, and will be the one most readily available in the marketplace. If tools are not provided, alternate strategies for making tools accessible to emergency settlement members should be considered. In Dadaab, for example, the refugees borrowed tools from CARE and the UN in return for their ration cards.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, a shovel may be an essential tool. In 1991, Kurdish refugees in southeastern Turkey were desperate to receive shovels – even before receiving food and blankets. More than 50 people per day were dying, and the refugee community was afraid of a cholera epidemic. Shovels were needed to bury the remains of slaughtered animals to try to control pollution of water sources (Telford, 1992).

### Procurement

It is too late to begin the purchasing process only after the emergency settlement has occurred and emergency responders have assessed the needs of the community. Ideally, local communities and emergency responders will have emergency preparedness plans in place before an emergency occurs.
Individuals who are trained and ready to procure household goods for emergency populations, a system for procuring household goods, and predetermined standards for both the type and quantity of household goods to be distributed to emergency populations should already be identified. In some cases, preexisting stockpiles may exist from which materials can be requisitioned when the emergency responders have determined how much is needed. For example, UNICEF maintains an emergency stockpile in Copenhagen, UN DHA maintains one in Pisa, and the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance maintains stockpiles in Maryland, Panama, Italy, Guam and Thailand.

Procurement, in an emergency settlement situation, is a delicate balance between quality and cost, local and international procurement, and delivery time. Emergency responders must act quickly in the early stages of an emergency. While knowledge of local markets will help facilitate emergency response, responders may wish to consider using parallel supply lines from different suppliers or a combination of international and local procurement in large operations where local suppliers cannot provide all the necessary goods in a timely manner. While quality is an important consideration in providing goods, cost also needs to be considered. It is important for emergency responders to recognize that, even in emergencies, competitive bidding is appropriate in order to ensure the lowest cost for the desired goods. Because the nature of the procurement process will change over the life of an emergency settlement, it is important for those involved in procurement to maintain open communication with members of the emergency settlement population to ensure that the right products are provided at the right time.

Quality vs. cost

Most agencies involved in emergency response would like to respond to the emergency in the most cost effective way possible. Cost effective, however, does not mean that the role of the purchasing agent is to find the cheapest household goods available and ship those goods to the emergency settlement community. The quality of utensils is an important issue and should not depend on expected duration of settlement. Aluminum spoons, for example, should never be supplied because they always bend and break. Supplying low quality utensils may lead to disputes over who will get replacements and who will not. In Burundi, for example, maize pounders were distributed in all Red Cross–managed Rwandese refugee camps. Softwood from the *Grevillea Robusta* tree was used and the grinders all cracked within a month and were then useless. Further distributions would have been costly and pointless. One solution would have been to provide pre–ground maize, which uses much less fuel and was preferred by the Rwandese. Another solution would have been to provide high quality grinders from the start. The field manuals identified in the references to this paper describe various cooking sets and utensils that different agencies provide in refugee emergencies. These descriptions can serve as a guide for other emergency providers.

Local procurement

As discussed in the *Topic 17 Emergency Settlement Paper* on logistics, whenever possible, goods should be purchased locally rather than imported from outside the local community. The major exception to this principle is that goods should not be purchased locally if the purchase will result in a major local price increase. Price increases and a shortage of goods may create hostility between the local community and the emergency settlers if they have displaced to a new community. An essential characteristic for someone responsible for purchasing household goods is knowledge of local markets and cultural norms. This should include knowledge of the availability, quality and prices of the range of items to be procured.

Supplying goods from regional centers to many countries at the same time undermines local markets for such goods by allowing an influx of free or very cheap alternatives. For example, in Burundi all the cups and bowls were imported from Zimbabwe, when high quality utensils were available in neighboring Tanzania and nearby Uganda. In Kenya, Chinese machetes were distributed instead of the locally–made versions which were perfectly good. Because emergency settlers may sell distributed goods immediately upon receiving them, market prices may be driven down. It is generally the case that both food and non–food items are cheapest in the local markets following a major distribution. At times, price considerations may outweigh the importance of local procurement; these situations should be handled on a case by case basis. It is always important to consider the long–term effects of a short–term decision based solely on price. In the long–run, such decisions may prove more costly.

Donated items

Usually field–level emergency providers will prefer cash donations over donations in–kind. If goods are donated, however, donors should attempt to give the type of items requested by responding agencies. Donated items should be identical or similar to goods normally used by the affected population; items that
require special storage, preparation or treatment should not be donated unless specifically requested (UNHCR, 1986). While procuring goods locally is generally the best idea, many donated items can be sold for cash if they are deemed inappropriate by either the emergency responders or settlers.

#### Distribution

In an emergency situation, it is essential to distribute household goods to the appropriate individuals/households as quickly and efficiently as possible. Distribution of household goods is typically overseen by the agency which has been designated to handle logistics and which is typically responsible for distributing food. Distribution usually takes place from in-settlement stores, ration shops or distribution centers. If possible, however, efforts should be made to assess, strengthen and use local distribution systems (governmental, local NGOs, local leaders, etc.) and to avoid establishing external parallel systems. An example of an efficient distribution system is the one employed at the Hagadera camp in Kenya. Upon disembarking from the trucks which picked them up at the border, the refugees were registered, medically screened, and given essential items.

Since most household goods are distributed only once or on an irregular basis, the distribution of household goods should not be part of the food distribution system. Fuel and soap (if supplied) will require multiple distributions. Soap can be given out regularly with food. If firewood is supplied, it cannot be distributed at the same time as food since it is too bulky and heavy for families to be expected to carry along with their food. It is normal to distribute fuelwood by the stacked cubic meter or some other volumetric measure and to distribute to several families at a time for speed and efficiency. Emergency responders should ensure that the emergency settlement community is aware of both what and how household goods will be distributed. It is important that the agency responsible for distribution has the proper monitoring and reporting controls to ensure that everyone receives their entitled goods and that only those entitled to the allocation receive it. Ration cards or another type of identification should be required to receive goods. Involving members of the emergency population in the design and monitoring of the distribution system will provide additional control.

With regard to distribution at the household level, there should probably be less variation within a settlement in the number of household items received compared to commodities such as food and clothing because one set of basic utensils will serve a family whatever its size (within reason.) The items given out should be the same in type and quality for all households and will only differ depending on the number of family members.

#### Equitable distribution

Although it is important to complete a needs and resources assessment of the emergency settlement population, certain distribution procedures should be considered standard regardless of the assessment results. For example, if an agency adopts a minimum standard for essential household goods, everyone in the emergency population should receive the standard distribution. In order to facilitate distribution, this same principle may also apply to the distribution of “non-essential” goods. On the other hand, if resources are limited, emergency responders may need to restrict distribution of non-essential resources to those who are most in need. It is important to acknowledge that, even in an emergency situation, supply lines in the private sector will exist so that emergency settlers with personal resources will have access to desired goods.

#### Standards

The issue of standards is complex because no two emergency situations are alike. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to have a certain general “standard” set in advance – recognizing that each individual situation will require adaptations. Reasons that standards may vary include: type of disaster, family size, efficiency of the local market, and resources brought with the displaced. Flexibility has to be given to the assessors/implementors to decide what is appropriate for a given emergency. In situations where people are fleeing war, the following are some essential household needs: clothes, blankets, mats, cooking utensils, water containers and shoes. A suggested emergency distribution package is as follows:

- One blanket per person (two in cold places)
- Cooking utensils – two cooking pots with lids per household, one stirrer
- One water container with lid per household
- Soap
- Cooking fuel (may be found locally, or may have to be supplied)
- Matches
When establishing such a list it is important to consider the type, specifications and quantity of goods to be distributed in addition to considering the reasons behind certain specifications. For example, have previous emergency settlement distributions demonstrated that heavy duty, waterproof canvas tents are the most durable, or is another material better? Establishing a general standard will provide emergency responders with a quick and efficient way to determine the quantity of required goods. Equally important is conveying the importance of adapting general standards to meet the needs of a particular emergency settlement. For example, it may not be sufficient to simply specify that one blanket per person is required (two in cold places.) It may be more appropriate to specify that in a particularly hot climate one cotton blanket per person is required while in a cold climate, a 70% wool blanket, or possibly two, is required – or even that blankets are not sufficient and sleeping bags are required. A further complexity is the issue of who will receive the blanket. While a cotton blanket may suffice for a healthy adult male in a temperate climate, it may not be adequate for an elderly person in the same climate. Providing emergency responders with a pre-established starting point from which to base their decisions in particular emergency situations will facilitate a quick and efficient response.

When deciding which household goods to distribute – number, type and quality – it is important for emergency responders to consider existing local standards. When possible, local standards, not external ones should be followed. In addition to determining the local standards in the settlement area, emergency responders should also obtain background information about living standards in the home areas of the emergency settlers. As long as the health of the settlers is not endangered, matching the standards that people are accustomed to will avoid the creation of a high level of services which will be difficult for local people and government to sustain after the withdrawal of aid agencies or resettlement/repatriation to home areas.

In some cases the conditions of the local community are as bad as (or worse than) those of the emergency settlers and the entire combined population may be considered to be in a state of emergency settlement. In the case of household goods, members of the local community will likely have everything they need. One possible exception may be that the local population needs fuel as much as the emergency settlers. This may be especially true in situations of mass displacement where local fuelwood resources are rapidly depleted. On the other hand, the host community may actually benefit more than it suffers from an emergency settlement. Benefits for the local community may include employment of locals by agencies responding to the emergency, lower market prices of essential commodities, marketing opportunities for certain goods required by the settlement population, black marketeering of misappropriated food and other supplies, and the cheap labor supply which may suddenly become available. The balance of services between emergency settlers and the host community is a very sensitive and difficult political issue. At the onset of an emergency, implementing agencies should engage local governments, settlement leaders/institutions, and the host community in decisions regarding the level of services to be provided.

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Introduction

Far more involved than simply “loading and dispatching trucks”, the logistics of supporting an emergency response is a complex set of procedures and activities which merges numerous interdependent technical systems. As a result of this interdependency, the logistics chain can be only “as strong as its weakest link.” Given the security concerns which increasingly figure in emergency operations, each of those systems must receive due attention on the part of planners on an on-going basis to ensure that the risks to other systems – and staff – are minimized. Close attention must be given to each of the “links” which generally include:

• Contingency and Operations Planning
• Ongoing Logistics Assessment
• Procurement (Commodities, Supplies and Equipment)
• Security Management
• Communications Management
• Commodity Transport, Storage, and Handling
• Maintenance & Repair (Facilities and Equipment)
• Distribution Systems Management
• Monitoring
• Recording and Reporting Systems
The logistics operations plan forms an integral part of the overall emergency operation plan. Its development should be undertaken in close collaboration with emergency program planners; in short, logistics objectives must support those of the overall program. Any needed modifications to the logistics plan should be immediately communicated to those responsible for overall program management. Cooperation, communications, and coordination between logistics and program are essential under crisis conditions.

**Principles**

1. **The purpose of the logistics and procurement operation is to deliver the right supplies in the right quantities in good condition to the right place at the right time as efficiently as possible.**

   While the aim of operating a logistics system “as efficiently as possible” is usually equated with “operating at the lowest cost.” This criterion of “lowest cost” may often be at odds with the other objectives of “right supplies, quantities, condition, place and time”. Indeed, the issue of “saving lives at any cost” – viewed as almost a truism by many emergency response planners – must perhaps be reexamined given the plethora of emergencies to which the international community is expected to respond and the corresponding decline in available resources. Hard choices must be made.

   It is critical that logisticians – in collaboration with overall emergency response program managers – make a concerted effort to balance these sometimes conflicting aims.

2. **A single, centrally–managed operation with standardized procedures with clearly defined staff responsibilities is the preferred management structure for an emergency logistics operation.**

   The logistics operation should be under the direction of a commonly recognized authority. If necessary, different functions of the logistics system may be implemented by different collaborating agencies, but they all should fall under the single, centrally managed authority. A highly decentralized structure is an invitation to chaos.

   This principle has – admittedly – often been violated as emergency response agencies rush to the emergency scene and compete for exposure and funds. Many NGOs in particular regularly and resolutely refuse to submit their actions to a “centrally–managed authority.” Whether for reasons of principle or of potential donations, private agencies place high value on their “private” status and view submission to an external authority as a compromise of this status. It is critical that host governments, donors, and the UN (or other entities charged with “managing the logistics operation centrally”) understand this position held by so many NGOs who are vital to the response and try to work with them as partners – rather than simply view them as “irresponsible renegade elements.” Fortunately, this need for partnership is increasingly recognized as agencies begin to prepare “letters of understanding” and attempt to lay down in advance ground rules for future emergency program cooperation.

3. **Local procurement of supplies for the emergency response should be considered before resorting to the importation of resources into the affected country.**

   The decision to procure locally must ensure that purchases will not negatively impact local prices or disrupt access to essential commodities by the local population. Other factors affecting decisions whether or not to procure locally include financial considerations (e.g., currency variation) and administrative requirements (e.g., fund transfers through operating banks.)

4. **Local procurement should generally occur as close as possible to the emergency–affected area if by doing so the “per ton” costs of commodity delivery are reduced.**

   There are a myriad of factors which influence the decision to purchase locally, not all of them economic. (See Section II, Part 8) Essential considerations in the decision whether or not to purchase locally include – among other factors – the availability and reliability of transport at the point of purchase and, the impact of local purchase on per ton costs. Procurement officers should take into account the probability of local procurement increasing local prices to such a point that the “savings” incurred from shorter transport routes may be reduced or even eliminated.

   It is useful to distinguish between resources procured for distribution to the emergency settlement community and those materials procured for the operation itself. It may be, for example, preferable – from the standpoint of technical specifications, security, ease of shipment, etc. – to purchase vehicle parts in Europe for use in an East African logistics operation. Proximate local procurement of food items to be distributed to the affected
population is likely to produce a commodity acceptable to that population.

5. Given the likelihood for dramatic increases in the emergency−affected population and the fact that under emergency conditions, “thing generally tend to go wrong”, logisticians should always plan for spare capacity in the logistics system

In many instances, and especially in refugee situations, the numbers of those moving to the area of emergency settlement increase over the first few weeks or months of the emergency as reports of “safe haven” or of “available services” are disseminated or as the conditions triggering the exodus degenerate further. (Indeed, depending upon the magnitude of the emergency, substantial changes in beneficiary numbers may be anticipated any time.)

Where feasible, therefore, the buildup of buffer stocks – of materials to be distributed and of resources to run the operation – is advised. It is true, however, that international emergency response funding procedures generally preclude “resourcing” situations that have yet to arise. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon planners to maintain contingency plans for such scenarios of sudden change and to prepare for likely increases in levels of beneficiary need.

6. Whenever feasible, existing logistical structures and systems (e.g., railroads, truck fleets, barges, warehousing, etc.) should be used to move and store supplies for the emergency−affected population. New systems should only be established in the absence of existing, functioning systems or where the security of such systems cannot be adequately assured.

The assessment as to whether or not such existing systems are in fact “functioning” should consider their capacity, condition, and reliability – and the likelihood that other demands could suddenly make those systems unavailable to the emergency logistics operation. For example, the harvesting of local crops may result in a sudden lack of available transport as local producers corner the supply of transport; or local authorities or contractors may simply renegade on logistics−support agreements to the detriment of the logistics operation and the emergency – affected population.

Here the logistician should be considering “lowest−cost” criteria. If existing government truck fleets require only quickly obtainable spare parts and basic repairs to “get back on the road”, then such efforts are generally preferred over the effort to procure new trucks from abroad, an action which can quickly become bogged down in customs or other delays.

7. Airlifting bulk supplies – food commodities in particular – for ultimate distribution to those in the emergency−affected area is extremely costly and should only be considered as a measure of last resort: i.e., if lives are threatened and less costly means cannot reach those affected in time.

It should be noted that there are specific situations where airlifts can be useful and should be considered as an option by logisticians. Where high value, low−volume supplies – e.g., medicines, water−purification chemicals and equipment, radio communications equipment, etc. – are essential to emergency program startup, then airlifts are in fact an option that logisticians should consider. In such cases, the items to be airlifted should be prioritized in collaboration with overall emergency program planners.

Emergency respondent should be aware, however, that the tendency to view airlifts as a “normal” response to crisis is increasing and at the expense of other more efficient and effective means of transport. As national military forces with their far greater resource bases have become increasingly involved in emergency response, the use of airlifts has at times been viewed as the first response to an emergency situation. In some cases, airlifting has continued long after the establishment of a viable ground transport system. It is critical that civilian logisticians continue to seek effective and efficient means to move emergency commodities – and make known to overall emergency program managers the high costs involved in emergency airlifts.

8. Authority to procure essential emergency resources should be decentralized to the field level only in situations where qualified, professional staff and well−established procedures are in place in the field – in particular, a systematic and accountable method for transferring funds to the field staff for the actual procurement.

Decentralization of decision−making is increasingly viewed by many international relief and development agencies as practically an end in itself. The sincere desire to eliminate top heavy bureaucracy often results in efforts to push decision−making down to field officers who are closer to the areas of implementation. This proximity to the area of implementation, however, means that these officers are usually farther afield from
suppliers and the procurement negotiations which can sometimes result in great cost-savings for the agency. Where such decentralization of procurement is desired by top management, there must be close and ongoing communications between field and head office to ensure that the specifications of items to be purchased are appropriate and that negotiated costs are reasonable.

9. From the outset of the emergency logistics operation, all commodity movements – from the point of entry in the country to the end–distribution site – must be approved by a recognized authority and well–documented in accordance with established inventory procedures.

Many agencies, in their rush to respond to the emergency, take the attitude that “we will move the commodities now and account for them later when we have more time.” However, attempts to track past, undocumented movements – i.e., to figure out ex post facto “what happened” – are almost always bound to fail.

With the numerous commodity accounting systems, manual and computerized, that have been developed over the past two or three decades, there is absolutely no good reason why agencies cannot send in an experienced inventory systems expert on a short–term basis to install and train staff in a well–functioning inventory system from the very outset of the program.

Best Practices

■ Logistics planning: Before the logistics plan which is to support an emergency program can be developed, logisticians must consider the following:

- **Size of affected population:** All calculations of resource requirements (food, water, shelter material, health services, etc.) and logistical requirements (warehousing space, transport capacity, distribution sites, staff requirements) can only be made once an estimate of population has been made. Absolute accuracy at the beginning – while desirable – is not essential; a “best estimate” can be produced in the interests of saving time. Numbers should be based on the best estimates of people presently in the settlement and include a “best guess” as to the expected number of new arrivals over the planning period.

- **Service level:** The level of service that is to be provided to the settlement must be decided. Decisions will have to be made concerning ration size (general or supplementary): will the population have access to other foods locally? Once the ration size is decided, the quantities to be delivered (ration size × population size × period of service) can be calculated as can the logistical capacity requirements. Other decisions concerning water, shelter, and other community services must also be made as these will affect the capacity of the logistics system to deliver needed goods and services to the settlement.

- **Accessibility of the settlement:** Accessibility to the settlement area must be assessed by trained logistics officers. A settlement that is inaccessible to ground transport may require airlifting or airdrops. A settlement with limited access may mean that goods and materials will have to change modes or means of transport frequently, potentially increasing storage and handling costs and incurred damages. In such a situation, commodity and inventory controls will have to be established at each transshipment point, again increasing the costs of the operation.

- **Access to water:** Planners should consider as well the proximity of the settlement to water resources. Trucking water into a settlement community can quickly become the highest cost component of the entire emergency operation; whenever possible – before a site is selected – logisticians should be consulted to ascertain this potentially crippling cost.

Once the above–mentioned aspects are determined, a logistics plan can be developed; it will have to address the following issues:

- **Transportation:** Transport plans must consider the quantities of commodities and other materials needed to supply the settlement over the plan period. Turnaround–times between commodity source and the settlement (and between all other transshipment points) must be factored into the calculation of transport needs. Transport plans must more and more consider the reality of operating in an insecure, unsafe environment. Where conditions are such, convoy systems must increasingly be planned with all of the attending storage and
handling problems that beset large deliveries.

Of particularly importance concerning transport planning are fuel, spare parts, and maintenance requirements. An unforeseen lack of any of these can pose major impediments to the full use of transport capacity.

• **Storage and handling:** Storage capacity must be determined by calculating the flow of commodities into the settlement and the rate of distribution. If commodity receipt rates exceed potential distribution rates, additional warehousing space will be needed. Also, the greater the number of transshipment points, the greater the amount of storage capacity and handling.

• **Distribution cycles:** The duration of time between commodity distributions in the community must be calculated as well. While it may be more practical for the logistics operation to make deliveries to the settlement on a monthly or quarterly basis, this cycle may be impractical for both emergency field officers and/or beneficiaries (given storage, monitoring capacities, etc.) who would probably prefer more frequent arrivals. Once the distribution cycle is agreed, then food delivery needs and the amounts to be distributed during each cycle can be calculated.

**Record keeping and information management:** Successful management of the logistics operation will depend greatly upon the reliability of the record-keeping system. A comprehensive inventory recording and reporting system must be set up prior to the actual arrival in port – or the start of local procurement – of commodities destined for the emergency program. The system must record and track all entries and issues and be able to provide current commodity status reports on an as-needed basis to program managers. As well, close attention must be paid to the establishment and maintenance of all transport records: fuel receipts, vehicle service records, spare parts inventory reports, truck tire serial number listings, etc.

For the purpose of assessing accountability and program impact, these systems must be set up before supplies begin to flow to the settlement.

**Logistics staffing/skills/training:** Staffing requirements to manage the logistics operation for an emergency program will vary with the situation. Often, many of the jobs can be filled from local recruitment and personnel “on loan” from local government departments. What is essential is resolute, experienced management: the following professional logistics staff are generally needed:

• **Logistics manager:** Overall responsibility for coordinating transport, storage, distribution, and reporting efforts; supervising logistics and distribution staff; coordinating with programming staff and with other service providers.

• **Transportation operations manager:** Responsible for receiving and dispatch operations, fleet/equipment management, transport support services (maintenance, fuel, etc.)

• **Inventory manager:** Responsible for managing flows through the system; overseeing warehouse operations and staff; tracking and reporting on stocks by shipment, commodity type (and, increasingly, by donor and usage.)

• **Distribution manager:** Responsible for overseeing – and in some cases actually carrying out – distributions to beneficiaries; managing distribution teams, coordinating with recipient community; monitoring end-use.

• **Procurement/contracts/administrative officer:** Responsible for procurement of materials, supplies; issuing transport or other contracts; verifying receipt of goods and services by consignees.

The size of the emergency response and particularly of the logistics operation will determine whether all of the above positions are staffed. Smaller operations may combine these functions into fewer positions (e.g., Inventory/Distribution Manager or Logistics/Procurement Officer)

• **Skills:** Skills essential to the proper functioning of the logistics operation include:
It is important to bear in mind that, while certain logistics skills are highly technical and require significantly experienced personnel (e.g., port facilities assessment or communications system setup), many logistics tasks can in fact be done by conscientious, numerically-literate persons who have an interest in seeing the emergency operation function smoothly.

Logisticians, in planning the operation, should not overlook the possibility of hiring or using on a voluntary basis where feasible, members of the actual beneficiary population. The emergency affected population almost certainly has skills, experience, and/or motivation which can assist the effort. Areas of beneficiary involvement in the logistics operation might include warehouse operations (loading and unloading, stacking, or, where skill levels are sufficient, warehouse staff supervision), monitoring (warehouse and distribution operations), and physical distribution.

It should be noted that pressures may be exerted upon staff recruited locally by family, friends, or factions to use the system to the benefit of the particular interest group rather than for the common good. Managers must be aware of the local operating environment and, where such pressures cannot be resisted, look elsewhere to recruit staff.

- **Training:** The best training for entry-level logisticians is “on-the-job”: i.e., working alongside an experienced logistician. Emergency operations workshops – e.g., UNHCR Emergency Management Training Program or WFP Emergency Operations Training Workshop – are also useful for providing generalists with an overview of the logistical concerns of emergency operations. As well, there exist numerous comprehensive handbooks on the subject of logistics operations; a review of these manuals and of the specific procedures used by the various organizations involved in the operation is always be helpful. *The UNHCR Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook* is particularly valuable for training generalists in logistics.

Agencies which plan to undertake long-term logistics operations in particular emergency situations should consider providing from the outset a logistician who is capable of working with and training generalists. In this way, the skills of the emergency population can be increased and manual jobs provided to those most in need. Such efforts are almost certain to result in significant cost-savings for the agency as or entry-level administrative/supervisory positions in the operation become locally staffed and avoid the high travel and maintenance costs of expatriates.

**Planning for expansion:** Spare Capacity Concerns: Planning spare capacity into the logistics operation is always advisable, although the high costs of establishing the operation and the unwillingness of donors to fund “anticipated needs” may preclude the procurement of substantial space capacity. The manager should, therefore, become informed in advance as to where additional capacity might be hired on a short-term, as-needed basis to handle unforeseen events or expected peak, seasonal needs. Requirements will vary, depending upon delivery times, storage capacity, road conditions, etc. In general, the following rules apply:

- **Staff time:** A working month of 20 – 25 days should be planned. While dedicated staff can work non-stop when required, this pace cannot be maintained for extended periods; otherwise productivity will decline and mistakes begin to appear. Logistics managers should be aware of the hours that their staff are working and ensure that needed downtime is available, particularly under highly stressful, insecure conditions.

- **Transport:** While exact figures will depend on a number of factors such as road conditions and availability of alternative modes of transport, in general, space transport capacity can be calculated as follows: calculate the number of trucks needed (factors to consider include total
tonnage to be moved, truck capacity, turnaround time for each trip, number of trips possible per month) and add an additional 20% to account for bulkier non–food items (which can reduce individual truck capacity by 10%) and for truck down–time due to maintenance and repairs. For light operational vehicles, calculate actual needs and add one or two vehicles. For field monitoring staff, calculate actual needs and add one additional vehicle per eight existing.

- **Storage:** Plan for enough storage capacity to be able to keep at least one month’s supply in storage as a buffer stock. Warehousing is not usually the most critical limiting factor as temporary storage can often be arranged in schools or other public facilities, or even under tarpaulins (as long as pallets and security for the goods can be assured.)

- **Security practices:** The best security measure is, obviously, to situate the emergency–affected population and the logistical routes which serve that population out of “harm’s way.” This may not be possible, depending upon the geographic spread of the violence, the authority of the host government (or, increasingly, the absence of government.) The logistics planner must, then, take into account the following security concerns as well:

  - **Logistics staff:** Protection of staff must be the chief concern for the logistics manager. Managers must stay informed about the political environment and of any changes in operating conditions. Staff contact via high–quality communications equipment is essential. Procedures for evacuating the emergency–affected area should be established and communicated to all staff in advance of any need to carry them out. It is critical that all staff understand exactly whose decision it is to evacuate and the repercussions within that agency of a staff member’s refusal to obey that evacuation order.

  - **Security of goods in transit and storage:** Warehouse managers must ensure that entries and exits to all warehouses are controlled and that warehouse guard systems are established. Transport managers must approve all commodity movements in advance and ensure that deliveries are made in accordance with signed documentation. Managers must consider the level of security along the planned transport route (e.g., the threat of truck hi–jacking and/or commodity theft, the potential for rain or other seasonal impediments, etc.) and (a) restrict travel accordingly to secure, passable routes; (b) dispatch trucks when feasible in convoys; and/or (c) recruit armed security forces to accompany deliveries.

- **Accountability:** To ensure accountability, the logistical operation must be able to account for and document (a) the receipt, allocation/use, and disposition of all commodities and (b) the location, use and cumulative assignments of all operational equipment and materials consigned to the emergency operation. Agency staff should be present at all times when commodities are handled, stored, and/or distributed. It is essential that accountability measures be put in place from the outset of the emergency logistics operation; the emergency logistics operation must maintain and provide – as with any well–functioning commodity accounting system – the following:

  - **Stock ledgers:** Maintained in all warehouse locations. Stock ledgers must detail all entries and issues from stock for each shipment by date, units handled, source and emergency program destination. The waybill number for each movement and a running balance of stocks must be included.

  - **Waybills:** Each commodity issue must be accompanied by a pre–printed, pre–numbered waybill which is issued in multiple copies (one copy to remain at the point of origin, two to accompany the stock issue – one of which will remain with the receiver and one signed copy of which will return to the point of origin as “proof” of delivery). Waybills must generally include the dates of issuance and receipt, the quantity (units and weight), type, condition, source, and emergency program destination of the goods, the ID number of the transport vehicle, a signature authorizing issuance, and a signature of an authorized staff member at the warehouse confirming receipt of goods.

  - **Summary reports:** Each warehouse must produce periodic summary reports detailing all receipts and issues for each commodity. Issues from one point should be compared to receipts at each dispatch location. Losses (quantities, type, reason, and location) in the system must be identified as well.
• Dispatch reports: Each warehouse should provide all receiving points with a list of commodity dispatches to that particular destination. Receiving points should compare these lists with their records to verify receipt of consignment.

• Stock reconciliation and physical inventory count: Stock ledgers must be periodically verified for accuracy. Physical inventory must be done periodically at each warehouse by staff not directly connected to the warehousing operation. Physical counts must then be compared with documented balances.

- Logistics operations for displaced populations dispersed in local communities: The chief logistical concerns when trying to reach dispersed emergency populations are distribution modes and costs. As segregating the dispersed, displaced population apart from the resident population to carry out the distribution may not be possible, the scheduling of deliveries for numerous distribution points throughout the local community often becomes necessary.

Logisticians should attempt to organize distributions according to pre-announced dates at specified points and to organize local transport from forward storage points to distribution points within the local communities. Decisions about ration size should take into account the needs of the local resident population to avoid creating tensions between the displaced and their resident hosts. Whenever feasible, the participation of both displaced persons and resident community members should be encouraged to assist the distribution: e.g., loading and unloading trucks or handling the physical distribution.

- Logistics operations for non-combatants trapped in their communities: The primary logistics concern must clearly be security conditions for staff and material goods. Managers must stay abreast of changing operating conditions and be prepared to shut down operations when necessary and restart them when windows of opportunity open. Assuming that an acceptable level of security for staff can be assured, logisticians must be concerned with accessibility of the non-combatants’ zones. Advice of any UN military protection forces should be sought and the logistics operation planned and carried out in close cooperation with those forces.

Warehousemen must pay close attention to the loading of trucks or aircraft involved in the relief operation to ensure that no items are transported that could, in any way, compromise the credibility of the humanitarian effort or put the relief operation staff at risk. In the absence of an agreement between the warring parties to let relief supplies flow to the emergency-affected area, the relief effort is likely to be plagued with stops and starts as access to the settlements opens and closes. Under such conditions, planning for spare capacity increases in importance as the likelihood of interruptions in deliveries increases and stocks begin to pile up at front-end storage points.

Should air-drops become necessary, careful consideration should be given to the selection of drop zones taking into account: accessibility for clearing operations without undue risks from any of the warring parties, minefields, or falling supply containers. Control over the drop zone, while difficult to obtain, is always preferable.

- Procurement issues: In an emergency situation, the ability to determine and obtain needed supplies quickly is essential. Unfortunately, many agencies remain extremely rigid about their procurement procedures; many find it difficult to accept that emergency conditions may require the temporary establishment of an entirely different set of procedures. Emergency operations logistics officers should take into account the following:

  • Planning: Well-documented emergency procedures and pre-established relief checklists can greatly speed procurement activities. Items to be supplied to the logistics operation generally fall into the following categories:

    ? vehicles (light and heavy)
    ? spare parts, fuel, and vehicle maintenance equipment
    ? communications equipment
    ? warehouse supplies (record and report forms, pallets, handling equipment, etc.)
    ? office equipment and supplies
    ? security equipment
Agencies that can draw up checklists with clear specifications of needed items ahead of time may be able to write contracts in advance with suppliers to guarantee price, quality, and delivery terms.

- **Training:** Procurement for an emergency operation should be carried out by a trained procurement officer — although this is frequently not the case. At a minimum, field officers involved in procurement activities should be briefed in standard agency procedures, in essential items specifications, and in the status of the current operating environment.

- Training may also be needed to orient field officers to “think as emergency managers.” Too often, field officers are trained to “watch every penny” in their normal, regular program budgets. While cost will always be a concern, “lowest-cost” criteria should not necessarily or rigidly determine procurement decisions for an emergency program. Issues such as reliability, speed of delivery, and item availability become increasingly important and should be communicated to all emergency managers at all levels of the agency.

- **Specifications:** A critical factor in the timely, effective functioning of a logistics operation is the capacity of those purchasing materials to provide exact specifications of needed equipment or other materials to the supplier — e.g., item description, catalogue number, part number, etc. The ability to provide exact specifications and communicate clearly with vendors can greatly speed the flow of goods, especially when the materials must be imported into the emergency-affected country.

- **HQ/field communications:** Inefficiencies in the establishment of an effective logistics operation occur when authorization to purchase is vested in persons other than those who require the materials (and who may fundamentally distrust the knowledge or motives of the field users.) Such inefficiencies are best dealt with in advance through the clarification of and training in the particular agency’s procurement procedures.

- **Timing:** A procurements officer must be knowledgeable about the expected delays between purchase order and arrival on-site of the goods. Such delays are lamentable under “normal” conditions and can kill under crisis conditions. Arrival times are one of the chief concerns to consider when trying to decide whether to purchase the items locally or, at least, regionally.

- **Availability of funds:** The procurements officer must be well acquainted with the severity of donor restrictions; i.e., can the donor’s funds actually be used to buy locally or regionally, or must they be used to purchase items from suppliers in the donor’s country?

- **Local economic conditions:** When deciding whether to purchase locally, planners must consider the impact of sudden large purchases on the local economy and the possible resentment that can be generated by the ensuing price hikes. This is especially critical for servicing the needs of displaced persons who are dispersed throughout a local community. Host population hospitality is likely to wane in the event of price increases resulting from the local procurement of goods destined for the displaced persons program. It may be preferable under these conditions to import items into the community to reduce upward pressures on prices.

- **Payment conditions:** Planners should select the most secure, reliable means of forwarding payment to the supplier; bank transfers or checks are always preferable to cash. As well, tendering procedures should be followed, although “lowest-cost” bids should be carefully considered, particularly with regard to the supplier’s performance record.

- **Legal considerations:** Procurements officers must fully acquaint themselves with the “force of local contracts” and any other local regulations which might affect a decision to procure goods and services locally.

- **Supplier reliability:** Of critical importance is the supplier’s reliability and whether or not the supplier can in fact produce the contracted goods according to agreed terms: quality, quantity, timeliness, and capacity to deliver according to agreed price must be assured. Despite successful early negotiations, suppliers may decide later that the location of the emergency population represents too great a risk for its trucks, drivers or deliveries.
Port operations and customs clearance:

The rush to move needed items to a newly-forming emergency settlement community often overloads port of arrival capacity causing additional delays. Indeed, one of the most critical factors in the logistics supply chain is the port off-take capacity: the ability to move goods quickly through the port. The logistician should consider the following:

- **Port operations planning:** The inclusion of port officials early in port operations planning can greatly facilitate arrival and off-take operations. Some actions that can be taken include devoting certain berths to vessels carrying goods for the emergency response and altering port working hours to increase throughput capacity. Waivers and/or exemptions from certain port fees and/or customs clearance procedures can often be obtained for goods bound for the settlement due to the “emergency” nature of the operation.

Pre-planning can also help to minimize commodity handling and, thereby, speed delivery to the settlement. If an agency has been granted permission to uplift cargo and transport goods immediately upon arrival in port and prior to customs clearance, it may be possible to receive cargo directly from the vessel onto rail or truck and deliver that cargo immediately to warehouses in the emergency-affected area. Such procedures do not eliminate the need to process clearance documents – only the need for the goods to remain in bond until clearance is completed. Logistics officers should contact the head of national customs, explain the program and request assistance to facilitate the quick release of relief cargoes. Donor representatives and/or UN agencies can assist this effort.

- **Clearing and forwarding agents:** Planners should consider hiring reputable clearing and forwarding agents to process necessary paperwork to discharge cargo, arrange for labor, make port payments, and arrange transit storage and onward transport of goods bound for the emergency program. The establishment of one contact point can greatly reduce the need to spend in-house staff time on the myriad details of these various operations.

- **Port/transit storage:** Often, under insecure emergency conditions, the frequent “stopping and starting” of transport operations due to fluctuating levels of security means that cargo can pile up at various storage points along the logistics chain. Planners should consider hiring additional transit storage capacity at the port or in the port town to prevent such buildups in the port area where congestion can slow all operations once the supply lines are reopened.

In-country transport: Some of the key constraints to an efficient system for transporting needed emergency supplies include: the lack of a comprehensive transportation system from the outset, poor security, poor communications, lack of established dispatch procedures and commodity accounting systems, and ignorance of the physical operating conditions. Other constraints include poor capacity planning, poor delivery scheduling, lack of convoy control and discipline, and the inability to obtain and control fuel and vehicle spare parts. Other issues for logisticians to consider include:

- **Transport sources:** As a rule, it is cheaper to hire than to own transport. Often clearing and forwarding agents can act as transport brokers and assemble truck fleets from various owners and offer services on a “cost per ton delivered” basis. The transport broker takes responsibility for moving the goods to the emergency-affected area. The relief logistics officer then has only one point of contact for coordination and payment, once again reducing in-house staff time spent on these implementation details.

- **Delivery scheduling:** The transportation plan should be developed and sent to the receiving destinations to keep them informed as to expected receipts. Ideally, if the receiving end can “call-forward” commodities such that goods are “pulled down” the channel by field officers in the distribution zones rather than “pushed down” by logisticians, then the quantity of goods in storage at the emergency site can be minimized, a desirable objective especially in zones where security is a concern.

- **Communications and dispatch:** The need for extra security measures for transport in unsafe conditions warrant the establishment of a communications system which can give advance warning by radio to destination points of dispatches.
Minimizing handling: If a distribution is planned at a particular site and a truck has arrived at the central warehouse, the truck can be “direct dispatched” to the distribution site, physically by-passing intermediate storage points. The truck, upon arrival at the central warehouse, is “checked-in” (waybill details recorded in stock ledgers) and “checked-out” (new waybill issued for the distribution site) without unloading at the central warehouse. While this practice violates the FIFO (first-in, first out) principle, it does save on handling. (Goods must be tallied at the distribution site and delivered amounts recorded on both waybills – the original waybill and the one issued from the settlement’s central warehouse.)

High-value items – e.g., medicines – should be shipped in sealed containers which can be off-loaded without major losses. (The containers can also serve as temporary storage if needed.)

Airlifts or air drops: While the principle is to use in-country air transport as a last resort, it can be justified under certain conditions:

- The emergency population is cut off from ground transport
- There is a possibility for opening ground access in the near future
- The cargo is high-value and low-volume and absolutely essential to efficacy of the emergency response

If opening of access is not foreseeable, then some consideration should be given to the use of airlifts to evacuate the population (assuming “feasible” numbers of affected) to a more accessible location.

Air drops should only be used where there is tight control over the drop zone to prevent injuries to people rushing into the area. Planners should note that accountability is extremely difficult to maintain over any air dropped supplies. In general, air drops should be used as the last resort in air transport which, in turn, should be the last resort in overall transport options. In any air operations, logisticians should try to move the takeoff point as close to the emergency zone as possible as most air companies charge by the “block hour”: the longer the flight, the higher the cost.

Storage and operating stocks: Key constraints to the establishment of an efficient storage system for emergency supplies include: lack of a planned allocation and inventory system; lack of sufficient or appropriate warehouse facilities (pallets, security, etc.); and lack of trained staff. Logisticians should consider the following issues:

- Accessing storage capacity: Space is seldom an issue, especially when the need is understood by local authority. Temporary storage facilities for emergency programs include the use of modular Rubb–Hall facilities which are becoming an “international standard” for relief operations.

- Inventory management systems: Establishment of an effective information management system for commodity inventory is essential and worth the cost of hiring a short-term expert to focus on inventory systems implementation and staff training. The system can be either manual or computerized, but the critical source documents – waybills, stock ledgers, summary report forms, etc. – must be available from the outset.

- Staff recruitment & training: Warehouse operations generally require a large number of staff with supervisory and commodity accounting skills – and a high level of honesty. Generally many of these staff will be recruited from the local resident community or emergency–affected population and be relatively inexperienced. While most training will take place “on-the-job”, some formal training with a short-term qualified expert should be programmed. Staff must be trained to record inventory transactions accurately and on a daily basis.
• **Buffer stocks**: Emergency program managers will be under pressure to undertake immediate distribution to all the affected, giving everyone a one day ration every day. This is very time-consuming for the logistics staff as well as for the population of the settlement. A Daily Requirement should be calculated and efforts made to accumulate sufficient stocks to commence less frequent, but periodic distributions (e.g., weekly, ten-day, or fortnightly).

Distributions at the outset should be planned around what is in stock – not what is expected – at least until a pipeline into the settlement is established and functioning. One rule of thumb states that a one-month supply of commodities should be maintained on hand at all times. At a minimum, a buffer stock equivalent to one distribution cycle’s worth of commodities should be maintained. (This “rule of thumb” may not hold under highly insecure conditions. Where security cannot be assured for buffer stocks, it may be preferable to store the buffer stocks well away from the emergency zone and make regular deliveries to the zone which will coincide with actual distributions.)

• **Accessibility of storage sites**: In setting up storage sites, logisticians should consider the accessibility of the sites to trucks. Ideally, the site should be on an all-weather road to avoid seasonal impediments and be accessible to large capacity trucks (30 tons or more). Large-capacity trucks should be able to maneuver within the warehouse compound. Entry and exit point control should be facilitated by fencing.

• **Security concerns**: The warehouse should be near the settlement but not in the settlement as crowd control and looting may be a problem. Five kilometers from the settlement is ideal; this distance will discourage casual visitors but still be within reach of day-laborers recruited from the settlement. If possible, quantities Large amounts of commodities stored in an insecure area can invite attacks on the local population and/or warehouse.

• **Drainage**: Warehouses should not be placed in low-lying areas so as to minimize the potential for damage from flooding. Drainage canals should be dug around sites.

• **When there is no warehouse**: Outdoor storage sites should be placed in a visible spot where unauthorized activities can easily be observed with guards placed around the site, especially at night. If feasible, commodities might be left on the trucks for a longer period of time and then delivered directly to the distribution site. (This, of course, lengthens, turn-around time and reduces truck productivity.)

**Communications**: The management of an effective communications system requires planning and expertise. The system should provide at every stage and location of the logistics operation – i.e., at all ports, airports, emergency sites, stores, etc. – constant, direct access to communications equipment and the use of established, documented procedures. The logistics planner should consider as well:

• **Management**: The system should if possible have a full-time technically qualified communications manager, skilled in installation, repair, maintenance and operational procedures who is posted at the one main base station and has the responsibility of supervising and managing the network.

• **Expertise & training**: At the beginning of the operation, there may not be a qualified communications manager present. In such cases, a short-term communications expert may be contracted at the beginning of the operation to assist in selection of appropriate communications equipment, in procurement, and in setup and procedures development. Selected local staff should be trained in maintenance and troubleshooting the equipment and in use of established communications procedures to ensure a roster of qualified communications users.

• **Integration & standards**: Whatever communications systems are put in place, they should be well integrated with technical support locally available. UNHCR has established guidelines and procedures – especially with regard to operating frequencies and established call signs – which can provide a standard for agencies establishing emergency communications systems. Regular radio calls are important; messages should be clear and a hierarchy of the types of information to be transmitted should be developed and clarified for all users.
• **System links:** Linkages to HQ, the capital city, or base station are essential. International communication via telephone and fax at the main point of entry is required to enable notification of shipment arrivals and the requesting and submission of procurement tenders. Communications between the central office and each logistics node (warehouse and/or transshipment point) via telephone and fax – if available – or HF radios is essential to track commodity movements and issue instructions. Within the emergency–affected area itself, staff should be provided with VHF hand–held radios; this can greatly improve coordination between staff at distribution sites, warehouses, and administrative offices. Where security is an issue, hand sets are essential to provide staff the ability to report on and receive information concerning security–related problems.

• **Types of equipment:** Satellite phones (sat–phones) are increasingly used as size and equipment and satellite usage costs continue to decline. A sat–phone with fax and/or data transmission capability via laptop computer is the recommended communications equipment for isolated emergency sites.

HF radios can be stationary or mounted in vehicles for mobile communications. Mobile radios are important if staff are required to travel long distances to emergency–affected areas and if the operational areas are threatened by insecure conditions.

VHF Hand sets must be programmed to specific radio frequencies; one channel should be programmed as internal to the agency project while another should be programmed to communicate with other agencies working in the same area.

• **Power supply:** A good power supply for all communications equipment is essential. Generators and/or solar panels may be used to charge batteries.

Standards

Standards in need of development – or agreement – in logistics operations include:

• **Uniform ration scales** – for food and non–food items: Increasingly, the rations recommended by UNHCR, WHO, and UNICEF are merging towards consensus and include (approximately): 400 grams of a staple food which provides the bulk of energy and protein requirements; 20 – 40 g of an energy rich food such as vegetable oil to provide additional calories; and 50 g of a protein rich food such as beans or peas.

Standards in food rations generally become an issue at the distribution end of the chain. Where one standardized ration can be agreed upon for all individuals regardless of size, the distribution operation is likely to run smoothly; where rations are measured in accordance with the individual’s size or physique, then distribution becomes far more complicated and the need for distribution monitoring staff increases significantly.

• **Logistical needs assessment checklist:** Checklists are available from OFDA and from WFP. A standard checklist, however, has yet to be agreed upon.

• **Commodity control, allocation, and inventory system:** Many systems exist and are in use. While there is general understanding of the type of information that must be recorded and reported by emergency commodity programmers, there is not as yet an agreed standard system that might facilitate reporting across agencies. Such as standard is unlikely given the disparate nature of the type of reporting required by different donors.

• **Control, recording of donations–in–kind:** The “SUMA” system developed by PAHO is used in Latin America and might serve as a standard pending agreement by major programmers of international donations.

• **Distribution methodologies:** Again, there is general understanding of the types of distribution systems that are available to emergency programmers. To date, however, there is no agreed standard practice of which type of distribution system to use under given conditions (other than general advice concerning wet or dry feeding systems, direct or indirect distribution, etc.)
Key Resources for Logistics and Procurement


CARE Incorporated. *Procurement Manual*. Atlanta, Georgia, USA.


Stephenson, R.S. *Logistics Guidelines: Procurement Activities*. International Disaster Institute, London.


TRI−MED Ltd. *TRI−MED Supply & Logistics Directory*. 7 Hanson Street, London W1P7LJ, UK. Fax: 0171−255−1000


**Topic 18 – Population Estimation, Registration, and Distribution**

This paper was prepared by Jeffrey S. Klenk for InterWorks. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:

- **Dr. Robin Stephenson** – is a London−based consultant to various UN and NGO organizations who has written extensively on emergency response systems.

- **Mr. Bela Hovy** – is a statistician with the Programme Coordination and Budget Section of UNHCR/Geneva.

While the section on Best Practices was primarily derived from UNHCR’s *Registration: A Practical Guide for Field Staff*, referenced in the bibliography, the paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

**Introduction**

The determination of the number of persons affected by an emergency can, despite its seeming innocuity, often become the most politicized of actions taken by an emergency manager. The numbers of those in need
reported by relief agencies affect the magnitude of donor interest, cause large volumes of assistance to be programmed or eliminated, and generate strong support or resistance from local authorities or intended target groups.

Disagreements over the numbers of affected have caused immense strains between international relief agencies and the host governments which permit those agencies to respond. Attempts to count or register anew those already benefiting from an established relief program have led to negative reactions ranging from lack of cooperation and anger to life-threatening violence.

Field officers operating in emergency settlements must fully understand the potential effects of any efforts which aim to make a distribution effort more efficient. Such efforts almost always imply that the interests of those who have been benefiting from an established relief program are to be challenged. What the field officer views as a simple act of good management – ensuring that resources are most effectively and efficiently programmed – may well be viewed by the program beneficiaries as an assault on their interests.

In addition to the number of affected, it is critical to know as well “who” the affected are: which vulnerable groups are present and what their special needs for protection, special feeding programs, or community services may be. Nutritional and medical screening can be undertaken at this time and begin to consider what might be the longer-term needs of the affected.

In the case where the emergency displacement is temporary and the affected are expected to return eventually to their places of origin, registration data is needed to know who will be returning and who will stay in the place of asylum. During its planning phase, a relief operation should determine the mechanisms its staff will use to gather, update, and act upon this information.

**Principles**

1. **Any emergency settlement program should obtain an accurate count of the affected population. In those cases where it has not been possible to count the population, efforts must be made to produce an accurate and verifiable estimate of the settlement’s population.**

Effective programming clearly requires accuracy. Where programmers must operate without a good estimate of the numbers resident in the emergency settlement, programmed resources will be either wasted or insufficient. Either outcome – waste or insufficiency – must be avoided whenever possible. Relief agencies should apply whatever leverage exists to ensure that those who might favor an excessive supply of resources – e.g., local governments, antagonistic factions, or the affected population itself – permit an accurate estimate to be made of those need. The estimate should be based on accepted sampling techniques carried out in the settlement itself (or, where circumstances permit, based on overflight and photographic analysis of the situation.)

Where groups refuse to permit population estimation to be carried out, relief agencies should make it clear that continuance of the program could be jeopardized by that refusal. To be sure, in any threat of cutoff, there will be cries that the relief agency is “sacrificing the victims.” Such cries, however, must be considered against the likelihood that the groups in refusing to permit population estimation are doing just that: sacrificing victims.¹

¹ That is, where access is denied because a faction does not wish the world to see how bad conditions are, then the faction is sacrificing their own by the withholding of information that could get supplies moving and relieve the situation. Where this refusal occurs because a faction does not wish the world to see that there is little or no problem, then the faction is in fact sacrificing victims elsewhere in the world by attempting to secure more than its needed share of scarce relief resources.

Whenever such a cutoff policy is threatened, support from agency headquarters – and, where feasible, from the international relief community – for that policy must be forthcoming and resolute. Any appearance of wavering on the decision to slow or stop the flow of relief is likely to play into the hands of those factions who would use the relief program for their own gains.

2. **Population estimation is a critical emergency action which must be as accurate as possible for the efficient startup of the emergency response; estimates should be replaced with actual registration figures as soon as possible.**
An estimate of the affected population is essential to the startup of any relief operation. The longer-term needs implied by the establishment of an emergency settlement, however, should be quantified through an actual and ongoing process of registration of the affected. It is essential for the very credibility of the response that the numbers served be based on actual and ongoing counts of the population.

The registration plan may have to be tailored to the specific operation: e.g., registration while moving populations from one site to another; registration of stationary populations in the emergency settlement; registration of affected populations who are dispersed throughout a local community. (It may well be that in emergency settlement situations where community structures remain relatively intact, relief agencies may simply be able to provide relief items in bulk form to local community groups or leaders who may take charge of the registration and/or distribution operations. In such “indirect” distributions, community-managed registrations may be preferable – assuming a certain level of trust and close contact between the relief agency and community leaders.) In any event, some form of registration program should be planned as an integral part of any long-term emergency settlement response.²

² Arguments can be made against registering program participants when the emergency situation is likely to end very soon and the affected likely to return home; the affected are already being assisted by related (e.g., ethnically related) groups in the place of asylum. That is, when outside assistance is likely to be short-term or unneeded, registration may not be needed.

3. Cooperation of the population to be registered is essential. An uncooperative population cannot be registered with any meaningful degree of accuracy.

Field officers charged with registering the population of an emergency settlement must plan and implement a “public-awareness” campaign to be carried out before the start of the registration process. This campaign should seek to inform the affected population about the coming exercise and, wherever feasible, to enlist the participation of that population in the planning and implementation of the exercise.

The affected population must be informed about the reasons for the registration and the procedures to be used. Generally, a population which understands the relation of the registration to the eventual resourcing of the emergency operation will tend to be more cooperative with the registration program. In many cases, the population will tend to monitor itself during the registration process to ensure equity if it fully understands the consequences of doing otherwise.

4. Discrepancies between official population numbers and the best estimates of those working in the emergency settlement should be resolved as soon as they are noticed. The preferred method of rectifying numbers is through a joint assessment with representatives from those entities involved in counting or estimating populations.

The instances of wide variation between host government and relief agency numbers are numerous. There may be significant discrepancies between the operating figures furnished by different international or non-governmental relief agencies as well – depending upon their immediate interests. Some agencies may view it as more important to maintain amicable relations with the host government and, therefore, accept the “official version” or even inflate actual figures themselves to exaggerate their own importance in the response. Other agencies, who may be held more closely accountable by their donors may wish to ensure that figures are as close to reality as possible and, therefore, insist upon the publication of actual figures gathered by field staff.

Joint assessment and ongoing monitoring teams can serve to minimize these discrepancies. Team members should attempt to reconcile differences in the field before presenting results to their superiors upon their return. Results which have been verified by various interests in the field carry much more credence with higher government officials, donors, and relief agency headquarters staff. The team should generally include representatives from those host government agencies responsible for emergency programming, those UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP which are likely to be involved in the response, and those NGOs likely to be involved in the distribution of relief items.

5. In some emergency settlements, registration may be an important factor in protecting the affected population.

In the event where the only protection available to a displaced population is that offered by the international relief agency – i.e., situations where the host government is not inclined to guarantee the security of the...
displaced – a registration may serve the interests of the affected by ensuring that their identities and needs are well-documented. In such cases, security of this registration data is likely to be a major concern of the relief agency; field staff must take measures to ensure this data security.

6. A properly functioning distribution system within the emergency settlement is essential to orderly management and equitable assistance.

A distribution system that is perceived by the intended beneficiaries as inequitable is unlikely to garner widespread support of the affected population. Such support is generally needed to ensure that the affected population participates in and assists with the implementation and monitoring of the distribution system.

7. Success of any distribution program in an emergency settlement depends on the distribution agency’s ability to identify at the moment of distribution the actual, targeted population – or to ensure that community-based mechanisms are in place to do so.

Best Practices

Population counting/estimation

Whether or not the population of an emergency settlement is actually registered, it must be counted or at least estimated to facilitate relief distributions and other emergency service programs. As noted in the introduction, this process is often one of the most highly politicized activities in emergency settlement management precisely because it produces the numbers by which donors make decisions about resource commitments.

Population estimation is particularly important at the outset of an emergency to provide emergency managers with some idea of the magnitude of need and enable the response to begin. In emergency situations where the actual number of affected is likely to become the subject of contention and protracted discussions, an estimate may be useful to those agencies ready to respond. Various techniques are used to quantify emergency settlements populations. These include:

- **Use of existing administrative records**: Local authorities may have already begun the process of recording arrivals into the emergency settlement area. Such records are clearly the first resource of the assessment team. The team must, of course, consider how the data was obtained (first-hand? hearsay?), updated, and maintained. Also important is to understand any local prejudices or other factors which might serve to exclude certain individuals or groups from these lists.

  In situations where the affected population remains within its place of origin, there may be census records to which the field officer can turn. Intervening events and factors which have transpired since the time of the census and which may have affected population numbers should be considered.

- **Actual head-counts**: Affected populations can be counted at points of entry to the emergency settlement or at transportation points when beneficiaries are moved from one site to another by the relief agency (e.g., when refugees are moved away from insecure border areas.) In large population movements, rough figures can be obtained by calculating the “flow rate” of people through an entry point.

- **“Under-fives” counts**: An estimation of the entire population size can be obtained if records exist on the numbers of children under five years of age. (Such records are often obtained from health program immunization records or nutritional surveys.) Generally, the “under-fives” account for about 15–20% of the population. Emergency managers should carefully assess the quality of this data before announcing a determined population size. Errors in age reporting can stem from ignorance of exact date of birth.

- **Dwelling counts**: Where the affected population is not mixed with local resident communities, the area of the emergency settlement can be mapped with grid lines drawn and measured. The number of dwellings in the emergency settlement is then counted per cell and multiplied by the average number of persons dwelling in a compound. Care must be taken to avoid counting empty dwellings which may be erected to inflate population figures. The presence of cooking fires may also be used as a good indicator of actual habitation within a particular dwelling/compound.
• Overflights and aerial photography: Overflight and photographic analysis are very useful in population estimation when the population is out in the open and visible from the air. This is generally the case during an exodus along clearly visible routes or upon arrival in an uncovered, treeless area. It is a quick and – given the large potential savings generated by possible large reductions in beneficiary figures released by local authorities or others who might benefit from inflated totals – relatively inexpensive method. Area photographs are overlaid with grids and dwelling counts (or, if possible, actual head counts) are then performed for each area. This method should be accompanied by on-the-ground sampling to check for empty shelters and moving populations. Constraints to this method include availability of film-processing labs and takeoff/landing/overflight clearance for airplanes and crews.

• Windshield surveys: The windshield survey – estimating crowd size by driving by it or through it – is probably the most frequently used and most inexpensive method of population estimation. The results are usually, however, grossly inaccurate and should be considered only to help confirm results obtained from other methods.

Population registration

Population registrations\(^3\) are generally time-consuming, costly endeavors which make heavy demands on staff time and, if poorly managed, can create additional strains in the emergency settlement. Registration systems vary considerably in their level of sophistication, coverage, and consistency. At one end of the spectrum are efficient, well-operated computerized systems, designed to track detailed changes in household structure and link records from a variety of programs into comprehensive profiles of individuals in the emergency settlement. At the other end are chaotic assemblages of arbitrary and often incomprehensible procedures run by semi-literate staff who serve largely to divert attention from the underlying turmoil and conflicts among various emergency settlement interests vying for control of relief commodities.

\(^3\) Field staff often confuse the terms “census” and “registration.” A census is an exercise carried out at a particular time and is aimed at collecting useful statistics about the refugee community in relation to a specific time period. Basic demographic variables are usually of primary concern, but other information may also be collected including occupation, origin, income, assets, etc. A census can be carried out using sample survey methods. Sample census data is of little direct value for registration purposes. Given the dynamic of population displacements in response to emergency, census data very quickly loses currency and credibility, especially when based on small samples.

Despite this wide range in efficacy, registration systems are an essential component of a longer-term emergency intervention. As donor resources decline, the need to ensure proper targeting and efficient distribution of relief items will continue to increase – as will pressures to improve and implement population registration techniques.

B.1. Phased approach to registration

By contrast, registration is a continuous process by which details of the whole population are recorded with any changes noted as soon as possible after they occur. The objectives are to maintain a record of individuals for whom assistance is intended and to help control the targeting and delivery of assistance.

Field staff should consider adopting a “phased” approach to registration. Phases include:

• Phase 1 – Planning: Emergency managers should, during the planning phase, consider the potential for carrying out a “community-managed” registration (instead of the more traditional registration process which is “agency-managed” – i.e., managed by the outside relief agency.) Under the community-based registration process, emergency settlement leaders determine the number and identity of those in need. The outside relief agency agrees to provide bulk commodities to the emergency settlement which then carries out its own (or “indirect”) commodity distribution.

This community-managed registration requires close contact and good communication between the outside relief agency and the leaders of the emergency settlement. Naturally, there is a certain level of trust between the two parties as well. The disadvantage to the outside relief agency is the loss of control over the process and the inability to ensure that the neediest receive their appropriate quantities of goods. The advantage to
the outside relief agency is primarily the cost–savings: an agency–managed approach requires the recruitment and training of a large number of staff to handle the registration process. Under emergency conditions, the outside relief agency is often forced to accept this loss of control and implement indirect distributions; i.e., the agency may simply not have the capacity to distribute at the family level.

A full registration exercise requires a relatively stable environment in which the emergency settlement is no longer receiving new arrivals and the initial emergency or crisis phase is over. The planning phase enables the manager to ensure that human and material resources needed for the registration exercise will in fact be available and that a public information campaign regarding the registration can be carried out.

**Material resources** needed for the registration exercise include:

- staff uniforms (armbands, vests)
- registration ledgers, forms
- clipboards
- pens
- calculators
- blank identification cards
- card punchers (clippers)
- box files
- marker dye (Gentian/Violet)
- rope (or other means) to cordon off the registration area
- megaphones, batteries
- items needed to perform simultaneous activities such as health/nutrition screening or food distributions.

Depending upon available skills and resources, portable computers, bar–code label generating software, and printers can greatly facilitate the registration process.

**Staffing needs** for the registration generally include:

- on–site registration manager
- activity supervisors
- ledger and card issuance clerks
- crowd communicators
- escorts (shepherds)
- guards

It is essential that one staff member be appointed as manager of the registration exercise and that all participants – staff and beneficiaries alike – understand who is in charge. The manager should always be visible and accompanied throughout the exercise by an interpreter if needed.

An intensive public information campaign should be carried out to inform local authorities and likely beneficiaries about the need for and the objectives of the registration exercise. (The actual date of the registration, however, should not be released.) Uncertainty about the adequacy of relief commodities is often a key reason for the emergency affected to attempt to inflate their actual numbers (through multiple registrations in the same or in different settlements, “borrowing” children, etc.) It is generally true that beneficiaries will attempt to cheat the system less if they understand the system and the need for it.

An effective public information campaign will help to establish a certain level of self–monitoring by the beneficiaries who – if they understand the system – will be more inclined to ensure the proper functioning of the registration exercise. Field staff should inform beneficiaries (or their leaders) that the registration is being carried out to ensure that (1) there will be sufficient resources and staff to assist all of the affected, (2) those persons with special needs are identified, (3) the international community will be aware of their situation. The involvement/role(s) of the potential beneficiaries in the actual registration should be discussed as well.

**Phase 2 – Fixing the size of the population**: The objective of this phase of the registration process is to determine the size of the population about whom more detailed information will subsequently be gathered. This phase should be carried out in as brief a period as possible – preferably in one day – to ensure against duplicate or fraudulent registrations.
Methods to fix the population size include compilation of names through an actual census (more applicable in small-scale emergencies) and/or distribution of **fixing tokens, wristbands, or temporary cards** (which will later be traded for actual detailed registration cards.) These can be used to identify recipients for one or two distributions but should soon be replaced with the more detailed registration cards as these temporary fixing items are not linked to any verifiable information about the members of the affected population. Fixing tools that have also been successfully used include invisible ink markings read with ultraviolet lamps.

Fixing population size can be carried out in *enclosure settings* although emergency managers should carefully assess the cultural reactions to such methods during the public information campaign. It should be noted that such an exercise should only be carried out as a last resort, when all other fixing mechanisms have failed. Indeed, in some populations, resistance to this method may doom the exercise from the outset. Where it is decided that enclosures must be established, managers should ensure that all enclosures are closed on the same day at the same time. *No fixing tokens should be issued until confirmation is received that closure is complete.* The population is then divided into manageable groups (e.g., 100 per group), and then individuals from each group pass single file through a gate where each collects a fixing token.

A *house-to-house system* can be used to fix the size of the population. The affected are told to remain in their emergency shelters and security forces must be used to prevent outsiders from entering the emergency settlement. The main advantage of this system – in which the registration staff visits each shelter to determine household membership – is that it is generally less disruptive to the emergency population. The main disadvantage is that it is a time-consuming process. Because it may be difficult to complete the house-to-house exercise in one day, there is a risk of outsiders arriving in the emergency settlement to be included in the count.

Both systems mentioned – enclosure and house-to-house – imply that the emergency population can in fact be cordoned off from the outside, “non-affected” population. In situations, however, where the emergency population has been dispersed throughout a local community, the fixing activity will have to contend with members of the local “non-affected” population who try to be included in the process. In such cases, registration managers will have to maintain close links with community leaders throughout the exercise, building trust and involving them in the identification of the affected and the planning of the response. In other words, it is essential that the entire registration process be seen as largely a community responsibility.4

The question often arises as to whether those *actually in need* from the host or resident population should be included in the target population. While clearly preferable, this may not always be possible due to limits imposed by donor requirements or agency mandates. In such situations where needy residents may not be included, “building trust with the community” is likely to be problematic. Field staff must be well-informed about the parameters of each relief operation, and well-trained in conveying those parameters to community leaders.

Ideally, local leaders will find local volunteers – e.g., local Red Cross volunteers – to help identify the new arrivals most in need as a result of the emergency. The key here is to *identify trustworthy leaders* of the local community and work closely with them to explain the objectives of the registration exercise and ask those leaders to work with the community to **limit the number of unworthy claims** on the system. While inflation of figures can be expected, lists should be drawn up by these volunteers to provide a basis for initial distributions of relief items.

**• Phase 3 – Information gathering/registration card distribution:** In this phase, the fixing token, wristband or temporary card is traded in for a more detailed registration card. Registration staff use this time to obtain needed information on the population. The information gathered depends, once more, on the level of sophistication of the registration system.5 In increasing level of detail, this information generally includes:

- the population size at a given time
- the population disaggregated into age and sex categories
- a listing of families, giving the number in each family
- a list of families or other unit heads with an accompanying note of the number in each family
- a list of names of family or other unit heads with family numbers disaggregated into age and sex categories

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4 The question often arises as to whether those actually in need from the host or resident population should be included in the target population. While clearly preferable, this may not always be possible due to limits imposed by donor requirements or agency mandates. In such situations where needy residents may not be included, “building trust with the community” is likely to be problematic. Field staff must be well-informed about the parameters of each relief operation, and well-trained in conveying those parameters to community leaders.

5 In increasing level of detail, this information generally includes:
• a list of names by family unit disaggregated into age and sex categories

5 UNHCR data to be obtained for each member of a refugee population during this information-gathering phase includes: registration date, arrival date, name, gender, place of origin, year of birth, current site/location, relation (to household head), type of vulnerability if any (single parent, single female, unaccompanied minor, unaccompanied elder, disabled, missing child, etc.)

Any of these statistics may be disaggregated at various geographical levels, down to emergency settlement sub-sectors of a few hundred or less households. Where registration data is disaggregated into sub-categories, specific data on groups of special interest can be derived by simple counting. These include:

• gender ratios
• number and proportion of female heads of households together with distributions of family size
• number of unaccompanied minors (countries have different age limits for “minors”)  
• number of single women on their own by age category
• number of single parent families with family size distributions
• number of disabled people by family size and structure
• number of isolated elderly people

In situations where the affected population is dispersed throughout an urban community, an address system can be established with address numbers assigned to particular households. Given sufficient time and staff, registration staff can then visit households containing the emergency affected population to interview heads of households concerning actual family size and composition and to ascertain special needs of vulnerable groups. It is critical to obtain good, detailed lists of names of family members as these lists will be used further on in the verification process.6

6 Generally, detailed lists are needed for long-term interventions. For shorter-term emergency distribution programs (e.g., up to nine months), summary lists by household can suffice with the total number of members recorded (as opposed to actual names.)

In those situations where the emergency program is unable to field sufficient numbers of staff to conduct actual house visits to gather information, a central administrative office should be established at which new arrivals must register and provide detailed household/family information. Lists compiled at the central administrative office should ideally match lists compiled by volunteers during the fixing phase. Where there are substantial differences noted, actual visits to the community/village should be made and physical verification of the household members conducted.

• Phase 4 – Verification and updating: Verification of registration data is an essential – and often overlooked – component of the registration system. House-to-house visits should be undertaken on a random basis to ensure that data obtained during the information gathering phase concurs with the reality on the ground. Verification should be carried out as long as the distributions continue. It is a vital part of the monitoring process.

Assuming that detailed information has been obtained for each household (i.e., names of each family member recorded), field staff should use this information during household visits to verify the existence of those family members. Heads of households should be asked to name each member of the household; failure to produce the same list of names as was given during the information gathering phase should result in corrective action.

Use of bar-coding technology enables field staff to record needed changes as reported by verification teams. Changes need only be made to database records rather than to bar-coded cards directly. A card that is reported as lost or stolen can be de-activated by the electronic system and a replacement card quickly reissued.
Computerization can greatly aid verification efforts, particularly in verifying data on registered family members, food distributions, passenger manifests (in the context of voluntary repatriation), and the tracing of unaccompanied minors. UNHCR has developed a registration software package known as FBARS (Field-Based Registration System) to assist verification efforts.

B.2. Other emergency settlement registration issues

Other registration concerns include:

- **Use of existing information technology in emergency registrations**: With the technology currently available – portable computers and low-cost software applications, bar-code scanners, and printers – the registration process could be improved. Bar-coded, laminated identification cards can now be produced at relatively low cost and could be used to track distributions and deliveries of other essential services to individuals and/or households. Misuse of cards could be further reduced through the addition of identification photographs to the bar-coded cards.

  Current technologies have made these systems simple to use and cost-effective, and may be appropriate for use by agencies involved in emergency registrations. Electronic systems can be backed up via the traditional “card punch” in event of electronic system failure. Verification that a given card is in fact still authorized for use by the holder – i.e., the card has not been reported as lost or stolen and consequently de-activated – becomes much easier with bar-code scanning and checking. Time spent verifying cards is greatly reduced. The key is to manage effectively the sudden transitions when the technical systems break down.

- **Registration in insecure conditions**: In situations where the security of the field staff and/or the beneficiaries may be aggravated by a registration process, emergency managers should make a careful determination of the costs and benefits of carrying out the process. In such situations, where there appears to be blatant misuse of resources or outright falsification of numbers, emergency managers should consider reducing the volume of relief item deliveries or stopping the program altogether.

  In situations where crowd control is likely to be problematic, field staff would do well to seek advice from experienced staff. A security coordinator should be appointed and a security plan with appropriate communications and signals developed.

- **Emergency settlement participation**: Members of the emergency settlement should be involved in the registration exercise as much as possible to ensure maximum cooperation. Areas of beneficiary involvement include:

  - Shepherding registrees
  - Crowd Control/Policing
  - Crowd communications
  - Monitoring any distributions
  - Interpreting/translating
  - Emergency settlement security
  - Identifying vulnerable groups
  - Acting as registration clerks

- **Security of registration supplies**: Registration identification materials are the key to obtaining access to emergency aid. Registration cards, forms, fixing tokens, and other control materials should be considered valuable assets of the relief agency and maintained in conditions as secure as those of the supplies they represent. Registration cards turned-in by returning members of the emergency settlement population should be promptly destroyed under close supervision. One designated staff member should be given responsibility for handing out and receiving back registration supplies. Cards and tokens returned from staff at the end of the exercise should be counted and, along with those distributed during the exercise, compared with supplies originally distributed to each staff member.
The distribution program can often be the most problematic link in the entire logistics chain. It is the part of the chain which generally attracts the closest public scrutiny as well as the greatest public outcry when “things go awry.” If the distribution process is erratic and the amounts distributed perceived as insufficient or inequitable, some individuals from the emergency settlement will seek to obtain more than their fair share of the total, aggravating still further perceptions that the system is unjust and poorly managed.

To maintain credibility in the emergency response amongst all interests – from donors to beneficiaries – emergency managers must supervise closely the distribution operation and ensure that action is quickly taken to correct problems detected through the monitoring process. In planning the outlines of the distribution system, emergency managers should consider the following issues:

- **Centralized vs. decentralized distribution:** Generally, given sufficient resources, the preferred method of distributing relief items in an emergency is one implemented as close to the beneficiaries as possible. In a situation where beneficiaries are scattered, however, this implies a relatively decentralized system with numerous distribution points – i.e., system which is inherently more costly than a highly centralized one where recipients receive items at one specified location in the emergency settlement.

  Major factors influencing the decision to carry out a centralized or decentralized distribution process then include the availability of staff resources, the degree of geographic dispersion of the target population and the capacity of the logistical system to supply relief commodities to various points. The ability to monitor the distribution program should always be a critical factor in the decision as monitoring costs rise concurrently with the degree of decentralization; a centralized distribution is more easily monitored.

  Such cost considerations must always be weighed against the capacity of the intended beneficiaries to present themselves at the distribution site(s). It is essential that logisticians and programmers work together to determine the appropriate degree of centralization as, in some emergencies, the lack of organization and/or the physical condition of the target population may not constrain beneficiaries’ access to the chosen distribution sites.

- **Direct vs. indirect distribution:** Planners must also decide whether to implement a direct (i.e., directly to individuals or households) or indirect (i.e., through leaders or other beneficiary representatives) system of distribution. Whatever system is selected, planners should first discuss the options with the affected population to obtain their knowledge and preferences. Factors to be considered in the decision include:

  - **Commodities vs. cash:** In some situations it may be more effective to distribute cash than commodities. Some relief programmes have made cash payments to refugees via the local banking system. Decisions to provide cash rather than commodities must take into account local economic conditions: in hyper-inflationary conditions, recipients may prefer value-retaining food or other commodities over cash which will lose value in direct proportion to inflation.

  - **Cost:** Does the distribution agent have sufficient human and material resources to distribute to each household? What will it cost to obtain them?

  - **Accountability:** Can the receipt of goods by intended beneficiaries in an indirect system be adequately monitored?

  - **Distance:** In a geographically large emergency settlement, the affected may have to walk significant distances to obtain relief supplies distributed in a direct system. The indirect system, while more difficult to monitor, generally implies food is distributed more closely to beneficiaries’ homes.

  - **Health:** Will a direct system of distribution cluster too many people in one place, increasing epidemiological risks? At the same time, will a distribution directly to individuals ensure that those most in need – who may be physically unable to go to the distribution site – will be assisted? (Will special feeding programs be put in place to handle these cases?)
Community leadership: Does a direct system in which all households receive their relief items directly from the distribution agent actually undermine the traditional leadership structures of the target population? Can these structures be reinforced via a more indirect system, thereby assisting the community to rebuild and to regain its self-image?

Gender: Does a distribution to “heads of household” mean that women and children (who may be most in need) may not receive their fair share? Does a distribution to “women only” – while optimizing the possibility that rations will in fact reach needy children – further reduce the role, self-image, and possibly the sense of responsibility towards family of men in the emergency settlement?

Corruption: In an indirect system, do the leaders or other identified beneficiary representatives have the requisite level of integrity to ensure that the relief items reach the intended beneficiaries?

Equity: Will households or families of differing sizes receive rations proportionate to their needs in an indirect system – or will all households receive the same ration regardless of the number of members?

Dry vs. wet (cooked) distribution of relief food: Dry food distributions are advised when the affected population is able to take home and prepare its own food (fuel, utensils, and skills are available), distribution staff resources are limited, and/or it is preferable to avoid large clustering of people at a distribution/feeding center.

The advantages of wet (or cooked) rations include: less fuel is needed to prepare the emergency settlement’s food and, because the distribution is more centralized, it is easier to monitor actual food distribution and usage. Disadvantages include the extra staffing costs needed to prepare and distribute the food, and loss of control over this central activity by the emergency settlement community.

Location of distribution centers: It is generally advised by programmers of emergency distribution programs that distribution centers be located far enough apart so as to minimize the possibility that the same beneficiaries can travel between centers and receive multiple rations for the same period. This practice, however, would appear to be in direct conflict with logistical cost considerations which warrant minimizing the number of distribution centers, and locating them, if possible, in close proximity to a main road and within easy access to a major warehouse to ease transport and minimize transport costs. While this cost conundrum is not easily resolved, it is hoped that improved registration and identification systems can minimize the number of multiple distributions to the same individuals.

Distributions to populations dispersed in local communities: In situations where the target population has been dispersed throughout local host communities, programmers will have to rely to a certain degree on the goodwill of local community leaders to identify and respond to the needs of the affected. Distribution systems will almost certainly have to be indirect – i.e., through local service agencies or other representatives of the affected population – due to the high costs that would accrue from efforts to distribute directly to numerous individuals scattered throughout the local community.

Community awareness and participation are key to the success of such programs. Community members must understand the special needs of those affected by the emergency. At the same time, programmers – and donors – should not overlook the special burden imposed on the resident host community by the influx of emergency affected persons.

Where feasible, emergency distribution programs should consider community members – newly arrived or resident – who meet the needs criteria for program membership. To be sure, donor requirements and/or agency mandates must be respected; where these requirements do not preclude local resident participation in the relief program, inclusion regardless of place of origin may be the best means to ensure the success of the distribution program.
• **Distribution agent capacity issues:** In many emergency situations, there is only one distribution agent available for the task of implementing the distribution in the emergency settlement. Nonetheless, donors of relief items or intermediary agencies responsible for channeling goods to the distribution site(s) must ensure that the distribution agent actually possesses the managerial, administrative and technical capacity to carry out the planned distributions. Often agencies charged with moving commodities to the distribution sites consider that their **responsibility** for those goods is lifted once the goods are received by the distribution agent – i.e., once actual physical **control** over the goods is signed away on a commodity waybill. Donors, on the other hand, often consider those intermediary agencies responsible for the goods until they actually reach the hands of the intended beneficiaries.

It is critical that emergency response agencies understand clearly this difference between “responsibility” and “control.” “Giving away control” does not necessarily imply absolution of responsibility. Intermediary agencies which have accepted goods from donors should consider it their responsibility to ensure that the items are in fact distributed to the affected population. Emergency response agencies must be conscientious in their efforts to identify and contract obtain a final distribution agent which is fully capable of handling the distribution program. Factors to consider in selecting a distribution agent (or in the situation where this is only one available, in training the staff of the distribution agent) include:

**Previous experience:** Does the contracted distribution agent have a proven track record in distribution? Has the agent previously worked in the area with the affected population?

**Reporting capacity:** Can the distribution agent produce acceptable distribution reports on a timely basis as required by the donor or other agency channeling the goods to the local agent? Does the agent have any previously generated reports which can attest to this capacity?

**Staffing:** Does the agent already have staff on-board? Do any staff members have previous distribution/monitoring experience? Do any staff members speak the language of the affected? Are they willing to work at the distribution sites? Does the distribution agent generally seem committed to the program? Do the staff members seem to have a high level of integrity?

**Standards**

### Population estimation

Increasingly, statistical sampling techniques are advised in conducting estimates of emergency affected populations. Estimates provided should be within standard 95% confidence levels.

### Registration

In registering the population of an emergency settlement, agencies should try to limit camp–style settlement populations to no more than 10,000 people. Where resources available for a specific response are limited, planners should generally use a population figure of 5,000 is a minimum level for a camp–style emergency settlement.

*Registration in Emergencies* by Mitchell & Slim (see Key Resources section of this paper) provides a complete guide to the planning and preparation of an emergency registration. It also lists the standard equipment needed by a team to register 10,000 people.

UNHCR registration kits are designed for registrations of up to 30,000 refugees.

### Distribution

While the frequency of relief food distributions varies with – among other factors – costs, seasonal factors, and storage capacities, the population of an emergency settlement would generally prefer weekly, 10 day, or fortnightly distributions; emergency response agencies generally prefer less frequent (monthly to quarterly) distributions to obtain logistical cost savings.
Distribution of adequate general rations should be in place before implementation of specialized feeding programs are implemented. That is, the affected population should be assured of a minimum daily ration of 1,900 Kcals (either from the distribution or from other sources) before selective feeding programs are begun.

From the perspective of accountability, there appears to be no consensus among donors or relief agencies as to what might be considered an “acceptable loss” of commodities in an emergency distribution program. In considering whether such a standard is feasible or even desirable, it seems useful to bear in mind that most commercial food distributors or retailers plan for a certain percentage of annual loss due to theft or spoilage. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that donors and relief agencies might proceed in a similar fashion.

References


Theme FOUR: Social, Psychological, Economic and Developmental Issues

Topic 19 – Social and Psychological Aspects of Emergency Settlement

This paper was written by Kirk Felsman, Senior Advisor, Children and War Initiative, Save the Children, USA and Visiting Professor, Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University. In addition to resources identified in the references, significant contributions were made by the following persons:

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- Margaret McCallin – is Director, Refugee Children’s Programme, International Catholic Children’s Bureau, Geneva, Switzerland.
- John Williamson – is an independent consultant specializing in children in especially difficult circumstances.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

Massive dislocation tears the fabric of society, thus the psychological implications of displacement are best viewed within their social context. Indeed, trauma can be understood as a profound disruption in meaning, linked to the separation of families, the disintegration of social institutions and the splintering of communities. A psychosocial perspective becomes an essential lens through which to view intervention strategies intended
to provide communities with the support they need to cope, adapt and rebuild themselves. Indeed, all activities in emergency response benefit from an informed perspective on psychosocial and cultural issues, the foundation of which, is a healthy respect and working understanding of the ways of life and culture of the affected population.

Given that the majority of any displaced population will consist of women and children, a solid frame of reference to appreciate their vulnerabilities while building upon their strengths and capacities is essential. Responding to children as if they were simply short adults will yield unintended and negative consequences. By integrating a child development perspective into emergency response activities, children’s varied needs will not be overlooked.

Outside agencies can play a constructive role in this process but can do so most effectively as catalysts, helping mobilize communities to define, organize and address their perceived needs. From a psychosocial perspective, addressing issues of scope, scale and sustainability requires that intervention strategies shift from being “community−based” to being more fully community implemented and managed. Community managed programs in the trust of the capacity of local people, rely upon genuine participation at all stages and assume a long−term perspective that allows the necessary time for coalitions to build, for priorities to emerge and objectives to be clarified.

It must be emphasized that emergency settlements, however defined, are dynamic and evolving. Therefore, the very nature of understanding psychosocial issues in an emergency context, including essential building blocks such as assessment, monitoring and evaluation of intervention strategies are best approached as an ongoing process. This is especially true in situations where the affected population comprises different ethnic groups or people from different provinces who may not share the same dialect and have differing social structures.

Addressing the psychosocial needs of a given population in an emergency settlement requires an orientation and a framework for intervention, not a check−list. Strong observational and listening skills, coupled with a broad−based knowledge of human development and community organization, informed by field experience and an appreciation for cultural differences, are more likely to yield effective intervention than efforts designed by short−term experts who possess highly specialized academic training. Though more absorbed than learned, aspects of individual character, such as humility, patience, humor and flexibility are especially salient qualities in fieldworkers who must develop trusting relationships within local communities. The importance of such individual qualities on the efficacy and impact of field programs are generally underestimated.

The broad social and psychological aspects of emergency settlements can be articulated in a number of central and related principles.

Principles

1. Work to develop a sense of normalcy by providing protection, security and a sense of predictability in everyday life.

With the enormous disruption that comes with massive displacement, an overarching principle of psychosocial work in emergency settings is to provide for the security of the affected population, with special emphasis on protecting those who may be most vulnerable to marginalization, neglect and abuse. Achieving a sense of predictability is supported through the trust that comes from sustained contact with the same people and the comfort found in familiar routines. It is essential that the affected population be involved in determining how protection and security are established, especially with regard to those members of the community who are perceived to be most vulnerable or at−risk.

2. Take actions that prevent further harm and minimize the accumulation of additional risk factors.

Displacement is often quickly followed by other stress factors that become cumulative in nature. For instance, lack of viable alternatives for economic self−sufficiency and increased levels of poverty may soon be reflected through worsening nutritional status, lost access to education and lower levels of available social support. Loss of loved ones and a decline in social status may impair the capacity to provide guidance and empathic care for immediate dependents. Thus, the healing and recovery process for war−affected populations requires a long−term strategy rooted in community involvement, emphasizing primary care and prevention. For children, the major threats to healthy psychosocial development in war−torn areas are chronic, including fear, isolation, deprivation, social withdrawal, and lack of appropriate stimulation. Intervention is most effective when it minimizes stress factors, such as unnecessary separations from family. Active documentation and
tracing efforts for separated children promote family reunification. Equally important is the need to address the critical issues of interim care for separated children, decreasing the risks of neglect, exploitation and abuse.

3. **Adopt strategies that provide for genuine, active participation of the affected community.**

On a large scale, most social and psychological services must be provided by members of the affected population. The community should be involved in all phases of psychosocial programming from assessment and design through implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Strategies that build upon existing social networks and rejuvenate previously existing social organizations, rely upon and build local capacity and are more likely to become sustainable. The potential constructive role of community organizations, youth groups, religious institutions and traditional healers to provide psychosocial support should not be underestimated.

Outside agencies can be effective facilitators for community mobilization, helping people see what it is they already do and, are capable of, in addressing their own needs. Emphasizing a model of self-help acknowledges the strength and capacity that exists within communities and promotes a sense of competence and efficacy.

Organizations involved in psychosocial assistance must be careful that pressure to demonstrate impact and verifiable results does not pay simple lip service to community participation, or worse, turn participation into a form of taxation by demanding ever increasing amounts of time and labor, most often from women (Salole, 1991).

4. **Demonstrate an orientation that respects and seeks to understand local culture and traditional practices, while avoiding the immediate imposition of western-based, therapeutic models that may be inappropriate and unsustainable.**

Lessons learned from field programs in southern Africa over the last six years suggest that successful psychosocial programs help restore social supports and relationships rather than provide individualized “therapy” for affected populations. In fact, a western framework of narrow, clinical approaches to “treatment” may be culturally inappropriate and, given limited resources, unsustainable. While expressing and coming to terms with one’s story may be an essential part of recovery for some people, who one tells, in what context and over what period of time, remain essential issues in any therapeutic process. During emergencies and in immediate post-conflict situations, intense efforts driven by the objective of having people recall “their worst moment” may undermine important defenses, work against active coping and actually undermine healthy adaptation. Social work efforts may be most constructive if viewed from the perspective of mobilizing community resources rather than from a model of service delivery. Establishing an environment that provides the sense and reality of personal security is an essential prerequisite for an intervention to be therapeutic.

The social and psychological aspects of local culture, traditions and practice require insight to the meaning and significance of major events. This can be especially important when it comes to how people cope with loss, grief and mourning. For example, how are ceremony and ritual used and what are the roles of traditional healers and religious leaders? How are “symptoms” understood and dealt with in the local cultural? Are there systems of traditional justice and local means for promoting reconciliation? Traditional practices are especially important with respect to issues of care and guardianship. For example, how are orphaned or separated children perceived? What is the attitude towards widows and how are problems of inheritance dealt with?

Respect for local culture does not imply that all traditional practices are in the best interests of children or vulnerable groups. Active mediation is required when, for example, local culture supports or encourages the involvement of children’s participation in armed conflict, or allows children to be placed in situations that may subject them to sexual exploitation or physical abuse.

5. **Actions to address the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups should ensure their long-term reintegration into the community, avoiding short-term assistance that may only increase the probability of their marginalization.**

Targeting particular individuals and groups in an emergency context, especially with an emphasis on material assistance, can have negative, unintended effects. This includes the unnecessary separation of children and other family members as a means of obtaining material assistance. Preferential treatment for separated children or former child soldiers can, for example, lead to hostility and even increase their social marginalization. The local community must play a role in articulating who is commonly understood to be most at-risk and be involved in developing appropriate strategies to address their perceived needs.
6. Recognize that building economic opportunity and the means to become self-sufficient are part of psychosocial support.

Long-term dependence on material aid undermines genuine recovery from mass displacement. Beyond the basic issues of food security, psychosocial programs must incorporate ways to help vulnerable families achieve economic viability. Efforts in skill training and the development of income-generation projects are important. While group guaranteed lending schemes are typically implemented in stable communities, creative means for prospering in the informal sector must be devised. Yet such endeavors require careful planning by people who have solid expertise and experience in these areas, as the creation of false expectations and the development of skills that have no viable market are unacceptable. At times, efforts may focus on helping people do what it is they traditionally do, though more efficiently and effectively. Without question, the ability to contribute to the family economy can provide adolescents, widows and single mothers with a sense of competence and self-efficacy. It is important to note that both field experience and research suggest that ensuring women culturally appropriate opportunities to earn income almost always translates into direct benefits for their children. The psychosocial dimensions of creative and active coping with economic stressors is a key area in need of further attention.

7. Provide adequate psychosocial support for all front-line field staff.

Programs in war-affected communities often require staff to work under highly stressful and sometimes dangerous conditions which may result in frequent staff turnover. Yet continuity in staff is highly correlated with effective program implementation. It is an essential element in the process of understanding and building viable relationships within emergency settlements. Supervisors and program managers must acknowledge that work in an emergency can be highly stressful and take specific measures to address this reality (see example: Psychosocial Support for Front-line Staff).

8. Promote practices and policies that demonstrate a commitment to sound ethical principles.

Field experience suggests that workers who provide sustained support to communities affected by armed conflict and displacement frequently encounter serious ethical dilemmas. These range from immediate problems that affect specific children to broader issues concerning, for example, research or the media. The failure to respond to ethical problems can undermine trust between individuals, institutions and governments, resulting in less effective collaboration and weaker support for the affected population.

Awareness of neglect, abuse or exploitation is likely to be highly stressful for a conscientious field worker. Such dilemmas can place these workers (often young women) at odds with those in authority (often older men). A concern for ethical issues should be integrated into the overall design and implementation of programs in emergency settlements.

Best Practices

■ Documentation and tracing to promote family reunification

For developmental reasons, young children's bonds and attachments to caregivers and family members are more important to their immediate welfare, and are far more fragile than attachments that exist between adults. Therefore, the need for active tracing as an initial intervention for separated children is a widely accepted principle in psychosocial intervention efforts in areas of armed conflict. The technical sophistication of documentation and tracing methods has improved in recent years, with higher quality photographs, poster production and faster computer databases. The more complex issues of providing care for separated children, however, have received less attention. These include interim care and the provision of support for substitute families through community networks and grass roots associations. The tendency for documentation and tracing to become a distinct, highly specialized and technical aspect of family reunification is worrisome if it comes at the expense of a more holistic approach, based on the development of viable community networks that support ongoing tracing efforts and, at the same time, promote the long-term reintegration of affected children.

Documentation and Tracing – Example of Poor Practice

In 1989 in a central province of Mozambique, a joint NGO and government tracing team received information on the whereabouts of a parent of three children who were then living with a local substitute family. The informant identified the children from a photograph on a poster and gave very exact details about the children's biological father. Despite a policy of securing the consent of families prior to all reunifications and of
verifying the family’s location, the team decided to transfer the children to the provincial capital so that local officials could reunite them with their family in a well known deslocado community. Other factors contributed to this decision: the children wanted to go, district officials supported the plan, and the children were located in a remote village accessible easily by light plane only.

Three months later, while arranging for the reunification of a child who was living in the capital’s orphanage, a member of the original team encountered the same three children. He learned that when these children arrived in the capital, their father could not be located. He had gone to South Africa to search for work in the mines. The children were placed in the overcrowded provincial orphanage, whose administrators were furious with district officials and the tracing team for sending the children without prior notification and clearance. In sum, a tracing team that was trying to respond quickly had ignored basic guidelines and had failed to protect the best interests of the children. The children had been removed from a viable substitute family in their district of origin and placed in an overcrowded orphanage.

### Documentation and Long-term Tracing – Example of Good Practice

In 1993, many unaccompanied Mozambican children were living with substitute families in camps in Zimbabwe. The majority of these children were in families from the same geographic area and shared the same language and culture of the child. In anticipation of the repatriation of Mozambican refugees following the peace accords of 1992, cross-border teams consisting of provincial social welfare staff from both countries, representatives of collaborating NGOs and UNHCR completed Final Disposition Forms on all separated children remaining in Zimbabwe. These records provided a succinct history of the child’s displacement and care, highlighting information that might increase the likelihood of finding the child’s original family. In addition to providing the final documentation to local social welfare offices in Mozambique to enable ongoing tracing efforts, grassroots community associations became involved in the monitoring of these children, increasing the prospects of their eventual reintegration.

Emergency and immediate post-conflict situations engender a felt need for quick action and early documentation; tracing efforts for separated children are essential in such war-affected areas. Shared guidelines and high levels of collaboration between host governments and participating agencies, however, are essential to ensure that the collection of primary data is accurate and reliable. Language and translation problems, hastily completed forms and the failure to carefully review initial information can waste a tremendous amount of field time and undermine effective tracing. Verification of the receiving family and their location and determination that both the family and the child are being reunified voluntarily are essential to protecting the child’s best interests. Mobilizing local associations and networks around children’s psychosocial needs is likely to support long-term tracing efforts as well as to promote the care and healthy adaptation of children who remain in substitute families.

### Interim Care for Displaced Children

Field experience shows that it is critical to minimize the level of institutionalization. When families cannot immediately be located, it is in the best interests of displaced children to live with substitute families in local communities that share the child’s linguistic and cultural background. Placement in residential centers should be a last resort (Williamson and Moser, 1988; Ressler, Boothby and Steinbock, 1988; Tolfree, 1995). Even in residential centers, the emphasis should be on creating family-like bonds with the children rather than on supervision and control. In Rwanda in 1994, for example, thousands of displaced children were placed in residential settings, generally referred to as “care centers.” The centers followed strikingly different approaches to caring for the resident children.

### Interim Care – Example of Poor Practice

In a former training school in one of Rwanda’s larger towns, local authorities and an international nongovernmental organization cared for 280 children, ranging from infants to adolescents. Adults provided all labor including preparation of food, washing of clothes, and maintenance of the buildings. They did not require the children to perform duties nor were the older ones asked to care for the younger ones. The center’s staff were paid employees who did not have responsibility for specific groups of children. They emphasized material assistance and the rehabilitation of the buildings. The ratio of children to staff was quite high at night and over weekends when most local staff went home to their families. Children appeared aimless, and the center offered no organized program of recreation or instruction. Children had little or no contact with the adjacent community and the director had announced plans to initiate a school within the center. The director indicated that he had little interest in the reintegration of children into local communities. He was unsupportive of active tracing efforts and spoke of the center’s capacity to accommodate more children.
In general, the more children are appropriately involved in their own care, the better. Having older children provide care and support for younger children tends to be culturally appropriate and can enhance a sense of competence, build self-esteem and reinforce pro-social behavior.

### Interim Residential Care – Example of Good Practice

In marked contrast to the above example, a smaller, previously existing center in a different town was locally managed, though staff relied on an international agency for basic material assistance. Following the genocide, the center population swelled over 100% to 160. All school-age children were given tasks, including cleaning the grounds, washing clothes, cooking meals and washing dishes. The nearby soccer field was cleared and repaired; children played there with other children in the community. A proportion of center staff lived on the premises, including displaced widows for whom the center was home. Adult women were responsible for specific groups of children; older children were charged with the care of younger ones. Children gardened in a large vegetable garden that staff helped them build. Staff met with local officials to discuss the placement of children into the local school when it opened. The Director supported active tracing efforts and all children in the center were documented. He spoke at length about the need to help children return to their families and the potential to secure viable substitute families in the local community.

The term “interim care” implies that it is temporary. Yet all too often, children’s stay in residential settings becomes protracted. Even when children are successfully reunited with extended families or placed in substitute families, their best interests are not always assured. Biological children in receiving families may experience a genuine drop in their standard of living, sharing scarce attention, space, food and clothing with new arrivals. Resentments and open conflicts may arise, especially if the reunified child is provided with special support or privileges (waved school fees, extra clothing etc.) Children placed in extended or substitute families are not free from neglect or potential abuse. Indeed, they are at increased risk for being marginalized, emotionally and materially, and being exploited for their labor. A process of monitoring that relies on resources that are external to the community (for example, agency social worker, government caseworker, etc.) will seldom provide adequate protection. Promoting a reliance on local associations, religious groups and community networks may be a more effective strategy to identify viable placements for separated children and to ensure steady monitoring of their conditions. Government child welfare officers or agency community workers can play important support roles in such a community system, including: the provision of training and supervision, as referral sources and to help intervene in cases of exploitation or abuse.

### Material Assistance

While material assistance is vital in war’s aftermath, the ways in which the assistance is administered can make a huge difference. The following example shows how material assistance can pressure families to separate even though that is not intended. To prevent unnecessary family separations, relief workers must pay attention to how assistance affects family relationships. It is good practice to distribute food and materials in ways that encourage family cohesion and protect vulnerable groups such as single women and the unaccompanied elderly.

#### Material Assistance – Example of Poor Practice

In three camps for Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe, an NGO with a particular interest in separated children began to distribute extra material assistance to substitute families who had taken in a separated child in addition to an adult food ration provided by an international refugee agency. The materials included clothing, soap, oil, petroleum jelly and blankets. All of these assets were highly desirable in a materially scarce environment, especially during the drought of 1991/92.

As the official repatriation got underway in 1993, it was soon recognized that some of the separated children knew exactly where their parents were and, most often, had managed to stay in contact with them. Based on a systematic analysis of these cases of “false documentations” (children who had been documented as separated but, in fact, had relatives in the camp), the number of such cases was significantly higher in the camps where additional assets had been distributed to substitute families. Though perhaps reflective of an active coping strategy on the part of hard-pressed refugee families, this situation may have actually contributed to the long-term, unnecessary separation of some children and also created a substantial amount of unnecessary work with regard to documentation, tracing and reunification efforts, including the use of valuable staff time, costly film and poster printing.

#### Material Assistance – Example of Good Practice
In mid-1994 in Tanzania, an NGO collaborated with an international organization to assess the psychosocial needs of newly arriving Rwandan refugees. From the first day, the consultants emphasized the need to involve the refugee community in the initial assessment of its own needs, and to participate actively in organizing themselves to address those needs. The creation of institutions or “care centers” for children was discouraged and material assistance was carefully channeled through the communities rather than into the existing institutions. The vast majority of separated children were absorbed by families from their same community.

In contrast to the situation that developed with the Rwandan refugees just across another border in Zaire, the rate of child abandonment in this camp in Tanzania was quite small. While the total number of refugees and the speed of their displacement is not directly comparable in these two settings, the methodology for responding to separated children in Tanzania was significantly different and minimized the unintended separations that might have occurred if the creation of residential institutions had been coupled with the distribution of material assistance as was the case in Zaire.

**Economic opportunity and a sense of competence**

Over time it has become clear that programs of psychosocial support in poor communities must incorporate efforts of economic empowerment. This is especially important for vulnerable female and adolescent headed households. Abject poverty and destitution lead to a pattern of increasing risk factors for children. Similarly, continued dependence on the material assistance of aid agencies undermines genuine recovery. The experience of competence and of being able to contribute to the economic well-being of one’s family can be very self-reinforcing and many adolescents, young widows and single mothers have made it clear that a combination of group psychosocial support and economic opportunity have been key factors in their successful adaptation. Thus, the maintenance or promotion of skill building, and appropriate assistance through group guaranteed lending schemes may be crucial in supporting active coping and long-term, positive adaptation. It is important to note that there are risks involved in such efforts – the raising of false expectations being high among them. Often, people know what they want and need to do; rather than “generate new markets,” they have ideas about the kind of assistance that would support them to do a better job of what they are already doing to cope.

**Targeting vulnerable groups: the problem of reintegration**

The genuine reintegration of vulnerable groups, such as former child soldiers, landmine victims and unaccompanied children and elderly, into their communities is essential in achieving a durable solution to their displacement. Program managers need to be aware, however, that targeting particular individuals or groups can also have negative effects, from heightening stigmatization to triggering overt hostility with other members of the community. Where resources are scarce and the effects of war are widespread, it is wise to develop programs for the larger community, with components for integrating specific groups. Community leaders and naturally formed groups can help to identify the most vulnerable families and children; their perspective may differ from that of outsiders.

**Targeting Assistance to Separated Children – Example of Poor Practice**

Separated children being reunified with extended family members in a rural district of Mozambique were, upon reunification, provided with a material kit. While some items supported the entire family (seeds, hoe, oil and sugar) other items (clothing, blanket, pencil and school books) privileged only the reunified child. In addition, a government policy waived school fees for reunified children.

In one extended family, two separated boys, aged nine and eleven, were reunified with their paternal uncle who had five children of his own. Follow-up visits to the home revealed that there was significant tension around the boys’ relative privilege. The other children were resentful that these cousins were the only children in the family attending school. The envy and frustration were manifested into open conflict on numerous occasions and one of the uncle’s older biological children poignantly described how their share of food and space had been diminished with these privileged additions to the family.

**Targeting Vulnerable Groups – Example of Good Practice**

With support from an international NGO, a life-skills building program was established through a local community association in a rural village in one of Mozambique’s northern provinces. The program included basic numeracy and literacy, recreation, access to viable trade skills and mentoring relationships with adult role models. The program was opened to a wide range of economically marginalized adolescents which included those who had been internally displaced, returning refugees, original local residents and, recently
demobilized child soldiers. As the long-term goal was to promote genuine reintegration into the local community, special programs were not established for particular subgroups such as former child soldiers or separated children. There was a conscious attempt to address common problems and issues with support being reflective of individual needs rather than being tied to membership of a special sub-group. Recreation programs and cultural activities were also designed to be inclusive.

**Involvement of displaced adolescents**

In war and refugee situations, the special needs and capacities of displaced adolescents are often overlooked (Felsman, 1989; Save the Children Federation – USA, 1994). Education programs in refugee camps typically focus on children of primary school age (roughly 6–12 years) and adults (over 18 years) in need of skills training. Adolescents may find themselves in-between and marginalized, with few opportunities to find a meaningful role in their communities. They have strong needs to feel that they belong and are needed. In some cultures, younger adolescents, like the elderly, may be given more sanction to be playful with children than are their parents. They can guide and support younger children in sports and recreation, pre-school programs, traditional dance and singing groups, and other activities. Providing meaningful roles for adolescents may increase their experience of competence and sense of self-worth while minimizing the risk of anti-social behavior. Also, by providing adolescents opportunities in their own communities they become less vulnerable to military recruitment in war-torn areas.

At the same time, continued dependence on materials from aid agencies can undermine genuine recovery. In field programs, many adolescents have expressed their desire for a combination of psychosocial support and economic opportunity. They want to experience competence and to contribute to their family's well-being. As a result, programs that build skills or extend start-up business loans, while complex, are of critical importance to this age group.

**Strengths and Capacities of Adolescents – Example of Good Practice**

In a camp in Zimbabwe, a 16 year old Mozambican refugee arrived having spent the previous 18 months with Renamo rebels. While initially sullen, isolated and withdrawn, he seemed to take some interest in the activities taking place in the camp. He was invited to join a skills training program and gradually began to form a few meaningful peer relationships, along with a strong mentor relationship with one of the older male trainers (also a refugee).

During the second year of his involvement with the program he was asked to become an “activista” or program assistant. He blossomed in this role, helping organize the recreation program in two of the camp’s villages. He also became the leader for one of the camp’s best traditional dance groups. His confidence and self-esteem grew steadily and his relationships with same age peers deepened. In addition, he gained significant status and respect in the refugee community, especially during the public performances by the dance group.

**Adolescents and Pre-school Children – Example of Good Practice**

In a refugee camp in southern Africa, there were no secondary school opportunities for adolescents. A pre-school program had been established through the collaboration of two NGOs (one local, the other international) and a host government ministry. Refugee adolescents were recruited to assist with younger children in the camp’s “escolinhas” (little schools). The adolescents were trained in groups and worked in teams under the ongoing supervision of an adult refugee teacher or “animator,” who also served as a mentor and role model. Though unpaid, adolescents received modest material incentives that had been decided upon by the group. Most striking was the importance of group membership, reflected in their high level of energy and the commitment brought to their interaction with the younger children.

**Therapeutic interventions**

The effects of violence and displacement on people depends upon a range of contextual and personal factors. It is a mistaken assumption that reported high levels of exposure among a particular population can or should be equated with similarly high levels of symptom formation or the diagnosis of clinical syndromes. Some people may continue to evidence distress beyond what might be considered, in their own context, a normal reaction to events beyond the normal boundaries of human experience. Addressing the special needs of such individuals represents a major challenge in most emergency situations where resources are scarce and where an emphasis on individual “treatment” may be inappropriate and unsustainable.

Guarding the integrity of families and especially for children, maintaining contact with primary caregivers, can serve as protective factors, providing a basis for effective coping if not resilient behavior. Promoting
Psychosocial well-being is a basic response to the traumas of displacement. Creating the opportunity for a range of small group support can also have genuine therapeutic value. Often, the healing process and the supportive, primary relationships that can evolve from participation in such small group activity are secondary benefits. They are not stated as the primary purpose of the group's formation or activity. Examples might include: a knitting or sewing group for adolescent girls, guided by an empathic older woman from the community; a sports team or traditional dance group for boys or girls lead by a competent, older adolescent; a women’s prayer group in a local religious organization; a small group of community women who share an income generating activity.

Strong emotions may also find expression in physical symptoms, such as repeated fainting, vague aches and pains in the head or stomach, or general body pain.

**A Health Post Assessment and Referral Mechanism – Example of Good Practice**

Patients, mainly women and children, who came regularly to a health post in a refugee camp in Malawi complained of difficulties in breathing and sleeping, lack of appetite, low energy, and generalized aches and pains. No medical cause for their complaints could be diagnosed. As a result, a referral system was set up that allowed them to receive a home visit from a community worker (a para-professional from among the refugees) with whom they could discuss their ailments and any other concerns. Such sessions often revealed a range of stressors within the family and led to people being referred to appropriate support services in the camp: a school, a pre-school, recreation programs, activity groups for adolescent girls, others for skills training, and so on. The system included follow-up with each client that involved both the health post and the support programs.

**Psychosocial Care Training at Rwandan Children’s Center – Example of Good Practice**

A child-focused international NGO helped introduce psychosocial care at a residential center for displaced children on the outskirts of Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Previously, only the children’s immediate material needs were met. Staff were trained in a variety of skills, including ways to engage young children’s interests, how to make toys from available materials, and how to distinguish between children’s different stages of development, and how to draw on adolescents’ capacity to work and play with younger children. Other areas of training for local caregivers ranged from care and protection of vulnerable children and documenting separated ones to helping the center establish relations with the outside community and then exploring its potential to provide substitute care, schooling and recreational activities.

**Ethical issues**

Ethical conflicts, whether encountered at an individual or an organizational level, require reflection and action. Failure to respond to these conflicts entails a moral cost and can impede collaboration with other organizations. When dealing with children who are separated from their families, fieldworkers face many ethical dilemmas. A worker’s relationship with a child may resemble a parental relationship with similar obligations and responsibilities. Awareness of neglect, abuse or exploitation can be a dilemma for a fieldworker (often young and female) at odds with established authorities (often older males).

**An Ethical Dilemma – Example of Poor Practice**

A young female staff member working in a care center became aware that the local director was skimming food from relief shipments and trading it off to a shop keeper in a community market. While she had shared her concern with a female co-worker from a different center she had been reluctant to bring the matter to her other colleagues or the senior staff of the international NGO in which she worked.

The issue came to light when she became aware that the director was also sexually exploiting one of the adolescent girls in the center, a youth for whom she was indirectly responsible. In exploring the ethical conflicts she faced it became clear how much she feared being responsible for exposing an older male authority figure whom she was certain would retaliate against her. She noted that she had seriously considered leaving her job to avoid the confrontation and it was only with the encouragement of a senior female staff member and reassurance that the agency would support her, that she decided to make a confidential report on the matter. This ethical dilemma had become a significant preoccupation that usurped a good deal of her energy and emotional life until it had been adequately addressed.

Establishing ethical guidelines can be a way to support fieldworkers. Though guidelines should take into account local circumstances, they might include:

- A confidential system for reporting ethical problems
• A clear method of response by senior staff, within a specified time frame
• Regular and structured group discussions of ethical problems and a system for collective reporting
• Preparation and use of case materials in training staff
• A system for protecting the confidentiality of children in sensitive cases
• A written code of conduct that guides the relationships among staff, refugees and children and is circulated to relevant parties.

Psychosocial support for front-line staff

Programs in war-affected communities often require staff to work under highly stressful and sometimes dangerous conditions which may result in frequent staff turnover. Involving front-line staff in developing a working plan that assures them adequate moral and emotional support and guards them against mental and physical exhaustion is essential. Such measures may include: periodic discussion of progress and problems with colleagues (including supervisory staff), regular excursions outside the area, staff exchanges with relevant programs elsewhere and in particular, communication and visits with family members away from the project site.

Developing a Structure of Staff Support – Example of Good Practice

An international NGO operating a field-based program with local government counterparts adjacent to an active conflict area devoted a specific segment of time during bi-weekly staff meetings to a discussion of staff and security issues. Other security precautions included: a system for sharing updated security information from the appropriate agencies and authorities on a daily basis, an evacuation plan for all staff (local and international), a clear insurance policy and SOS medical evacuation plan existed for each fieldworker, a communication system linking program vehicles with the office and a set schedule of check-in times, first aid training for all drivers and staff and, adequate accommodation in a secure compound providing some basic options for relaxation (sports field, small library etc.) As collaborative work with government counterparts sometimes required travel near unsafe areas, all staff retained the right to exercise their own judgment and refuse to travel into any area they believed to be unsafe. Military authorizations required for travel were respected and secured. A schedule of rotation leave was established and while allowing necessary flexibility for individual needs, leave periods could not be skipped nor could pay be requested in lieu of leave.

References


**Topic 20 − Supporting Emergency Settlement Leadership and Participation**

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**Introduction**
“Some years ago, a team of Zimbabwe Government and Christian Care field staff visited Mozambican refugees who had returned to their home country despite the war and had resettled in the relative safety of the Beira Corridor. We were delighted to see that in establishing their new village they were putting to use the various skills they had acquired while in the refugee camps in Zimbabwe: carpentry, brick laying, well digging, etc. But their criticism was:

‘You Zimbabweans let us learn how to do the labor but you kept the planning to yourselves. We know how to dig latrines but not how to site them in relation to water points. You gained experience from our situation as refugees which should have been ours.’

The same criticism has often been leveled at international organizations by local NGOs who feel that African refugee situations are used as training grounds for their expatriate staff at the expense of local capacity building” (DeWolf, 1994, p. 7).

This illuminating recollection and the short commentary well sum up the realities of contemporary “participatory” programs of international intervention in emergency settlement situations. From the point of view of the intervenors, their programs are participatory in that the affected population is involved in the day-to-day work of revitalizing the community and new skills are learned in the process. To the participants these same programs still prove to be paternalistic and exclusionary in that the affected community is kept out of the planning and programming aspects. The fact that both of these perceptions are true lead to the realization that participation is not an absolute state. The range of levels of participation, including participation of community leaders, varies from the lowest forms of tokenism, designed to increase acceptance of outside initiatives, to complete self-direction without outside manipulation or advice.

The intent of this paper is to outline a series of principles, best practices and pitfalls to be considered in moving the participatory nature of humanitarian interventions along this spectrum of participation towards capacity building and self-direction. Real partnership between intervenors and the emergency settlement community is achieved when the strengths of each contributing party are utilized to their fullest. The benefits of participation in community development are typically seen to be efficiency, equity, and empowerment (Cernea, 1991).

**Principles**

1. **Given that emergency or disaster-affected populations will, where possible, tend to maintain established structures of authority, the potential skills of traditional community leaders should be identified and utilized for planning and implementing emergency settlement interventions.**

   It has been shown that reliance on traditional community leadership structures is essential to the efficient implementation of humanitarian assistance in large-scale disasters. When affected population is very large, the community leadership structure may be the only workable access point through which the international community can deliver needed life-saving supplies and services. The second reason for incorporating local leadership is sustainability. Programs which incorporate an administrative model initiated from within existing community structures will be more durable than those offered from the outside.

2. **Participation of various groups within the affected community can greatly facilitate a process of social recovery from the emergency.**

   The identification and support of cohesive groups can be an important part of the process of self-identification in an emergency. Even if traditional structures or leaders are not immediately apparent, the formation of groups may be encouraged as part of the coping process. This can both facilitate a process of social recovery and assist in the management of outside interventions, as appropriate.

3. **When the emergency situation leads to the emergence of new leaders from the community, these, as well as traditional leaders, should be identified and supported.**

   The emergency settlement conditions may cause radical changes in the leadership structure of the affected community. Traditional leaders whose knowledge base and context of respect have been removed may not be able to adequately fulfill their traditional leadership role in the new emergency situation. Younger, multi-lingual or better educated members of the community may naturally come forth as strong leaders when their skills in communicating and negotiating with representatives of the international community place them at
an advantage over traditional leaders. The effectiveness (the degree to which they represent the community) of such leaders, however, should be the subject of regular reassessment through a process of consultation with the concerned community.

Also, the very nature of the emergency may cause deep changes in the demographic structure of the community. Previously “normal” community demographic structures may have been altered by warfare, conscription, or flight of fighting-aged men and boys resulting in an emergency settlement community structure characterized primarily by women and children. Such dramatic changes in the community population can lead to situations in which women will take more leadership roles, even where they traditionally would not have done so. In such cases these new leaders should be encouraged and supported even though doing so may seem to go against traditional practices.

4. In the case of resettlement (where the affected community has been forced to relocate), responses should involve the resident/host population in measures offered in support of the displaced. Particular care should be paid to potential conflicts of interest, such as land ownership or use rights.

In situations where there is a clear distinction between “host” and “guest” or “established” and “new” communities, special consideration must be given to the inclusion and participation of both communities in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian intervention. In such cases, both communities may be affected by the emergency displacement, as the resulting situation must involve changes in the lives of both communities. The fact that new people are introduced into an existing system will often cause conflict between the two communities as each will see advantages provided to the other as disadvantages for themselves. Often, the best way to temper and understand these situations (and mediate in many cases) is through communication and involvement by members of each community.

5. Community participation is not an end in itself, nor is it correct to think that all members of the community will participate equally in initiatives designed to benefit the overall community.

“The term community often masks people with a complex range of interests, many of whom will have different priorities. Some may wish to be closely involved in an initiative, others less so. War torn communities have special needs (unbalanced due to death and displacement; psychologically scarred; full of fear and suspicion, etc.); and possess special abilities brought out perhaps by the war (e.g. stronger role for women, increased neighborhood solidarity, capability to adjust to harsh conditions – survival mechanisms).

Thus it is useful to think of the stakeholder – that is anyone who has a stake in what happens. It does not follow that everyone affected has an equal say” (taken from the summary of the Workshop on Urban Recovery – Bridging the Gap Between Communities and Institutions in Kabul, September 5–6, 1995).

Best Practices

This section of the paper supports the principles above and illustrates some of the lessons learned in the implementation of participatory programs of humanitarian intervention in emergency settlement communities from various cultures and contexts.

Supporting emergency settlement leadership

There is a difference between support of leadership and supporting leaders in emergency settlement communities. Leadership must be seen as a reflection of the internal organization of the community. A strong leader in a disorganized community can constitute more of a threat than a benefit for the community. The leadership cannot be strengthened without strengthening the overall community organization. Special care must be taken in communities which are fearful of the accumulation of excessive power (political, economic, social) by just one leader or one sector of the community. In this context, the eagerness of an external program to support a leader, could possibly contribute more to weakening rather than strengthening the emergency settlement community.

Identification of leaders – The skills of traditional community leaders should be identified and utilized. These leaders should have the authority to make decisions regarding the emergency settlement design and implementation within the areas of their competence. While in any emergency situation it is not true that people become so destitute that they cannot do anything for themselves and therefore must depend solely on outside assistance, it is unfair and unwise to place people in charge of decisions beyond their technical
In general, it is critical to identify people or groups from within the affected community who can command respect and who can facilitate the process of recovery. These may not always be traditional leaders, but will, due to their evident authority, be able to assist in managing interventions.

Identification of leaders is only possible through discussion with the affected communities. The process should not always be seen as an absolute definition of authority, as the notion of leadership can change with the circumstances. In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, an “interim” leadership may emerge to respond to a catastrophe. The reason for this may be that physically stronger and more fit people, than those involved in the traditional structures, are required to undertake physical tasks. Alternatively, people may look to more dynamic structures in extreme situations. The very process of identifying appropriate leaders can, in many cases, help affected communities begin to restore a sense (no matter how illusory) of social organization at a time when this may be crucial to their overall coping process.

Supporting emergency settlement participation

The notion of effective participation is very subjective and will, in most cases, be judged against yardsticks set by donors or implementors. Developing methods for testing the efficacy of participatory techniques against the perceptions of the beneficiary community will take time.

Spectrum of participation levels – The spectrum of activities and approaches which constitute community participation may be represented as a hierarchy of activities (which are perceived to be participation by outside intervenors) in the form of a ladder or stairs with each rung or step towards the top approaching fully empowered self-determination.

Participation may be considered to be a five-level hierarchy of strategies. An organization may use any of these and call their overall strategy “participatory.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION:</th>
<th>MEANING:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>supporting independent community initiatives</td>
<td>local groups are offered funds, advice or other support to develop their own agendas within guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acting together</td>
<td>forming partnerships to carry out joint decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deciding together</td>
<td>encouraging additional options and ideas and providing opportunities for joint decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consultation</td>
<td>offering some options, and listening to feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>merely telling people what is planned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from the workshop summary from the Workshop on Urban Recovery – Bridging the Gap Between Communities and Institutions, 5–6 September, 1995.)

Another similar hierarchy called the “Ladder of Citizen Participation” prepared by Sherry Arnstein (1969) presents a similar notion in a slightly different way emphasizing the empowering aspects of participation at the “higher rungs”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Citizen Power</th>
<th>8. Citizen Control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Delegated Power</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degrees of tokenism</td>
<td>5. Placation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Informing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non–Participation</td>
<td>2. Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Manipulation</td>
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Process of participation-oriented programs – Participation is often initiated by someone, who then manages the process of participation over time, and allows others involved in this process more or less control over what happens. The process can be described as having four phases:
1. Initiation

Initiation of highly participative programs presents the field worker with a seeming paradox. How to promote, through intervention by outside assistance providers, empowerment and self-actualization within the emergency settlement community? To avoid the imposition of an outside-structure or pre-designed plan, community participation must occur at the earliest possible point in the intervention. In cases of both natural disasters and armed conflict, populations facing emergency settlement situations are too often classified as helpless victims after cursory assessment. This can trigger a potentially costly package of measures to meet presumed “needs” that can stifle spontaneous coping mechanisms and local initiatives.

Assessment

In order to arrive at a realistic base line against which to judge needs, a series of quick “diagnostic surveys” to assess the immediate physical or social resources that survive in the emergency settlement can provide a simple checklist of priority issues. (More detailed information on this topic can be found in the Emergency Settlement Paper “Needs and Resources Assessment.”) This process might, for example, point to the potential benefit of using skills (from abstract skills such as planning, mediating, and advising to specific trade skills such as carpentry, metalworking, and labor) that exist within the community. Not only could this provide employment, but it could also reduce the need for importing relief supplies and personnel.

The process of assessing the pre- with the post-emergency status of a community can also be used to identify possible effects on social or market structures, and therefore assist in developing responsive systems of distribution or supply.

Planning for participation

In order to set realistic goals for participation in the early stages of an emergency, it is important to define basic terms which will help inform donors about the limits of real participation in emergencies and guide field workers. Participation should therefore be clearly defined as a process which not only:

- involves representatives of the affected community in significant decisions about possible interventions,
- but also
- ensures a significant investment of community resources (in material or management terms) in any initiative to improve living conditions.

The goal of any field worker is to canvass a broad spectrum of opinion through a process of discussion and dialogue. This must be done in the available time and using the community structures available in the immediate aftermath of the emergency.

In order to initiate programs that will foster true community participation, a clear goal and/or policy of achieving such an end must be made clear from the start. The following example provides insight into a process where participation was initiated through an outside planning process with a clear inclusion of participation in the implementation plan.

In July of 1979 the Philippine Government offered a site for a temporary accommodation of 50,000 Indo-Chinese refugees from South East Asia. In August a Task Force on International Refugee Assistance and Administration was formed to conceptualize and plan for the new emergency settlement community. As this was to be a temporary settlement for refugees waiting to be resettled in other countries, the task force saw the ultimate goal of the settlement was to “transform the refugee from a displaced person to an individual who is reasonably equipped with skills and appropriate attitudes to start a new life in his country of final destination.

To assist in achieving this ultimate goal, the Task Force considered that in the construction of the center the basic design of the facilities shall provide the following:
1. A refugee family must have privacy. Each family can cook and eat their food and rest in privacy.

2. Ethnic groups in the design should be respected.

3. By designed arrangements of shelter units, social interaction amongst families and ethnic groups can be encouraged.

4. Toilets, showers, laundry areas, and water points with plenty of water will be strategically located within shelter unit groupings.

5. Shelter units will be arranged to achieve community housing scheme that will support community life among the refugees. It will be a support system arrangement that will assist the refugees in adjusting to their new environment.

6. A community center unit will be provided in each community grouping where the community leaders will be located. Community services will also be housed in the community center unit.

While we were fully supported by the Philippine Government and UNHCR, we would have been a failure had we not defined a clear, concise statement, our primary objective/goal. We believed that we have evolved a concept and a firm framework plan on how the objective can be attained” (Tobias, 1986, pp. 143−148).

2. Preparation – One primary method of preparing for and encouraging community participation in humanitarian relief efforts is through calling a formal meeting or series of meetings. A meeting of representatives/community meeting should be held to discuss plans on how to best manage the emergency settlement, who should manage what aspects, what services are needed, who will provide and who will monitor the provision of various services. Observations, suggestions, recommendations and access points for representatives of the community and various groups and sub−groups can all be discussed.

For the purpose of learning the views and needs and resources of the various groups within the community, a go−between may be appointed or otherwise tasked with the job of volunteering time to liaise with these groups and the planning group.

Dialogue – Wherever possible, emergency settlement programs should be undertaken after discussion with some authoritative representatives from within the beneficiary population. If this is not possible (for example in the planning of temporary settlements for immediate reception of new arrivals), the allocation or use of any shelter or facilities should be done in a consultative manner.

The most effective way to plan interventions is to build upon the practical coping mechanisms that may already exist within the community. This can only be done through a process of observation and discussion. The evident referral of authority (about issues from water supply to allocation of temporary shelter) may emerge from this process and allow the field worker to form a picture of the various levels of leadership within the community.

Cost of preparation – Although participation may avoid unnecessary costs of less−informed programs, this does not imply that there are no costs associated with participation – either for the agency or the community.

“Since most of the community’s costs are in−kind (labor, materials, participation time), they do not involve cash transfers. The implementing agency, however, will incur direct, cash outlays for salaries and expenses of personnel to assist in community organization, training, supervision, and back−up technical support. These costs generally are greatest during the mobilization phase and drop off rapidly as implementation progresses” (WASH, 1990, p. 87).

3. Participation, some pitfalls to avoid – While participation is a widely heralded method (and in some instances an end in itself) there are numerous pitfalls which can frustrate the intentions of intervenors.

“In truth, there are too many barriers, both physical and mental, within the system that preclude effective refugee participation. But the lack of participation by refugees in decisions that affect them and their livelihoods is a fatal error. Why? Because it deprives refugees of the
use of their own coping mechanisms which are so important in helping the refugees to reestablish identity, self-esteem and dignity” (Needham, 1994, p. 17).

Needham lists seven reasons why participation fails in the provision of refugee assistance interventions. The list has been condensed and adapted for all populations living in emergency settlements:

1. The affected people are assumed to be helpless, and therefore cannot participate.
2. Especially large operations tend to treat the affected people as numbers in a logistical exercise, where social factors are not considered.
3. Relief agencies are more accountable to the donors than the beneficiaries.
4. Assisting agencies tend to become more specialized and less flexible over time.
5. High tech responses add an experiential and cultural barrier between the intervenors and the beneficiaries.
6. Structural decision-making procedures in the intervening agencies do not allow for major local input.
7. Agencies do not have a history of using participatory approaches, and therefore the central idea is consequently “unthinkable.”

The list above describes situations where even though participation is deemed to be good it is often unachieved. In some instances there is another viewpoint in which participation is not a good thing at all. The following five situations represent conditions under which community participation should not be encouraged (Gilbert, 1987):

1. when the people do not want to participate
2. when such participation diverts needed resources away from the community
3. when the effort outweighs the result (opportunity costs are too high)
4. when the effort is really intended to increase support for a particular political party
5. when the effort is designed to collect funds for uses not benefiting the community.

**Community diversity and politicism** – Aside from the necessity of having a clear set of goals for the outside intervenors, it is important to realize that the affected community may not share these goals with the intervenors or between themselves. Communities are diverse. Virtually every community suffering emergency settlement conditions whether from natural disasters, internal displacement, or refugee-producing violence will be a heterogeneous collection of sub groups, some with very different agendas. This can become strikingly clear when magnified by the display of political affiliations within the larger community.

“Insofar as there is some form of partisan political competition in the society, this will manifest itself within the community. Some households will sympathize with one party, others with a second party, some with no party at all. Insofar as community organizations in Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela are heavily politicized (especially close to elections), these political differences are likely to adversely affect the homogeneity of settlements and the willingness of households to participate. I well remember visiting one family in a settlement in Valencia soon after an election. For five years, I was told, the family had ‘crossed their arms and done nothing’ because the association was run by the opposition. Now, it was their turn to be influential and for the others to be left out. Democracy may be a blessing, but partisan conflict is clearly a problem for community organizations” (Gilbert, 1987, p. 69).

**Inequity and gender bias** – There are situations where active participation of the affected community results in favorable treatment of one group within the community over others. This may show itself in obvious ways through inequitable distribution of physical resources such as food and shelter materials or unfair restrictions on access to other material resources. In some instances this results in situations of system abuse, i.e. diversion of food or material goods to those other than targeted populations for reasons of profit, power, or
military strategy rather than to meet the primary needs of the community.

It may also show itself through less obvious ways such as a reluctance to speak out on the part of any particular group in community meetings or other community-wide assessments so that silent members of the community become a distinct disadvantaged group. Various forms of gender bias on the part of the intervenors also lead to this kind of assistance inequity.

“In 1991, as desperate people scrambled through mountains of ice and mud to flee Northern Iraq, John Telford was posted to the area as a UNHCR emergency officer. When a few refugees took over food distribution, after days of utter confusion, ‘we thought we’d achieved a lot,’ Telford recalls. Later, however, UNHCR staff realized that food was not going to families headed by women. Only then did they notice that all the distributors they had appointed were men. The result: malnutrition, exploitation, suffering.

Telford remembers the shock he felt. ‘Had the group stood out in some way – visually or physically, because of their ethnic background, or a religious difference, or whatever – we would have made sure they got food,’ Telford recalls. ‘But because they were women, it didn’t even occur to us’” (Marshall, 1995, p.3).

Participation or favoritism? – In some cases the simple act of participating in the process sets the participants apart as a favored group. In most instances those people with the most leadership potential, education, and language skills are drawn to participate in the affairs of the emergency settlement. Because of their ability to foresee the needs of their own people, they are able to discuss them with the settlement authorities and therefore naturally take on leadership roles.

Support of leadership in highly divisive communities with many distinct groups, classes, cultures, or clans, however, can be very difficult. Such support must be seen to be fair and non-aligned with any particular group at the expense of others. Somalia presents a clear case of the possible pitfalls involved.

“Nowhere is Somali clanism more problematic for refugee workers than in the remote Kenyan border town of El Wak, where 15,000 – 20,000 Somalis have fled since May [1992]. Six clans and 21 subclans have emerged in the camp, each demanding control over their own food distributions.

‘We must do everything through the clan leaders, who are difficult to deal with’, says Kilian Kleinschmidt, a UNHCR worker in El Wak. Disorganized UNHCR food distributions, controlled by clan elders, deteriorate into near-riots and provoke hostility toward UNHCR workers, who are regularly accused of favoring some clans over others. Some refugees do not visit a child feeding center in the camp because Médecins Sans Frontières has inadvertently located it in the ‘neighborhood’ of a rival clan, Kleinschmidt observes.

‘Subclans have no end. It even goes into the family and which mother you have within the same family,’ says Zahra Jama, a UNICEF health worker in El Wak. Up the road in Mandera, where 50,000 Somali refugees have congregated, more than 92 subclans and sub-subclans have reportedly identified themselves” (Drumtra, 1993, p. 28).

4. Continuation – The continuation of community participation constitutes the sustainability of development initiatives which, even though begun as emergency interventions, can have lasting positive impacts on the affected community. A recurrent theme in promoting continuation of participation is the central importance of the stakeholders’ community and individual motivation and a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the community.

“One of the most important lessons from our work with Afghans to date is that an emphasis on re-building trust and responsibility, [emphasis added] whether in an emergency or during longer term activities, is essential if the process of rehabilitation is to be effective and lasting” (Leslie, 1995, p. 31).

Supporting constructive relations with the local community

Who benefits? – In cases where the emergency settlement arises out of displacement of one community into another, the potential for conflict will exist at several levels: access to benefits, access to land, access to power through control of other resources. The central question leading to conflict on both sides
typically is – “who benefits?”

“Control of the food that comes into the villages [of Cote d’Ivoire] for the refugees can be a major source of friction. Usually, the village chief and the representative of the refugees are supposed to ensure that the food is distributed among the refugees.

“In villages where there is a balance in the number of refugees to locals and where the two leaders work well together, the system works.

“In villages where refugees outnumber locals and where the refugee leader has become more powerful than the village chief, refugees are said to be less likely to share, and locals’ resentment of the refugees grows.

“But the reverse also happens, particularly in villages where the refugees’ presence and leadership is not strong” (Ruiz, 1992, pp. 32–33).

Intercommunity stresses – It is inevitable that local residents of the host (non emergency) community will see the emergency as an opportunity to benefit. To the extent possible, programs should be designed to take this into account, and include reasonable measures that might also provide for those who will be expected to host those affected by an emergency. The areas of potential conflict between the displaced and the local community are likely to include:

• the use of land which might, even if not of central importance to the resident population, have important secondary uses such as seasonal grazing or may be “planned for” by the local community, or in some cases may be sanctified land for spiritual or religious reasons.

• competition, sometimes seen in the form of theft, for scarce resources such as fodder, fuelwood, or building materials. Provision of essential resources through the existing markets could benefit both the resident and the displaced populations and help to supplement supplies of materials that will be important to both communities. As witnessed in many emergencies, this is an important way of reducing potential tensions between the victims and the rest.

• cultural intolerance

• water resources

• xenophobia

Addressing the larger problem – Through an understanding of the resources that might be at hand, and the procedures for their customary management, a process of quick “diagnostic” surveys might point to the critical pressure points on local resources and structures. Based upon these findings, field workers might design their interventions to take into account the impact of the displaced upon a resident community. Some areas in which positive steps may be taken to build understanding between communities are:

• education for both communities

• restrictions in areas such as employment and access to fuelwood gathering or grazing areas

• development of resources that can support both populations

Much will depend on the length of stay in the settlement. If representations are made to the local community that the nature of the emergency settlement is temporary, then problems will emerge as the length of stay grows. This source of conflict will be a three way problem based on the needs and perceptions of the displaced, the local population, and the national authorities.

When the pre-existing community is a poor community, the ideal long-term settlement program will include both the emergency settlement and local community. The local community will have the opportunity to improve its situation by sharing the bounties of the refugees/displaced. Hence a one-program approach will be beneficial. The equal treatment policy will erase any animosity towards the new group.

In a settlement area which is separated from the local population for reasons of security, the local population can be offered the opportunity to use the facilities and resources of the emergency settlement community such as medical facilities, training programs for future employment and access to income generating projects.
The services that are offered to the locals can be given out free or at a minimal cost depending on the economic status of the locals and verification by social workers. These services must be monitored and administered in such a way as to avoid dependency.

**Leadership and participation in situations of conflict**

Often, in situations of civil conflict, the political leadership of the warring parties is carried to the emergency settlement. If the political leadership becomes ineffective or is absent because leaders are at the battlefront, other leaders, traditional or emerging, may take over governance of the newly established community.

The traditional leaders should be given authority to make decisions regarding emergency settlement program designs and implementation. It is also necessary that intervenors exercise caution, especially if leaders come from war-torn areas or areas where they have conflicts with their neighbors. They should be monitored closely without interfering in their daily activities to ensure that their responsibility is not abused; and that the settlements should not be utilized as a staging point for retaliation against their enemies or for future conflicts.

In the case of refugees, regular meetings should be initiated by the government/relief agencies/UNHCR with the leadership in the emergency settlements. This will help in preventing any untoward incidents among more militant leaders.

In non-conflict zones, it is easier to identify leaders as their constituents will always point them out. In a situation of conflict, however, it is possible that nobody identifies their leaders for fear of reprisal from their enemies if they are in the area.

The local community should be made aware of the situation of the displaced in times of conflict. There may be instances when local communities are sympathetic to the other side; this could cause security problems. The preparation stage is important for making receiving communities aware that the people are not combatants but are victims of the conflict and therefore should be helped. Authorities must make sure that these emergency settlements are not staging points for possible raids on enemy positions.

**Conclusion**

There is more and more emphasis being placed on the value of and need for the incorporation of more participatory approaches in overcoming conditions of emergency settlement. While the perspectives and needs of emergency settlement populations have not changed, the needs and views of the donor community has:

- “The expectation that technocratic, nonparticipatory approaches can ‘deliver the goods’ has lost credibility in recent years. Both poverty and populations will continue to grow. Political elites are seldom monolithic, and some leading actors will perceive incentives to champion bottom-up approaches. These may not be conceived as reversing the status hierarchy, but they would open opportunities for more participation than now because of favorable ideological orientations, fear of present disorder, or apprehension over what an increasingly unjust future otherwise holds for the next generation.

- Governments are facing overwhelming fiscal problems, with a triple burden of budget deficits, foreign exchange shortages, and mounting external debts. There is more need than before to mobilize local resources both for capital and recurrent costs and to put all available resources to their best possible uses. Meeting both these needs requires greater local participation.

- The capabilities of the poor majority have been upgraded over the last thirty years by education, health, communication, and other investments. Self-management of development tasks is now more feasible. The poor are more confident as well as more competent to handle responsibilities of decision-making and implementation” (Uphoff, 1991, p. 503).

An important part of the role of international intervenors will continue to be supporting participation of emergency settlement communities in humanitarian interventions. This participation should be a partnership between the managers of the outside intervention and the affected community leading to empowerment of those living in the emergency settlement. It is believed that this partnership will result in more efficient use of emergency funds, improvement of the quality of emergency responses, and empowerment of the community. This empowerment, combined with an increase in capacity, will help move the community from a state of
vulnerability to viable and sustainable community life. This must be the goal of humanitarian interventions in emergency settlements if such programs are to be successful in the future.

“The long history of project failures where the goals and methods did not fit the needs and capacities of the supposed beneficiaries is convincing evidence of the need for a radical change of attitude in programme implementation. Slowly, human settlements agencies are moving towards procedures which allow target communities to be involved in programme planning and execution” (Ramachandran cited by Aysan et. al., 1995, p. 27).

References


Topic 21 – Support for Economic, Agricultural and Social Development

This paper was prepared by Marcy Ostrom of the University of Wisconsin–Disaster Management Center. In addition to the resources listed in the paper, the following people provided significant contributions:

U.B.P. Chelliah – Bread for the World Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland.

This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

**Introduction**

The widespread economic crises, civil conflicts and resource scarcity of the post–Cold War era have displaced unprecedented numbers of people and complicated prospects for their return or resettlement. The overwhelming immediacy and magnitude of contemporary refugee emergencies in combination with reduced aid monies have created a climate conducive to short–term crisis management rather than long–term development planning. It is imperative, however, not to lose sight of development objectives in seeking to meet the needs of refugees and other displaced populations. To offer durable solutions, assistance must encompass not only immediate needs during emergencies, but also contribute to meaningful social change addressing the forces that uprooted people in the first place. Attention needs to be focused not only on ways to improve the provision of emergency assistance, but also on the causal factors that underlie disaster vulnerability.

Awareness of the interrelationship between relief and development is growing, however the integration of emergency–oriented and development–oriented assistance continues to face a number of obstacles. At the institutional level, government, bi–lateral and multilateral assistance agencies have structural and philosophical divisions which often discourage cooperation between relief and development arms. In addition, the complex coping and adaptive strategies employed by those caught up in humanitarian crises are poorly understood. If identified and enhanced, the skills, knowledge, and resources of displaced people can form the basis for future livelihood security. Ideally, emergency assistance can be offered in such a way as to meet urgent needs while at the same time strengthening the recipients’ ability to achieve their development goals (Anderson, 1993).

It is difficult to generalize about the development potential of emergency settlements due to important differences with regard to land and resource accessibility, duration of displacement and prospects for repatriation, integration or return. Rather than attempting to construct blanket solutions, this paper is designed to provide a forum for exploring effective ways of integrating long–term development objectives with emergency assistance efforts in settlements. It is only through dialogue and collective learning from past experience that needed changes at the institutional level and in the field can be realized.

**Principles**

1. **Opportunities for economic, agricultural, and social development within the emergency settlement should be identified and promoted.**

Unless providers of humanitarian assistance recognize the larger developmental aspects of emergencies, they run the risk of reinforcing the conditions that gave rise to the emergency in the first place (Anderson, 1993; Korten, 1990). Humanitarian assistance attempts to relieve immediate suffering, however, if the urgent needs become chronic, assistance may exacerbate existing problems (Korten, 1990). Effective development strategies can ultimately help to alleviate the underlying causes of emergencies and reduce future vulnerabilities. Before employing development strategies as part of relief efforts in emergency settlements, however, it is imperative to fully assess the social, economic and environmental parameters of the settlement.

Participatory evaluation of the existing needs, resources and potentials of the emergency settlement is fundamental to determining appropriate development goals and strategies. Each population has a wide range of cultural, social and economic attributes and each emergency situation has its own complex dynamics. In addition to the composition of the population itself, emergency settlements vary widely in terms of their geographical and causal contexts. Such factors as whether the affected population is urban or rural, the availability of natural resources, the existence of any capital or assets, and the degree of permanence of the settlement will greatly influence the development channels open to the settlement. Also, it is imperative to fully assess the impact of development on the host community. Projects undertaken in the settlement can significantly benefit or harm the local population, depending upon the strength of the local economy and the natural resource base.
2. The skills, knowledge and resources of individuals of the emergency settlement population should be identified and utilized as the basis for development projects.

Development projects should utilize the resources, knowledge, and capacities of the affected population as the basis for coping with crisis situations and constructing effective development strategies (Minear, 1994, p. 13). While projects should seek to foster new skills and knowledge, building upon the existing resources of the recipients promotes self-reliance, improves efficiency, and extends limited financial resources (Anderson, 1993, p. 31). The aid recipients themselves are the most knowledgeable about their situation. Many times displaced people have already devised their own coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies which are low cost and sustainable. In addition, social channels through which relief and development aid can be effectively funneled may already exist. These resources should be identified, enhanced and expanded upon wherever possible.

3. The members of the emergency settlement population should participate in setting development priorities and objectives.

The settlement communities themselves need to be free to set their own development priorities and objectives. It is important to keep posing the question of “who is the development for?” and to make sure that the intended beneficiaries in the emergency settlement participate throughout the entire process of identifying problems and needs, setting development agendas, and planning and implementing programs. If affected population is involved in decision-making about development, many potential pitfalls can be avoided. Preexisting traditions, roles, and values will be respected, the projects will be more likely to utilize existing skill and knowledge bases, and settlement members will feel responsibility for the success of projects. Development is not something which can be done “for” people, but rather a process that has to be set in motion by the people themselves (Anderson, 1993). (See the Topic 20 Emergency Settlement Paper “Supporting Emergency Settlement Leadership and Participation” for more information on this subject.)

4. Development projects should foster self-reliance in the emergency settlement.

Survival requires more than the satisfaction of physical needs. Receiving aid “directly interacts with the recipients’ own physical, social, and psychological capacities.” Accordingly, the delivery of aid should be organized so as to support and enhance the abilities of the recipients rather than creating a situation of dependency which diminishes and undermines them (Anderson, 1993, p. 30). Dependence is demoralizing and leads to apathy, while self-help systems increase the capacity of individuals and communities to anticipate and respond to emergencies and create the conditions conducive to social change. Where people learn to analyze their own needs and resources, and develop their own problem-solving strategies, they become increasingly well-equipped to survive and to manage their own development process.

The ultimate responsibility for survival rests with the displaced people themselves. Aid may arrive late or not at all. The Brundtland Commission’s Advisory Panel on Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment has developed the concept of livelihood security to refer to the nearly universal human desire to achieve an “adequate, secure and decent livelihood which provides for physical and social well-being” (Chambers, 1987, p. 9). This concept of self-reliance includes developing sufficient stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs, as well as attaining secure ownership of sufficient assets to be protected against such contingencies as sickness, emergencies, sudden losses, etc. More important than the actual amount of income generated is the development of the skills, abilities, and assets to meet basic needs over the long-term. The important question becomes “how can people’s capacities to generate and maintain their means of living be enhanced?” (Chambers, 1987, p. 9) Emergency settlements sometimes offer unique opportunities for education and training because people may have time on their hands (Anderson, 1993). While attaining true “self-reliance” may be an elusive goal in the transitional environment of an emergency settlement, the development of sustainable livelihood skills will enhance prospects for self-reliance and economic security in the future.

5. Employment of the emergency settlement population in productive activities should be a chief priority of project developers; attention should be given to income-generating projects in the settlement area and the skills needed to secure opportunities.

Employment and income-generating activities are generally scarce for emergency settlement populations. Often, the settlement population has just been displaced from one struggling economy to another where even the host population may have few opportunities. People who suddenly find themselves without work or purpose can become physically and emotionally drained and depressed. A focus on generating employment and new types of economic activities in the settlement can potentially be of great benefit in maintaining a
sense of efficacy and involvement.

The message communicated by the form in which assistance is offered in the emergency settlement is important. Where donors can involve the recipients in setting up their own systems for distributing goods an ethic of mutual reliance, trust and respect can be established. Rather than becoming passive beneficiaries, “physically inactive and mentally dependent” (Anderson, 1993, p. 30), aid recipients are reinforced in the perception that they are capable of meeting their own needs. Where recipients are relied upon to carry out the daily tasks associated with aid distribution and the management of the settlement, they remain active participants in decision-making and gain the opportunity to learn new skills (Anderson, 1993). Existing food for work programs offer one such potential model for creating employment-based aid distribution systems.

Ultimately, employment and income-generating activities can best be supported through rural and economic development in the settlement area. Development projects ranging from large-scale public works programs to support for smallholder agriculture and small business enterprises can increase the demand for labor and decrease long-term dependence on outside assistance.

6. Any planning for transition to a permanent settlement should include an assessment of potential economic opportunities.

To permit any degree of self-reliance a settlement site needs to offer economic options which are ecologically and socio-culturally sound. In rural areas, the environment and the natural resource base form the basis for meeting economic needs. Secure control over land, trees, livestock or other natural resources is a precondition for achieving self-sufficient livelihoods. Access to water is a central consideration. For agricultural settlements it will be critical to help people locate sufficient capital to settle in their own homes on their own land. Individual and family-held rights to land and resources have been found to create the greatest incentive for good resource stewardship and high productivity (Chambers, 1987; Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987). Without secure land and resource tenure, effective resource management plans are difficult to design and implement.

Where agricultural settlement is not an option, other options for attaining economic self-sufficiency should be explored. Job opportunities can be created through promoting economic development in the settlement area or through job training programs that facilitate integration into the existing regional workforce. Without employment options, the settlement population will be perpetually dependent upon humanitarian assistance, either from host governments or from international agencies.

Best Practices

Integrating promotion and support for long-term development with emergency assistance is complicated. Practical application of the principles outlined above suggest the following guidelines for the design of economic, agricultural and social development programs for emergency settlement situations. A pervasive theme involves the appropriate level and timing of beneficiary participation. Despite the considerable amount of ambiguity surrounding the concept of participation, a growing consensus is emerging as to its profound significance in designing and implementing successful relief and development programs (Sollis, 1994; Chambers, 1987, 1992; Korten, 1990).

- **Best methods for assessing the emergency settlement population’s long-term development needs, skills, and resources**

In designing a development strategy, participatory identification of problems, needs, and goals is useful from the outset. Viewing the residents of the emergency settlement as major actors in the appraisal and planning process will contribute to more relevant and sustainable development programs and be more likely to result in beneficiary empowerment (Sollis, 1994; Chambers, 1987; Anderson, 1993). An important role for outsiders is to facilitate people in learning “to analyze their conditions, needs, and resources and specify their priorities” for themselves (Chambers, 1987, p. 24). Two approaches to development research which place a priority on the meaningful participation of project beneficiaries have emerged in recent years: participatory research (PR) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA).

**Participatory Research (PR)**

Participatory research (PR) can be defined as a collective process of inquiry in which a community participates in setting the research agenda, the data collection, and the analysis of its own reality, in order to promote social change. The PR approach aims to move from doing research on or for a target group towards
an ideal of doing research with people (Fals Borda, 1991; Maguire, 1987). PR stipulates that outsiders should become committed participants and learners who “join with local participants to define problems, design data-collection methods, analyze results, and utilize research outcomes” (Brown, 1985, p. 70). In keeping with these goals, a particular feature of PR is an emphasis on a flexible research and development process which continually seeks and accommodates inputs from a wide variety of participants in all phases of development, from needs assessment and project design through implementation and evaluation. PR has shown promise among practitioners of “people-centered development” for its ability to build bottom-up initiative, promote self-reliance, and increase participation in development activities and political processes (Brown, 1985).

**Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)**

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a still-evolving research approach which incorporates a variety of research traditions, including participatory research, rapid rural appraisal (RRA), agroecosystem analysis (Conway, 1985), applied anthropology, and farming systems research. It is described as “a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (Chambers, 1992, p. 1). Seeking to acquire in-depth information about a particular community or locale in an efficient and cost effective manner, PRA utilizes a range of data collection strategies which serve as cross-checks and maximize the depth and reliability of the information obtained (Chambers, 1992). Ideally, PRA builds strong rapport between outsiders and local residents, thereby inviting a wide spectrum of community involvement in the research and development process. PRA has been successfully utilized by NGOs and government field organizations in the areas of natural resource management, agricultural development, health maintenance and equity programs (Chambers 1992).

**Data Collection**

A wide range of data collection strategies can be utilized in a manner consistent with the participatory approaches to appraisal and planning outlined above. In an emergency settlement it will be important initially to take stock of available resources and to identify and classify affected groups by type; such as by ability to farm or self-settle, by skill, by amount of capital possessed, etc. (Chambers, 1982, p. 27). Semi-structured group and individual interviews, participatory modeling and diagramming, wealth ranking, livelihood analysis, short questionnaires and case studies are but a few of the data collection strategies which can be used to assess available human resources and gain a sense of development priorities and potentials (see Chambers 1992 for a more extensive list of ideas). Similarly, mapping and diagramming of natural resources, creating time lines, constructing seasonal calendars and resource matrices, making field observations, walking transects and aerial photography are useful in evaluating the status of the natural resource base and designing sustainable resource management plans. Gathering and consolidating secondary data available from NGOs, UN agencies, religious organizations, local governments, and the media can augment data collected in the field.

**Foundations for successful development projects**

**Security as a primary objective**

Robert Chambers has drawn attention to the Brundtland Commission's concept of “Sustainable livelihood security” as a nearly universal development priority of the poor. More important than quality of life measures such as income and consumption are the ability to maintain adequate stocks and flows of food and cash over time and the ability to weather shocks and overcome vulnerability to sickness, impoverishment and indebtedness (Chambers, 1988). Consistent with this line of thinking, development programs should enhance, stabilize, and strengthen the existing strategies of the poor to achieve secure control over assets and income-generating activities. In many cases, people have learned to piece together a living by taking advantage of seasonal labor opportunities in combination with various agricultural and subsistence activities (Chambers, 1982). Development should be designed to strengthen existing enterprises or introduce new ones to fill in seasonal gaps, while preserving a reliance on diverse activities rather than a single income source. Freedom of movement may be essential to devising year-round employment strategies in highly seasonal environments (Chambers, 1982).

**Access to natural resources**

Control over land and natural resources is critical to environmentally and economically sustainable development. While the uncertainties and complexities surrounding land and resource tenure in emergency settlements make generalizations difficult, a few basic practices have proven to be useful. In order to ensure
sustainable management of resources, it is important to initially assess the carrying capacity of the local resource base and develop land use policies and a strategic land use plan. A legal framework needs to be established for defining rights of access, use, transfer, alienation and compensation. In countries with systems of common property rights it is essential that any development planning be based on a clear understanding of the existing land–use system and be inclusive of the local host community. Assessments of the resource base should determine whether any "free" or unused resources exist which can be utilized without leading to conflicts or land degradation. Establishing a land use plan will be fundamental to ensuring long–term ecological stability and reducing future vulnerability to disasters.

Agricultural projects

Where sufficient fertile land is available, agriculture can provide a source of income as well as boost household and regional food security. Initiating agricultural projects will require support services for establishing access to adequate land, credit, and information on ecologically sound agricultural practices. Projects should be based on the priorities and needs identified by the settlement population with an overall emphasis on achieving self–sufficiency. Production on small individual land–holdings has proven to be more successful over time than any form of "cooperative" production (Chambers, 1982). Promoting networks of farmers facilitates the quick exchange of information and may lead to mutual help arrangements. The formation of farmer cooperatives can improve bargaining leverage in purchasing inputs and marketing products.

Agriculture can be practiced at a variety of scales depending on the availability of land, labor, and water. In more populated areas where land is scarce, intensive farming affords maximal work and wage opportunities. Irrigation and improvements to soil fertility may enable further agricultural intensification. Intensive gardening in small plots may also be a good option. In less populated, marginal land areas, the focus should be on fertility enhancement and soil conservation. Animal husbandry might be more practical than crop production in areas with low biological reserves. Sometimes degraded forest land can be acquired and allocated to settlers for restoration, allowing them to grow trees and graze livestock (Chambers, 1987, p. 22). The long–term viability of smallholder agriculture settlements will depend upon the productivity, stability, equitability, and sustainability of the agroecosystems created (Conway, 1987).

Other income–generating activities

Due to land shortages and spreading urbanization, smallholder agriculture will not be an option for the majority of refugees and displaced people. In such cases, other forms of economic and rural development take on increasing significance. Where people have been assessed and registered according to skill categories, they can be targeted with training programs and assisted in acquiring the tools and equipment needed to practice a variety of trades and occupations. With creativity, new income–generating projects can be devised; these might range in scale from large public works programs, such as water resource projects and reforestation projects to health and education initiatives to small–scale self–employment enterprises. Baking, shoe–making and repair, tailoring, handicrafts, and cross–border trading are areas where refugees have entered or created local market niches and generated employment for themselves (Chambers, 1986; Schultz, 1994; Basok, 1993).

In providing support for small business development, the amount of assistance required and the form in which it is administered should be given careful consideration. Studies of past projects indicate that such factors as too much or too little capitalization, insufficient training and inadequate technical support can jeopardize prospects for long–term project success and economic self–sufficiency (Basok, 1993). In addition, assistance cannot be administered in a rigid or overly authoritarian manner. Where the goal is economic empowerment, people need to be “afforded the opportunities to make key decisions, take risks – and make mistakes” for themselves (Basok, 1993, p. 115).

Conditions not suitable for long–term development assistance

Situations of conflict

Where people have been displaced as a result of conflict, development should proceed cautiously. While effective development strategies can help avoid conflict, if development is inequitable or ill–timed it can serve to prolong ongoing conflicts or strengthen the probability of future conflicts (Minear, 1994). Whether to wait for a resolution to the conflict before initiating development efforts is a complex decision which will be influenced by factors such as physical safety, freedom of movement, existing infrastructure, etc. Where outsiders are the targets of war lords or military groups or where outside assistance could escalate a conflict or play into the
hands of military groups, outside agencies may need to keep their involvement to a minimum.

Impermanence

There may be little point in designing development strategies where the settlement will soon be disbanded or transferred to a new location. Where escalating conflict, government policies, or deteriorating ecological conditions will necessitate relocation in the near future, emphasis should be placed on developing skills and knowledge which will be transferable. Similarly, in cases where increasing the permanence of the settlement will clearly have a negative impact on the host community such as depleting jobs or degrading the natural resource base, development may be unwelcome. In such situations the hosts may want to encourage people to return home quickly rather than offer incentives for people to become entrenched in the settlement location. If there is a likelihood that settlement residents will soon be repatriated or return home, there is no point in initiating extensive physical or site-related development programs for the settlement.

Assistance not needed

Outside agencies should not involve themselves in long-term development initiatives where such assistance is not needed or desired by the affected population. In some cases, groups or individuals may have sufficient resources and options for self-settlement. Where people have the wherewithal to settle on their own, they may be able to successfully remain independent of outside assistance. Finally, outside personnel and professionals should not get involved in local assistance efforts where they would be filling roles or positions which could have been staffed locally. Refugees and other displaced people sometimes form their own internal organizations for purposes of mutual assistance and humanitarian response (Sollis, 1994).

- **Designing relief programs in the emergency settlement to minimize dependence on external support**

Wherever possible, the foundations for development should be set in place during the initial stages of emergency assistance (Schultz, 1994). Service delivery in the emergency settlement can often be organized to provide employment, build the self-help capacity of recipients and encourage self-reliance. Employing the beneficiaries themselves to help run the settlement rather than contracting with outsiders is a good practice. Donor organizations and external NGOs should not provide foreign experts and aid where there are appropriate local resources at hand (Minear, 1994).

Food for work programs offer another means for actively involving the settlement population in productive activities. In creating employment-based aid programs it is important to consider issues of self-targeting, wage determination, the variety of assets to be generated, the ownership of assets created, and the acquisition and maintenance of skills.

Sub-contracting with groups among the beneficiaries to provide services or needed goods is another option. A study of locally available options for obtaining goods and services may reveal possibilities for self-provisioning. For example, settlement members may be able to obtain small garden plots to grow fruits and vegetables for themselves and for other members of the settlement or they might be able to make needed clothing, shelters, or bedding. Aid recipients have frequently been involved in the provision of health maintenance services and education. Such activities can provide an employment base which can be maintained even after the relief agency has withdrawn.

Members of emergency settlements should be encouraged to develop their own internal organizations and mutual assistance networks (Sollis, 1994). Wherever people can become directly involved in managing their own affairs, the potential for corrupt management and exploitation by intermediaries is reduced and people's self-help capacities are enhanced. For example, in Salvadoran refugee camps in Honduras, a high level of organization enabled refugees to manage administrative tasks, run literacy and skills training programs, and operate schools and clinics for themselves (Sollis, 1994).

- **Critical factors to consider in promoting development skills**

Gender

Gender differences should be taken into account in designing development schemes. Because refugee and displaced populations are disproportionately comprised of women and children, it is essential that women participate fully in all aspects of the development process. Countless projects have failed because women, who were the intended beneficiaries, were not adequately consulted in the planning and design stages. Since
women generally have responsibility for the physical survival of the household, it is important to make sure that supplies and resources intended for women and children are distributed directly to women and that they retain control over them. While development in emergency settlements needs to take account of traditional gender roles, it may also offer unique opportunities for empowering women. For example, in settlements women may have the opportunity to develop literacy and learn other new skills for the first time in their lives (Sollis, 1994).

Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is another important consideration in promoting development (Chambers, 1987). Will members of the emergency settlement be permitted to integrate with the local labor force or migrate to pursue seasonal agricultural activities? Restrictions on movement may inhibit the development of sustainable livelihoods where employment is highly seasonal or where it is necessary to integrate with the local population to find jobs.

Considerations regarding host communities

Relief and development planning must carefully consider the impact of an emergency settlement on the host community. The host population or segments of it may be even worse off than people in the emergency settlement. Further, an influx of refugees can potentially worsen preexisting conditions of resource scarcity, unstable food supplies, inadequate services and low wages. Absorbing newcomers has become increasingly difficult in many areas of the world due to already severe conditions of population pressure and resource scarcity (Chambers, 1986).

An overabundance of cheap labor can have a detrimental effect on work opportunities and wages for the host population, pitting the labor force of the settlement against that of the local community. Competition for scarce natural resources like grazing land, agricultural land, firewood, water resources, timber, etc. can create a situation of between hosts and refugees and can lead to severe degradation of forests, rangeland, and cropland. Where agricultural land, range land or forests are common property resources with indeterminate tenure, emergency settlements can increase the pressure on the land to levels that undermine the subsistence basis of the region.

Food aid can also have a potentially severe impact on the host community. The means in which food is provided to the settlement has the potential to either deplete local food supplies and drive up food prices or, where the relief food supply is in excess, it can drive down local food prices and discourage local production. Finally, refugee populations can severely strain local health and education services if these are not expanded (Chambers, 1986).

On the other hand, development can potentially benefit the host population. Where projects result in the expansion of health and education services for everyone or where overall economic development can be stimulated and thereby generate greater demand for labor, higher wages, more markets and greater supplies of consumer goods everyone benefits (Chambers, 1986). Whether the local economy is depressed or stimulated can be affected to a large degree by official policies and interventions regarding infrastructure such as roads, market access, etc. and freedom of movement for settlement residents. Improving the local economy requires a concerted effort on the part of local officials and development strategists (Chambers, 1986).

Perhaps the best approach is to include members of the host population in settlement planning. Care should be taken to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable members of the host population are not “neglected in analysis and action” (Chambers, 1986, p. 246). A research method such as PRA could be useful in assessing local attitudes and needs across a wide spectrum of the population and facilitating negotiations with host communities.

Development program implementation

Selecting and training field practitioners

Selecting and training field staff is critical to the success of participatory development programs. Good qualifications for a development practitioner working in an emergency settlement might include:

- common sense
- strong background in community work
• ability to communicate with settlement members and host community (local language, communication skills, knowledge of customs, etc.).
• ability to build a relaxed rapport
• familiarity with local culture and power structures
• group facilitation and listening skills
• ability to engender group involvement and participation
• flexibility and ability to focus on process rather than ends
• training in participatory research methods

In addition, it has been noted that field staff should have technical and administrative competence and political savvy (Chambers, 1982). Needless to say, this job requires people of exceptional ability, stamina, determination, and adaptability.

### Organizational roles in facilitating development programs in emergency settlements

Improving development assistance to emergency settlements will require new and creative thinking of the part of relief and development organizations. The major institutional actors in the provision of humanitarian assistance are donor governments, UN agencies, NGOs, PVOs and local and national governments. Each organization has different strengths, resources, expertise and limitations, as well as different development philosophies. In reconceptualizing aid for emergency settlements at a time when displaced populations are surging and aid money is drying up, it will be critical to maximize the strengths and resources of each organization. It will also become increasingly important for assistance organizations to work together in a complementary fashion. For example, national NGOs and local community organizations can often mobilize themselves faster in the face of humanitarian emergencies, particularly if they have had any prior involvement with the affected population (Sollis, 1994). Since knowledge and familiarity with a population can be a key factor in the design of effective interventions, external relief and development agencies need to develop full communications with local PVOs, NGOs, and community organizations.

Even within UN agencies, governments, donor organizations and NGOs, those concerned with relief and those responsible for development may be compartmentalized and have little contact with each other (Gorman, 1986; Sollis, 1994). UNHCR and UNDP have recently taken steps to improve inter−agency cooperation with respect to development activities affecting refugees and returnees, although many practical issues remain to be resolved (Sollis, 1994; German, 1986).

Suggestions for more effective coordination between organizations include the following: a) Review coordination expectations and limitations. What are the obligations of each organization? What processes can be set up to ensure ongoing collaborative efforts on a situation by situation basis? b) Review existing institutional responsibilities and determine where there are gaps. c) Allocate a more appropriate share of international resources from shorter term emergency to longer term development use and d) Improve accountability (Minear, 1994, p. 13).

In many cases the largest obstacle in building coordination and communication between different organizations is philosophical. Different types of organizations often hold widely varying conceptions of the objectives of humanitarian programs (Sollis, 1994). For example, there is an important distinction between participation viewed as the means for achieving the agenda of the assistance agencies and participation viewed as the means for achieving a development process which is driven by the local community. The extent to which relief and development organizations succeed in addressing the larger development context of emergency settlements will depend upon the degree to which they can clearly focus on making a difference in the lives of the aid recipients and the extent to which they engage in regular and critical self−evaluations (Korten, 1990).

### Conclusion

Optimally, assistance builds enhanced capacities for “sustained self−reliant development” (Korten, 1990, p. 139). Development in emergency settlements should seek to generate sustainable and equitable flows of resources, leading to improvements in the economic and social lives of residents. Important topics for future discourse include ways of measuring and ensuring appropriate levels of popular participation, sustainable use of natural resources, and ways to promote meaningful political participation. Achieving secure and sustainable livelihoods will require control over local natural resources and meaningful participation in local decision−making. The value of outsider’s contributions to development can be measured according to their support for the agenda set by the people themselves and by whether they have facilitated “an enhanced capacity of people to determine their own future” (Manila Declaration on People’s Participation, 1989).
References


Topic 22 – Education and Training

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This paper is a synthesis of the efforts of all of those cited above and as such does not express the viewpoint of any single resource, contributor or organization.

Introduction

The right to education is a basic human right that should not be denied to any individual. Children living in an emergency settlement may not have access to the education system of their country of origin or of the place where they have settled on an emergency basis. Therefore, assistance from the international community may be necessary to establish a temporary education system for these children. Resources in the international community are limited, but dedication to the ideals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration on Education for All is a starting point for providing all children – including those in an emergency settlement – with basic education.

“Each child has the right to education. The goal is free and compulsory primary education, secondary education (general or vocational) available to all, and higher education ‘on the basis of capacity’” (Article 28 cited by UNHCR, 1994(a), p. 109).

“Every person – child, youth or adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.... The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to respect and build upon their collective cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage, to promote the education of others, to further the cause of social justice, to achieve environmental protection, to be tolerant towards social, political and religious systems which differ from their own, ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld, and to work for international peace and solidarity in an interdependent world” (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990, p. 43).

This paper proposes principles and best practices related to education and training in an emergency settlement situation. While the principle of “education for all” is upheld in this paper, the main focus of the paper relates to schooling and school re-entry for children and youth, and vocational training for youth and adults. While secondary and post-secondary education are valuable commodities and should be made available to all interested and capable students, access to secondary education takes time to establish, and funding for post-secondary education is extremely limited. Therefore, the initial and principal aim of many emergency settlement education programs is to provide basic education[1] which serves as the foundation for lifelong learning and human development. In addition, youth education programs may prevent depression among some youth in emergency settlements and may also provide a valuable alternative to vandalism and violence for others.

1 Generally, “primary” education has meaning from four to eight years and “basic” education up to ten years according to the country and the latest administrative changes there. For further clarification see the UNESCO 1994 Statistical Yearbook or UNHCR’s “Guidelines for Educational Assistance to Refugees” (1995).

Principles

1. Every person has a right to quality basic education.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 states that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.” While all States should make progress toward this goal, there are two fundamental difficulties with regard to Article 26. First, even in societies where education is “free” at the individual household level, there is a cost to providing education. In most cases, education is paid for by local taxpayers. In an
emergency settlement situation, it may not be possible for members of the emergency settlement community to fund their own schools or for local governments to bear the additional cost of providing schooling to the emergency settlement children. Access to formal schooling may depend on monetary support from the international community which may or may not be enough to meet the demands of free education for every child.

Second, it is often difficult to enforce compulsory education. In some cases, the “opportunity costs” associated with sending children to school are too great for a family. Children may be needed to collect water for the family or for other household chores. In addition, if school fees are assessed or if there are other costs associated with school such as textbooks or uniforms, families may not be able to afford to send their children to school.

Free and compulsory education represents an ideal; it is important to the health and development of children that countries try to make this ideal a reality. Since it will take time for many countries to achieve this standard, providers of humanitarian assistance and individuals affected by emergencies should support the provision of quality basic education to children whose lives are affected by emergencies. The World Declaration on Education for All which was a result of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 declared the right of “every person – child, youth and adult to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning” (Inter–Agency Commission, 1990, p. 43).

2. Appropriate education should be provided as soon as possible in emergency situations.

Basic education for children should be planned as soon as agencies intervene in an emergency settlement and should be activated as soon as basic needs such as health, nutrition, and shelter have been addressed. In some circumstances it may be necessary to respond in three phases, namely recreational/preparatory, non–formal schooling and near–normalcy/restoration of curriculum. These phases will be discussed in detail in the “best practices” section of this paper.

3. Typically, children who have been affected by an emergency situation should be taught using a curriculum that is familiar to them – at least in the initial stages of an emergency.

For large–scale emergencies where large numbers of children have been displaced outside their own country, the design of education programs should support the objective of rapid voluntary repatriation. The curriculum should be that typically followed in the home community and should preferably be taught by teachers from that community. When the return of children to their home communities is delayed, some elements of host country curriculum may be adopted. If families are allowed to settle locally, the host country curriculum should be adopted with any necessary bridging arrangements.

In some emergency situations where a limited number of children have been affected and are living in settlements alongside local children, the emergency settlement children should be accommodated in local schools with appropriate bridging arrangements if they have the necessary language skills and this is the most cost–effective solution.

Where children are displaced within their own country, are returnees or are living in their original homes under emergency conditions, efforts should be made to ensure that they can benefit speedily from participation in a well–functioning national school system.

4. An assessment must be conducted in order to determine the age/sex profile of the community, cultural factors related to education, and the educational and occupational background of the emergency settlement population in order to develop a comprehensive plan for education and training.

A rapid needs appraisal should be made in order to permit the commencement of non–formal schooling, followed by a more thorough appraisal when population numbers have stabilized and/or been accurately assessed and the level of demand for education in the emergency situation has become clearer. Emergency responders that are responsible for the provision of education services should coordinate their information gathering with the work of other specialists such as emergency managers or health specialists who may already have gathered broad demographic information on the emergency population.
The affected population should be involved in the assessment and a key partner in the development of education plans. Community members and parents are often able to come up with very creative ways of meeting logistical and other challenges that must be overcome to institute primary education in emergencies. Furthermore, involvement and some measure of control can be very empowering to community members and can help to ensure that schools remain an integral part of the community rather than an adjunct to it. Community empowerment around schooling may mean that primary education does much more than just meet the educational needs of children.

5. **Academic education and vocational/technical training should be directed toward long−term solutions such as improving the economic self−sufficiency and well−being of members of the emergency settlement while in the emergency situation and beyond.**

Programs providing specialized training should relate to market/labor market conditions. Out−of−school youth not admitted to vocational courses should be offered the opportunity to follow literacy courses or condensed primary school re−entry courses (both of which may incorporate prevocational skills and ‘awareness’ messages along with basic coursework.)

6. **So far as possible education and training in emergencies should be community−based.**

Humanitarian agencies should train grassroots education/training committees in program management to ensure sustainability. The support of the community, especially women’s groups, should be obtained in the promotion of the participation of girls and women.

7. **To the extent possible, the government with jurisdiction over the emergency settlement population should try to offer educational opportunities related to training and employment equal to those of the local population.**

In practice, it may be quite difficult for host governments to provide training and employment opportunities to members of an emergency settlement since these opportunities may be very limited for even their own residents. If possible, however, humanitarian assistance agencies should work with host communities to find ways to provide these training and employment opportunities for both local residents and members of the emergency settlement.

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**Best Practices**

An important aspect of providing education in emergency settlement situations is to begin some type of organized activity for children as soon as possible after the immediate needs of health, food, and shelter have been addressed. In many cases, the start−up of educational activities may simply mean that children are gathered together for organized recreation such as games, songs, listening to stories and perhaps simple lessons. It is important to re−establish a sense of order for children as quickly as possible. Children who have been displaced from their homes feel a sense of insecurity. In some instances, children have suffered extreme trauma, such as civil war, during the displacement process. Education programs for displaced children, therefore, serve a psycho−social as well as educational purpose. (For more on the topic of vulnerable children, see the Emergency Settlement Paper “Special Needs of Vulnerable Groups”.) It is important to rapidly organize education programs to help children regain emotional balance by focusing their attention, stimulating their creativity, and helping to develop their social skills and sense of responsibility (UNHCR, 1995). After or while the children are being organized, emergency assistance providers, working with the emergency settlement community, can develop an education plan for the emergency settlement community.

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**Who is responsible for the education program?**

The individuals most responsible for the implementation of education programs in an emergency settlement are the members of that population. They typically do this, however, with the assistance of NGOs or education experts from the international humanitarian community. While there is no typical profile of the experts who oversee the education function within concerned international agencies, at a minimum an educational planner who can relate emergency settlement to the medium− and long−term perspective and formulate opinions, strategies and priorities most suited to the country−specific context is desirable. In general, good technical people who are well−trained, conceptually sound, disciplined, calm and creative are necessary.

UNHCR emergency response teams normally include a Community Services Officer whose responsibilities include encouragement of rapid educational response, often by convening an education coordination committee with interested NGOs and representation from the local education authorities. Subsequent UNHCR
assistance is typically channeled through an NGO present at the site or a government agency.

UNICEF teams will typically include both generalists and educators assigned to emergency settlement. The “generalist” will have received training related to emergency settlement and may also have prior successful experience in a similar situation. The educator is usually quite highly trained (with a minimum of a first university degree in education or a related subject and field experience.) Increasingly, UNICEF is able to place individuals with training and experience related to education in emergency situations. In addition, UNICEF has a core group of experts with experience in emergency education who can be called on to contribute.

■ Assessment

An assessment of the emergency settlement community will provide information about the emergency settlement population that will be necessary for the development of an education plan. (For a more thorough discussion of assessment see the Emergency Settlement Paper “Needs and Resources Assessment.”) There are several basic facts that individuals responsible for developing an education plan need to know. These include the number of children by grade before the emergency, the number of children who had been on a school waiting list, the number of children with disabilities and the types of disabilities, the total number of school age children in the emergency settlement and their individual ages. In addition, those responsible for the education plan must know basic demographic information about the emergency settlement population. It is important for emergency responders to recognize that some information which would be useful for the education plan may have already been captured by other assessment specialists such as those responsible for healthcare or food distribution. It is important to coordinate assessment efforts whenever possible.

Ideally, members of the emergency settlement community should assist humanitarian responders with the assessment. Including people from the emergency settlement can facilitate the assessment process as well as provide an opportunity to help those individuals build skills and be self supporting. For example, in Ngara, Tanzania, UNICEF and UNHCR Community Services Officers worked with NGOs, Rwandan refugee school administrators and teachers to do an initial survey of children in school before displacement (by grade) and children awaiting schooling. “An initial estimate of the numbers of children likely to attend school can be made, by asking teachers and students in selected locations to visit every hut/tent and inquire how many persons live there (adults and children), which of the children were attending school before becoming refugees, which school classes they were in, which children were due to start school soon or wish to do so” (UNHCR, 1995, pp. 17−18). A less preferable option would be to make an estimate based on country of origin statistics on the percentage of boys and girls attending school although these may not be typical of the refugee population. While initial estimates may be rough, this should not deter emergency responders from acting quickly. As schools are established and needs become evident, estimates should be revised as necessary.

■ The education plan

Because it is often difficult to judge how long displaced people will remain in a settlement, it is best to develop an education plan as soon as possible. In general, an education plan should provide the following information:

- The estimated number of pupils by grade (and sex, where relevant). The estimate should be based on previous school attendance levels plus an estimate of additional attendance by previously out-of-school children and youth.

- Identification of a site or sites for education activities (and any necessary repairs or construction related to this site).

- Establishment of a “shift” system if there are more pupils than can be served at the site at one time\(^2\). The plan for shifts should identify which pupils and teachers will go to “school” at which times. Special shifts should be scheduled in some locations for youth wishing to (re)enter primary schooling.

- Establishment of class sizes (40 or less should be the goal).

- The estimated number of required teachers.

- A plan for identifying teachers from within the emergency settlement population.
• A plan for teacher in-service training that elaborates the methods, content and dates for training.

2 When implementing a “shift” system, emergency responders should consider preparing an “activities analysis” in which the timing of children’s activities are charted to ensure that their shift time does not conflict with their responsibilities such as obtaining water or other regularly scheduled tasks. For more information on preparing “activities analyses” see UNHCR’s People Oriented Planning materials.

To assist emergency responders in developing education plans, UNESCO has developed SHARE (Scheme of Humanitarian Assistance for Refugee Education) which contains the following seven components:

1. Emergency sector information management
2. Reading and teaching materials development
3. In-service teacher training
4. School repair and construction
5. Skill building for the injured and unskilled
6. Education for conflict resolution
7. Improving health in school and home

When developing a plan, emergency responders should determine whether new schools need to be provided for the emergency settlement children or whether children affected by the emergency should be integrated into the existing local school system. UNHCR has developed the following guidelines to address this issue:

• For large-scale emergencies where large numbers of children have been displaced outside their own country, new education facilities will be needed. When UNHCR is involved, they may work with an implementing partner to establish refugee schools. If the schools are established in an area where there are no schools for local students, the schools will often be open to local students as well (UNHCR, 1995). If local schools require additional classroom space to accommodate refugee students, donors should support this provided it is a cost-effective approach.

• In some emergency situations where a limited number of children have been affected and are living in settlements alongside local children, the emergency settlement children should be accommodated in local schools with appropriate bridging arrangements if they have the necessary language skills and this is the most cost-effective solution. In refugee emergencies, UNHCR may request that the host government admit the pupils on humanitarian grounds. If the host government grants this request, further involvement of UNHCR may not be necessary. “However, refugee children from vulnerable families may be given financial help or help in kind (writing materials, school books, clothing, transport, fees, as necessary). Also, refugee communities may be encouraged to establish non-formal classes in out-of-school hours for their children to undertake studies, cultural activities, etc. related to their country of origin” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 10).

• When children are displaced within their own country, are returnees or are living in their homes under emergency conditions, efforts should be made to ensure that they can benefit speedily from participation in a well-functioning national school system (UNHCR, 1995).

Site selection

Site planners and emergency settlement community representatives should work together to identify an appropriate site for education activities. From the onset of organized activities for children, the selected site(s) should be used in order to keep the site(s) clear for possible future development. If the expected duration of the emergency settlement is unknown, educating children and training teachers is more important than building permanent school structures. Initial school shelter should be erected by the emergency settlement community “using similar materials to those used for family shelter, e.g. plastic sheeting, mud walls, or school tents, if available” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 18). Feeding sites for young refugee children should be located near their class site. More centrally located sites may be developed to cater to students in higher grades, to students in courses for out-of-school youth and for those participating in-service teacher training. Substantial buildings should be erected if more cost-effective due to climate, and/or if they will serve the needs of locally
settled displaced persons and/or local communities in the future. Standards should be similar to local government schools.

Teachers

The teachers in an emergency settlement school should be members of the emergency settlement community if possible. During the assessment phase, teachers within the population should be identified. If there are not enough qualified teachers within the emergency settlement community, individuals with the desire to serve as teachers should be identified. After identifying potential teachers, a basic test should be administered to select those individuals most qualified to teach. Teachers can be trained on the job. Experience has shown that a well-planned and integrated program may be useful for qualifying teachers once they have successfully mastered a predetermined set of areas. Such a program in Zimbabwe for teachers from Mozambique helped prevent teacher attrition, even during the repatriation process.

Regular in-service training for teachers should be a critical element of the education program. Topics for training should include:

- review of the basic subject-matter being taught;
- review of various teaching methods including an overview of how pupils learn, how to plan lessons and prepare objectives, how to enrich teacher talk and group repetition by beginning with the use of simple questioning (open and closed-ended questions) and spreading questions around the class;
- identification of children with psycho-social problems. Teachers should be advised on what activities they can undertake, and on referral procedures for severely traumatized children;
- approaches to the education of children with disabilities;
- relevant ‘awareness’ programs such as health awareness, mine awareness (where applicable), environmental awareness, and education for peace (UNHCR, 1995).

In addition to in-service training, good and simple teacher guides/manuals are essential. It is also a good idea to develop a teacher support system by clustering teachers together and using good headmasters as teacher counselors/guides. Involving parents and community members can help a great deal in terms of ensuring that teachers are on the job, students do not drop out, etc. An overall support system must provide quality control and should help teachers develop pride in their work.

■ Monitoring

Monitoring of the overall education system should also be a part of the education plan. Educational access, achievement and the overall functionality of the educational services should be monitored using the following types of indicators:

- enrollment, attendance and completion rates by age and sex;
- availability of educational facilities;
- student/teacher ratio;
- availability of textbooks and educational materials;
- number of trained and non-trained teachers (refugees and non-refugees);
- levels of performance;
- drop-out rate by gender, grade and type of education;
- repetition rate;
- numbers and percentages of refugee children in the terminal grade of each level who obtain certificates, continue in further studies and obtain employment (UNHCR, 1994(a)).
For formal academic or vocational education in the host country system, humanitarian agencies should help ensure that emergency settlement children obtain recognized certificates upon completion of a course of study. Where separate educational services are established for the emergency settlement children, records should be kept of students’ achievements and graduates should receive certificates indicating successful completion and describing the course content (UNHCR, 1994(a)).

## Educational objectives

The educational objectives may vary at different times during an emergency situation. As discussed above, in the early stages of an emergency settlement, the objective may simply be to organize children into recreational groups. After the children have been organized and the assessment and education plan are complete, however, consideration needs to be given to more formal aspects of schooling. The overall education goals for an emergency settlement community should be the same as for all school systems – that is, learning the basics in the core subjects (math, science, language, social sciences). This includes literacy, numeracy, and decision-making skills and is the right of every child.

As long as children are displaced from their homes, a primary goal should be to maintain the study skills of the children. Since voluntary repatriation is the most likely settlement option for children, it is important that displaced children are able to re-enter their home school system as easily as possible. This can be facilitated by keeping children in the habit of studying. Along this same line, it is important to keep in mind how education in the emergency settlement will be perceived by the home government of the children. Education in the emergency settlement should be consistent with that of the children’s home school system.

If children are in an emergency settlement for a prolonged period of time, it is important that the school they attend is recognized as a legitimate institution when they return to their homes. Children should be given “credit” for their years of schooling in the emergency settlement. In addition, if the home school system requires that children meet national standards, education in the emergency settlement should focus on preparing students to meet those national standards.

Efforts should be made to enable youth to (re)join the education system; and in the case of post–primary students, to at least maintain their study skills. If possible, and progressively over time, access to secondary education should be assured. Youth (re)entering the system should be able to gain primary school equivalency qualifications.

Preparing children and adults for repatriation may be an appropriate long–term goal, but at times, this may conflict with the short–term needs of the emergency settlement population. “In the event of protracted asylum, education oriented towards repatriation, outside the system of the host country (regardless of other prohibitions), would not enable refuge–seekers to insert themselves even temporarily within the local social and economic community. On the contrary, such education may contribute to maintaining refuge–seekers on the social periphery of the host–state, particularly if they do not have a common language with the local people” (Preston, 1991, p. 73). In such circumstances, a curriculum incorporating core elements of the curricula of the country of origin and country of asylum may be developed.

## Curriculum

In most large–scale emergencies where people have been displaced from their home countries, the preferred long–term settlement solution is voluntary repatriation. For this reason, it is important that displaced children are educated using the curriculum of their home community. The languages taught/used in refugee schools should initially be those used in the area of origin. Not only will this facilitate rapid repatriation, it will also prevent additional trauma and provide familiarity for the children. If possible, linkages should be established with the education ministry of the country of origin, to ensure that school attainments and in–service teacher training in exile are recognized after repatriation.

In cases where local settlement is a possibility, children should be integrated into the local school system as appropriate. Before integration, education in the settlement should serve as a “bridge” to help the children make the transition from their traditional schooling to that of the school system in their new home.

If repatriation is delayed or some pupils are likely to return to their country of origin and some are not, then it is desirable to teach a mixed curriculum which combines elements of both the curriculum of the country of origin and that of the host country. This can, however, lead to an unreasonable total of 4–5 languages studied. To prevent unreasonable demands on the children, some ideas are:
• to encourage new entrants to school to learn the language(s) they hear around them where they live, and

• to discuss the problem with community leaders and women's groups, as well as with host country government officials

Since it is desirable to use teachers from the emergency settlement, the language competencies of these teachers are also relevant. Unless local host country teachers are willing to work for modest 'incentives', initially it will be necessary to use languages known to the emergency settlement teachers. Over time, educated youth from the emergency settlement population, who learn the language of the host country, may be trained as teachers for the emergency settlement children.

In addition to thinking of curriculum strictly in terms of content, it is helpful to think of curriculum as pedagogy – the art of teaching. Messages regarding healthcare and water and sanitation issues may benefit both the children and their families as children carry these messages home from school. Health messages, for example, can be integrated into science and math. Nutrition information can be included in language and social and biological sciences. A good basic education must convey the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that form the basis for a productive life that is based on lifelong learning.

Care must be taken to ensure that schools are not used as vehicles for disseminating divisive political messages to refugee children. "Rather, the international humanitarian community, which is supplying relief goods and funding, should insist on progressively training teachers to convey skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and reconciliation; as well as messages relating to health and to environmental awareness" (UNHCR, 1995, p. 19). A focus on conflict resolution, respect, human rights and tolerance can be helpful in ensuring that violence does not recur when children repatriate to their home communities.

Access to schooling

Access to schooling is an important issue. In 1990 it was estimated that, throughout the world, more than 100 million school age children, including at least 60 million girls, did not have access to primary schooling (Inter−Agency Commission, 1990). Refugee children typically do have access to education after the early emergency phase, but do not always enroll and often drop out quickly. Enrollment patterns typically resemble those in the community of origin. In emergency settlement situations, those providing humanitarian assistance should try to understand the reasons why some children are not attending school. The best way to determine the reasons is to discuss the issue with the community – especially with women's groups. The possibility of violence should be addressed. Often, in emergency situations, girls are not in school because their parents may be concerned for their safety. If that is the case, emergency providers working with the emergency settlement community may be able to develop an acceptable solution which allows girls to attend school. Poverty is another factor, since parents may be unable to pay school fees or provide decent clothing or necessary educational materials to all or any of their children; boys get priority when resources are limited. Access to schools in refugee camps is not usually on the basis of fees, but poverty and parental illiteracy combine to keep many children out.

In instances where the community’s religious beliefs do not allow girls and boys to attend school together after a certain age, humanitarian agencies should try to determine what conditions must be met before girls will be allowed to attend school. Trying to change community norms in the early stages of an emergency may not be successful, although norms may evolve over time. Acceptable strategies for gaining access to schooling for girls may include having boys and girls sit on separate sides of the classroom or attend separate classes, shifts or schools; providing female teachers for older girls; or constructing separate female latrines.

Emergency responders should also discuss the possibility that girls are prevented from attending school because of household tasks. If girls and women are responsible for daily activities which take a significant amount of time such as collecting water and fuel, food preparation or child care; the timing of training and education courses can become a barrier to their participation. To ensure female participation, the timing of courses must be adapted to fit their schedules. This problem can be solved if emergency responders fully understand the issue and take steps to facilitate girls' access to schooling which can be done by changing the timing of classes so that girls attend in the late afternoons or evenings; providing day−care for younger siblings at the school location so that older girls can attend (they can take turns looking after the younger ones); providing other supports to ensure that girls’ jobs get done such as bringing water points closer to home so water collection does not interfere with school (UNHCR, 1992(a)).
Language may also be a barrier for girls’ attendance. “In societies where one language is spoken in the market or ‘outside’ world while another language is spoken in most homes, male family members who traditionally represent the household in the public world are more apt to speak the public language than women and girls. Often, school is also taught in this language. Thus, girls who are kept at home because they do not speak the language of instruction also fail ever to be exposed to it and, thus, learn it. The cycle of exclusion from schooling is self-perpetuating unless schooling is provided in the language of the household” (UNHCR, 1992(a), pp. 22–23).

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities may also have difficulties gaining access to school. Because access may have been a problem before displacement, teachers and community workers should be trained to encourage parents to send children with disabilities to school. “Teachers should be helped to understand that even children whose disabilities may prevent them from making normal educational progress can benefit socially and psychologically from school attendance by virtue of being with their peers” (UNHCR, 1992(b), p. 57). Often children with disabilities can be integrated into existing school facilities by encouraging other children to act as helpers for the children with disabilities. If there are a substantial number of children with disabilities, consideration should be given to separate facilities for these children. In Kenya, for example, CARE International maintains a separate classroom for deaf refugee students. The demographics of the emergency settlement and available expertise will determine the best policy for a particular situation. In every case, however, there should be a program and policy.

Provision of schooling in urban areas (or when children have not been displaced)

When emergency settlement communities are located in urban areas, gaining access to local schools may be the best alternative for emergency settlement children. Since local schools may be more accessible in urban areas, assistance from humanitarian agencies may not be necessary to secure access to schooling. When assistance is required/provided, it may consist of advocacy, counseling and coordination. For example, UNHCR or another international agency may need to intervene with the host government to secure admission to local schools or may need to provide counseling to emergency settlement families on how to access schools or how to organize pre-school activities, and extra classes for children to study home country languages and culture (or to cope with local curricula.) In addition, humanitarian agencies may provide some form of financial support to assist needy families with fees for tuition, textbooks, school supplies or transportation.

When local education structures have been damaged, humanitarian agencies may provide assistance with rapidly restoring education. Programs such as UNESCO’s “school−in−a−box” and the Academy for Educational Development’s “Rapid Ed” are available for quick start-up of schooling. These types of programs generally offer “prefabricated elements” such as basic instructional packages, special programs for trauma alleviation and conflict resolution, and physical materials for teaching such as blackboards, chalk, markers, children’s writing materials, etc.

Non−formal education

Education and training must be an on−going process. All emergency settlement communities should receive educational and training opportunities not only for meeting their basic learning skills but also for enabling self-organization, self-sufficiency and self-development. Learning is not limited to school spaces but should be done through a combination of various educational forms such as distance learning, on-the-job learning, workshops, etc. Non−formal education usually consists of courses and activities, designed to meet particular social or economic needs, through which participants gain knowledge and skills but which do not lead to recognized diplomas and certificates.

“Resources for non−formal education, whether this is in the form of basic educational skills or production−oriented training, tend to be given directly by national and international voluntary agencies. Overall, support falls far short of the level of provision needed to meet the rights of children or the needs of older people” (Preston, 1991, p. 66).

Particularly because women are often less educated or more illiterate than men, “women’s committees should be made aware of the range of possible educational activities that could be of benefit to refugee women and older girls. They could draw up plans for community−based literacy, vocational and life−skills programs, or combinations of these, for which external assistance could be sought as necessary, from UNHCR and other agencies” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 36). In addition, UNHCR strongly encourages their protection officers “to conduct
legal awareness training for refugee women. In addition, or alternatively, such training could be conducted through implementing partners, such as local human rights or women’s rights advocacy groups. The objective of legal awareness training is to ensure that female refugees are aware of their various rights under international instruments and national laws to empower them” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 36).

Community Services Officers (UNHCR) and/or NGOs should encourage the formation of self-help committees/groups of various kinds and help them with any necessary training. Such groups could organize activities such as pre-school, or awareness-raising for parents.

**Literacy or language training**

Literacy training may be very important for both adults and children who have not attended formal school. Adult community members may wish to study the local language or an international language. Where possible, the community should organize such classes themselves. Outside agencies may provide modest financial support. Somalis in Kenya, for example, asked to study English in their Somali literacy classes. Not only did this provide an opportunity for the Somalis to learn English, it also served as an incentive for general literacy. Another example occurred in Pakistan where IRC had a system whereby Afghan refugee graduates of the IRC English course could become self-employed teaching English “the IRC way.”

In Palestinian literacy classes in the West Bank and Gaza the overwhelming majority of students are female and married. Attending literacy class is often difficult because of household and child-rearing duties and sometime because of harvest time demands. In addition, social attitudes regarding the futility of such endeavors combined with opposition from husbands force many women to abandon their literacy classes (Baker, 1989). To combat pressures against women receiving literacy training, women’s learning groups can be formed which provide mutual support among the women. In addition, those involved in literacy training can arrange the timing of the classes to fit women’s schedules, provide childcare at the training site, and/or provide cooked food rations for women and their families at the training site (UNHCR, 1992(a), p. 24).

**Distance learning**

Distance learning methods may be appropriate in several circumstances. For children that have completed secondary education in an emergency settlement and desire more schooling but cannot access the post-secondary system of the host government, distance learning may be an attractive alternative. Distance learning may also be appropriate in circumstances where the emergency settlement community will not allow girls to participate in the school system. It may be possible for older girls to learn from their homes if the necessary materials are made available.

Distance education involves the use of self-study materials with or without some face-to-face contact with educators or tutor groups. While distance education may be an attractive alternative in certain circumstances, there are also disadvantages associated with it. These include:

- poor postal facilities which may make correspondence difficult;
- the length of time to develop new study materials;
- the existing study materials may relate to another culture/continent;
- many distance education materials involve the use of technologies such as radio, videos or cassette players that are not easily accessible by emergency settlement populations;
- teachers in the emergency settlement may need training to become effective tutors for students using distance materials (UNHCR, 1995).

**Vocational and skills training**

“Most commonly it is vocational education which constitutes the principal form of post-primary instruction. Whether its orientation is towards the rehabilitation of the handicapped or the teaching of skills thought appropriate to subsequent income-generation activities, the emphasis is on trade and craft skills. Literacy and numeracy may also be taught at vocational centers to those who have not been to school or who wish to maintain skills acquired at primary levels” (Preston, 1991, p. 65).
The balance between youth enrollment in primary and secondary school, literacy classes and vocational training will depend on local circumstances and traditions. Vocational training is often more expensive than schooling and can only absorb a small percentage of youth. Because local economies are often very weak, it is difficult to give ex-trainees work experience except in production of relief goods and services. In addition, students wishing to proceed with academic studies will not be seriously interested in vocational classes unless academic and vocational classes are combined. Besides entry or re-entry to primary school classes for youth, literacy and prevocational classes may be a viable option for reaching large numbers of uneducated youth.

Often vocational training is unsuccessful because it is unrelated to real world production and business processes. Apprenticeship is often the best preparation for entering the informal labor market. Training should relate to current possibilities for using the skill (e.g. for production of relief goods and services, and the limited market of a refugee community or rural folk.) Training for a distant repatriation without incorporating production practice will cause frustration and the skill will probably be lost before it can be used.

In the context of emergency settlement, vocational training can address several problems simultaneously. Beyond developing life skill competencies, it can also contribute to providing much needed income-generating opportunities. Vocational training may also contribute to alleviating conflict-related traumas and provide a sense of security and control over the future for participants. The training can be interspersed with psycho-social education and other survival skills such as primary health care, and nutritional education which may help address various needs of the emergency settlement community.

Vocational training should be targeted at enabling refugees to become self-sufficient while matching the needs of the country in which they will finally settle including their country of origin. When developing vocational training programs, it is a good idea to remember that the market is bigger for basic needs such as food, water, and clothing than for watch or radio repair. In the Tongogara camp in Zimbabwe for Mozambican refugees, sewing classes were very popular because, at the end of the three-month course, participants were allowed to take home the shirts, trousers, dresses, baby clothes and carriers they made. UNHCR supplied the fabrics for the classes. Another team of 40 refugees included several disabled men who comprised the tailoring production unit, which made up garments for Tongogara’s needy and destitute inhabitants. In addition, the advanced building and carpentry classes constructed a 28-classroom school. This training was designed to benefit the refugees after they repatriated. After returning to Mozambique, trainees should have been able to build and roof houses and schools and make furniture which would help provide them with a livelihood (Hooper, 1990). Providing tool kits that can be used first for the training and then issued to trainees who complete the course successfully may be another incentive for successful completion of vocational training.

Allocating a significant percentage of the vocational training budget for employment placement officers will help ensure that trainees obtain work-experience (possibly apprenticeships) during and after training, and will increase the possibility of placement after training (or advice to those beginning self-employment). Not only does this promote self-sufficiency, it also provides automatic feedback on market openings and local market saturation. The UNRWA placement branch, for example, fulfills the function of a traditional employment agency by establishing numerous contacts with businesses and administrations throughout the Arab world but also provides UNRWA with early indicators that are vital for developing and planning future training courses in UNRWA vocational training centers (Ernst, 1989).

When developing a vocational training program, priority for limited openings should be given to vulnerable groups such as female heads of households and persons with disabilities. In NWFP, Pakistan, the UNHCR-funded projects restricted access to tailoring and leatherwork apprenticeships to disabled refugees only. In temporary centers based in refugees' homes or compounds, UNHCR also supported self-help and NGO organized groups of disabled men or needy women who wished to study tailoring and a few other trades – training only one group in each site to prevent market saturation. Although there were specialized projects for some types of disability, hundreds of war-disabled and other disabled youth and adults were trained by giving them priority access to vocational programs.

War-disabled people who may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder in addition to physical disabilities should benefit from special education and specific skills training opportunities adapted to their disadvantages. The projects must reflect the specificity of the target group. Appropriate vocational training can be provided and interspersed with psycho-social education and with training in literacy and numeracy as well as in basic survival skills such as primary health care, nutrition, mine awareness, cholera awareness and leadership.

Secondary and post-secondary education
Opportunities for secondary and post-secondary education may be limited in emergency situations. When possible, children who attained higher levels of education prior to their displacement should be integrated into host community schools. Other options for these students include vocational training and distance learning as discussed above. Until secondary education programs can be developed (in prolonged emergencies), students at higher levels may need to focus on maintaining their basic study skills such as those related to language. If an emergency settlement has many children who are reaching higher levels of education, perhaps classes for these students can be developed and taught by teachers with more formal education.

Students at the post-secondary level may be helped to follow middle level vocational training which uses their schooling, if university education is not available. In addition to distance learning programs such as the Tanzania Open University, there are a limited number of scholarships available such as UNHCR’s Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) which is funded by the German government.

### Sustainability of education systems in emergency settlements

The best way to ensure the sustainability of an education system is to involve members of the emergency settlement. As discussed above, teachers should be from the emergency population whenever possible. Because funding for education is generally limited, teachers should be paid modest ‘incentives’ rather than formal salaries as a means of demonstrating the voluntary nature of their involvement. Also as noted above, members of the emergency settlement should be involved in clearing the site and erecting a physical structure for the “school.” In addition, members of the emergency settlement population should be encouraged to serve on community education committees. These committees can be involved in curriculum decisions and may help identify other training needs in the emergency settlement population such as specific vocational training needs. In some instances, combining education with income generation can also help ensure continuation of education during and after emergency support. When a large education system is initially funded by the international community, which the host government cannot later afford to fund; then, the emergency settlement community should be trained and motivated to gradually assume partial or full financial responsibility. A community-based approach is a way of laying the foundation for a sustainable education program.

### Standards

While it is difficult to identify a specific standard related to the provision of educational services, guidelines or objectives may be helpful for emergency responders. In general, emergency responders, host countries, and emergency settlement communities themselves should strive to ensure that all emergency settlement children have access to schooling. Participants in the 1990 World Conference on Education for All agreed that the ultimate goal is “to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. The long-term effort to attain that goal can be maintained more effectively if intermediate goals are established and progress toward these goals is measured. Appropriate authorities at the national and subnational levels may establish such intermediate goals taking into account the objectives of the Declaration as well as overall national development goals and priorities” (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990, p. 52). To this end, examples of proposed goals for an individual country to consider are as follows:

“Universal access to, and completion of, primary education (or whatever higher level of education is considered as ‘basic’) by the year 2000

“Improvement in learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort (e.g., 80 percent of 14 year-olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement” (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990, p. 53).

In addition to these proposed goals for adoption by individual countries, specific targets such as the following can be agreed upon by humanitarian agencies:

- at least 50 percent of the teachers in emergency settlement education programs should be female

- participation in each type of education program should be at least 50 percent female.

“Where this is not feasible, there should be a target of 50 percent female beneficiaries for the education training sector as a whole” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 36).

Guidelines such as these and a commitment to the Jomtien principles may be an indication of a particular organization’s capacity and willingness to respond to the education and training needs of emergency
settlement communities.

References


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Ms. Theresa Hicks – is the Director of the Society of African Missions lay missionaries.


Ms. Adela Quesada – is with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in El Salvador.

Mr. David Turton – is currently doing research in Ethiopia and will be assuming the position of Director of the Refugee Studies Programme at the University of Oxford in 1997.

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Introduction

Academic definitions of culture generally consist of phrases such as: “Culture consists of patterns of relating, knowing and believing and surviving that each particular human community has constructed via the process of choosing from and reconfiguring available options” (Pitman, Eisikovits and Dobbert, 1989, p. 36). In more practically linking culture to emergency response, it is also helpful to consider the following aspects of culture:

• Culture is socially learned behavior, not behavior which is physiological or reflexive. Implied in this definition is the existence of reasons why such behavior has been learned – reasons embedded within the environment, the social structure (economics, politics, social relations) and/or the history of a community.

• Values and beliefs are essentially subconscious rather than conscious. That is, people typically do not reflect upon nor easily change values and beliefs. On the other hand, behavior can be observed, discussed, evaluated, and changed in addition to taught, learned and unlearned. Behavior can often be separated from beliefs and values, but not always. It is possible for people to modify some aspects of their behavior without losing their “sense of self”, their integrity, and their values.

• In addition to values and beliefs, culture also includes how people live together, how they construct relationships, and how they provide access to the essential resources of the society. It is also about how people organize themselves to live together in community. While beliefs and social behavior are linked, the social/community/family aspects of culture are critical in crisis situations.

Combining the provision of assistance in emergency settlement situations with an effort to respond in culturally sensitive and effective ways is extraordinarily complex. Often, there is not time to develop and implement sophisticated cultural training programs or interview schedules. Rather, the nature of emergency response is the need to act rapidly without all the needed information – sometimes in life or death situations. Despite the crisis nature of emergency response, it is still true that emergency settlement situations often vividly highlight cultural differences that exist between groups – humanitarian assistance agencies, emergency settlement populations, and host communities. For relief operations to be effective, both in providing assistance and mediating conflicts, all parties must engage in a process of listening to, respecting and understanding each other regardless of their particular cultural beliefs and practices.

While recognizing that all emergency settlement situations are different and that differences between various cultures are many, the purpose in writing this paper is to propose principles which may guide the actions of those involved in humanitarian operations, and to suggest best practices that will support the identified principles. Ultimately, a culturally sensitive approach to providing humanitarian assistance in emergency settlement situations is an immense and complex challenge which will vary in each emergency settlement.
Principles

1. Emergency assistance providers should respect the culture, tradition and norms of emergency settlement communities. At the same time, however, individual cultural beliefs and practices should not be allowed to endanger or limit the human rights of others.

Because culture plays an important role in the values of a particular community, maintenance of and respect for a community’s culture will help prevent the breakdown of a community’s normal social rules, values and controls despite the cultural disruptions that occur as a result of the emergency settlement situation (UNHCR, 1994a).

One way of respecting an emergency settlement community’s culture is by giving members of the community a significant say in how aid is distributed, and thus allowing them to exercise their culturally specific knowledge, values and preferences. This type of respect by those offering emergency aid may increase the beneficial impact of the provided assistance. At the same time, however, emergency responders must make an effort to be aware of group differentials within the community (such as those related to class, gender, ethnicity, and social grouping) which may limit the access of certain groups to basic resources.

2. People of all cultures should have the right to receive aid without having to forfeit their cultural identity.

This principle is supported by the following principles identified in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.

- Principle 2 – “Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone” (p. 5).
- Principle 3 – “Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint ... We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed” (p. 6).

The Code of Conduct, supported by several major NGOs along with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross is an attempt to put forward standards to which agencies providing emergency assistance will aspire in order to ensure their independence and provide effective assistance.

3. Assistance providers should continually work to become aware of their own cultural norms, practices and biases. In the process of becoming aware of one’s own culture, assistance providers will become more effective at working with individuals from other cultures.

The point about our own “cultural norms” is that we often take them for granted. It is therefore very difficult for us to know what they are or, rather, to recognize them as cultural norms at all – they seem “natural” to us. They are powerful influences on our behavior, not because we are in the habit of reflecting on them and choosing whether to act on them or not, but precisely because we do not.

Realistically, the most that can be expected of fieldworkers is that they will learn, over time, to gain some distance from their own basic assumptions – i.e. recognize that, however basic, natural, “civilized” and obvious their cultural beliefs and practices seem, they are just as culturally specific as those of the people of the emergency settlement.

A genuine effort to see the world from a different cultural perspective will help assistance providers in their efforts to become aware of their own cultural norms and practices and to identify those which could block or facilitate good interaction with the emergency settlement population. The end result of such awareness will be more effective emergency relief operations.

4. Assistance providers should take all necessary steps to understand the cultural norms and practices of the emergency settlement population. To assure culturally appropriate assistance,
members of an emergency settlement should be involved in planning, assessment, implementation and, above all, decision-making.

When providers actively involve members of the emergency settlement in planning, assessment, implementation and decision-making regarding assistance, sensitivity to cultural aspects will be included in the relief operations. Assistance providers, working with a member or members of the emergency settlement population, can learn a lot simply by maintaining an open dialogue with the affected community.

5. Governments and those providing assistance to an emergency settlement should promote positive coexistence between groups with distinct cultural practices.

While promoting positive relationships between groups with distinct cultural practices is no doubt challenging, in emergency situations which have arisen as a result of conflict, the only way to establish some sense of “normalcy” is to work with the affected parties to establish understanding, and hopefully, tolerance. Assistance providers need to be up-to-date on the situation from which the emergency settlement population is coming and aware of potentially volatile situations (e.g. warring ethnic groups side-by-side) in the emergency settlement community.

Best Practices

No two emergency settlement situations are the same. While there may be some underlying and recurring cultural patterns, the differences, resulting from multiple social, cultural and political contexts, are likely to be much more important. Although it is certainly worth making suggestions about “best practices” for the guidance of aid workers, these suggestions will need to be adapted, modified and developed to fit local conditions. The discussion which follows will focus on four aspects of cross cultural issues in emergency settlement situations: 1) selecting and training emergency assistance providers; 2) working with interpreters; 3) assessing the cultural values of the emergency settlement community and involving the community in the relief effort; and 4) promoting positive relationships between the emergency settlement community and the local population when the two are of different cultures.

Selection and training of emergency assistance providers

Often, those involved in providing assistance to emergency settlement populations are of a different culture from the population they are assisting. Ideally, appropriate training should be provided to these individuals before and while they are working with the emergency settlement community in order to minimize inefficiencies that may result due to cultural differences.

Selection of emergency assistance providers

In many instances, assistance providers may be chosen based on their availability or their proximity to the emergency settlement population. This may mean that those offering assistance are inexperienced in emergency assistance or know very little about the culture of the emergency settlement population. International organizations involved in emergency response should make an effort to deploy personnel who have some knowledge of both the emergency settlement situation and the culture of those affected. One way that humanitarian assistance agencies can enhance their ability to effectively assign personnel to emergencies is to hire individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Whether humanitarian aid workers are hired “on the spot” or are hired as permanent employees of an organization, one criterion, aside from technical and/or professional qualifications, should be a willingness and openness to learn from and respect the people they will assist.

Training

The cross cultural training which is most basic is self-awareness of one’s own culture, one’s own values and beliefs, and one’s own culturally influenced behavior and expectations. These aspects of culture shape how one evaluates the behavior of others. Since in a crisis situation, such evaluations are done quickly, without reflection, pre-crisis training focusing on self-awareness is important. The benefit of self-awareness training is that it does not require knowledge of where the next crisis will occur but instead places an emphasis on self-reflection. The ability to analyze one’s own culture and gain insight into how one acts and evaluates others’ actions will be valuable for emergency responders in any emergency settlement situation. When
responding to an emergency settlement, it will be important for an emergency provider to do some reflecting on his/her behavior, and experiences and exchanges with the people of the emergency settlement. When we encounter individuals with cultural values different from our own, we begin to understand our culture by noticing the differences. “Culture shocks and confrontations are not only inevitable, they are healthy and essential in building awareness. What counts is the use that is made of them” (Lagier, 1995). Humanitarian assistance agencies can, therefore, further develop their employees by providing post−event training in which employees are provided a forum for reflecting on their experiences and continuing to develop an awareness of their own culture.

A goal toward which assistance providers should aim is to be competent to move freely between multicultural and multi−ethnic groups. This does not mean that assistance providers must change their own principles and values but that they will respect and appreciate other cultural beliefs and practices. For those emergency assistance providers who try to understand and respect individuals from different cultures, the result should be that they become more effective in their work. “It is axiomatic – and inevitable – that the better we understand the behavior of the local people the more easily we can work with them. The success of any interaction, in or outside our own culture, rests primarily on our ability to anticipate the behavior of others, including their reactions to our behavior. If we cannot do this, as we often cannot overseas, then even the possibility of successful interaction is largely precluded” (Storti, 1989, p. 92). While it may be difficult to accurately anticipate the behavior of individuals from another culture, it is possible for relief workers to train themselves to suspend judgment regarding a specific behavior, which is not congruent with their own cultural expectations/norms, until they have learned the “why” of the behavior.

Cross cultural training regarding a specific culture

Ideally, agencies involved in humanitarian assistance should have an on−going training program for their employees. While it may not be possible to train employees for specific emergencies or about specific cultures, it is possible to train employees about general cross cultural considerations and methods for identifying the cultural practices of a community.

One difficulty associated with training emergency assistance providers about the culture of an emergency settlement population is time. It may not be possible to thoroughly train employees who will be deployed to a specific emergency. At a minimum, however, organizations should provide current articles or materials on the emergency population – their customs, background, history, religion, and political situation – for the assistance providers to read. The Oxfam handbook provides the following recommendation which is applicable to both development workers and emergency assistance providers:

> “Field staff will need to understand in some detail the internal characteristics of the society. Since they are unlikely to have the expertise, and will certainly lack the time, to undertake the necessary analysis themselves, they should make every effort to identify existing publications and research reports on the people in question. Information about such material is likely to be most easily obtained through contact with university departments and research institutions in the national capital. Anthropological research is likely to be particularly helpful in giving insight into the attitudes, preoccupations and, not least, knowledge of the people at the local level. The aim must be to respond as far as possible to the needs of the people, as expressed by them, rather than introducing models of development devised by outsiders. All too often, without even consulting the groups concerned, development planners design interventions to improve economic security which are insensitive to culture and ignore crucial differences in values and attitudes” (Pratt and Boyden, 1990, p. 63).

When training assistance providers on how to identify the cultural beliefs and practices of an emergency settlement community, it is helpful to develop a list of categories that can be used as a guideline for conducting interviews with members of the emergency settlement community. An example of such a list is shown below.³

³ This list has been primarily adapted from materials provided by the Training Unit for the Development of Open Learning Across Europe (TUDOLE), 1993, p. 50.

List Of Categories For Use In Identifying Cultural Values

- governance − who has the power, what are the rules, how are the rules enforced?
- concept of family − role of children and elderly

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• perception of past, present and future – orientation to time, concept of time

• history – significant events in the group’s past

• traditional mechanisms for community conflict resolution

• superstition

• relationship between sexes

• ethics

• attitudes toward confidentiality

• value attributed to experience/theoretical knowledge

• perception of education

• how is trust established?

• perception of science and technology

• what is responsibility? to whom and why are persons deemed responsible?

• where are there conflicts between different expectations of personal and community responsibility?

• how is information typically obtained? shared?

• how are decisions typically made?

A list, such as the one above, can be used by emergency responders when interviewing members of the emergency settlement community. During training sessions, “practice interviews” are a useful exercise in which participants practice asking questions and improving their listening techniques.

“A good practice session is vital, for listening to a recording or reviewing a transcript will often bring home to the interviewers such things as the need for follow-up questions, the danger of asking too many leading questions, and the problems associated with using concepts which are culturally inappropriate or too abstract to get more than rather superficial responses. This is the time to identify and resolve such communication or cultural difficulties, establish key words and phrases, adjust the interview framework or ‘map’, and refine the particular themes to be explored” (Slim and Thompson, 1995, p. 83).

In evaluating the practice interviews, both trainers and group members can provide insight as to why some comments may be perceived as culturally inappropriate. It may also be valuable for trainers to assess the interactions and dynamics of the multicultural group of trainees because the attitudes and behavior exhibited during training will be the same as those carried to work in the field. Even when emergency responders have briefed themselves on the culture of the emergency settlement population, they will not have achieved complete understanding. “Their purpose is to learn from someone who is better informed than they are, and who may well have a different perspective on the issues in question” (Slim and Thompson, 1995, p. 75), that is, members of the emergency settlement population.

Involving members of the emergency settlement community in the training process is another method of training staff. This may not be possible in the initial stage of an emergency because the emergency response team will not be familiar with specific members of the emergency settlement community. After members of the emergency response team are able to identify members of the emergency settlement who could assist with training, members of the emergency settlement community can share first-hand the beliefs, traditions, and practices of their culture with assistance providers.

■ Working with interpreters
When training or selecting personnel for emergency response operations, it is important to consider the language of the emergency settlement community. If time permits, assistance providers should be given language training. At a minimum, humanitarian aid workers should be instructed on how to select and use interpreters, and the difficulties that may arise as a result of translation.

Selection of interpreters

Whenever possible, interpreters should be able to fluently speak both the language of the interviewer and the interviewee. Misunderstanding the comments of either party may seriously distort communication. In some instances, it will be important to ensure that the interpreters speak the specific dialect of the interviewee. In addition to familiarity with the language of the interviewee, interpreters should also be familiar with the interviewee’s culture. “An interpreter can help us understand some of these cultural elements. She can tell us things picked up through dress, language, religion or family life of the client that might be relevant. She should be encouraged to steer us away from action that would be culturally inappropriate or insensitive” (Shackman, 1984, p. 19).

Understanding the culture of members of the emergency settlement community will allow interpreters to correctly interpret both verbal and non-verbal responses of the interviewee.

When selecting interpreters, simply assessing the interpreters’ knowledge of the language and culture of the emergency settlement community is not sufficient. It is important for humanitarian assistance providers to have enough of a cultural understanding of the emergency settlement community to understand who may or may not be a culturally appropriate interpreter. For example, if the interviewee is a woman from a Muslim community, interpreters should be other women. If an interpreter is a member of the emergency settlement population, the aid worker should try to ensure that the potential interpreter is accepted by the emergency settlement community “as a person who is neutral and capable of relaying information on a helpful and impartial basis” (UNHCR, 1994b, p. 29). In addition, knowledge of the social hierarchies in a given community will alert the aid worker to the possibility that differences between the stratum of an interpreter and that of the interviewee will result in an unsuccessful interview. Differences due to class, religious or ethnic group, or political party, of which the humanitarian aid worker may be unaware, will interfere with communication during the interview (Shackman, 1984).

If possible, it is important to select more than one interpreter. Interpreting is a tremendous responsibility, and an exhausting task. People should not interpret for long stretches of time but rather for shorter periods. This necessitates the use of more than one interpreter.

Use of interpreters

After the interpreters have been selected, it is important to carefully go over the interview procedure with them before the interview takes place. At this time, the aid worker should discuss the following with the interpreters:

1. the aims/functions and mission of their agency – basic details, what the aid worker can and cannot do, the structure of the agency, any specialized vocabulary, and other people in the agency who may be in contact with the interviewee.

2. the role of the interpreters during the interview. For example, should they translate everything that is said word-for-word, or should they engage in a conversation with the client and relay the results to the aid worker? Generally, word-for-word interpretation is preferred in addition to accurate feedback on all responses, including silence or avoidance of the answer (UNHCR, 1994b). At times during an interview, intervention by the interpreter to avoid asking a culturally inappropriate question may ensure that the interview results in reliable, useful information. “Appropriate intervention is one of the great skills and assets of a community interpreter. But you need to settle beforehand how and when the interpreter will intervene and how she will let you know what she is doing” (Shackman, 1984, p. 28).

3. the reason, objectives and possible outcomes of the interview with the interpreters.

4. how to appropriately address the interviewee and how to correctly pronounce his/her name.

5. any cultural factors that might arise, and how to raise and talk about things that may be embarrassing for the interviewee (Shackman, 1984).
After having agreed on an interview strategy, it is important to prepare a private place for the interview. In most situations, a triangular seating arrangement will ensure that the aid worker, the interpreter and the interviewee will be able to see each other; in larger groups, a circular arrangement may work best. At the beginning of the interview, time should be allowed for introductions and explaining how and why the interpreter(s) will be used.

When actually conducting the interview, the aid worker should address his/her questions directly to the interviewee. This will maintain focus on the member of the emergency settlement, not on the interpreter. Also during the interview, the aid worker should make full use of the interpreter’s knowledge. “The interpreter cannot be merely an empty vessel translating words backwards and forwards. She must make sure that each side understands the meaning as well as the words of the other. She must fill in information gaps, explain cultural differences and misunderstandings, explain the thinking of each side to the other, and guide both sides towards a successful conclusion” (Shackman, 1984, p. 19). In addition, if the interpreter does not understand a particular word or concept, the interpreter must feel comfortable enough to ask for clarification.

Before completing the interview, the aid worker should give the interviewee the opportunity to ask any additional questions that he/she may have and to ask for clarification of anything that has not been understood. In addition, the interviewee should be allowed the opportunity to state how he/she felt about the interview.  

5 How this will occur is, again, culturally shaped. If the interview is conducted with a group, speaking out openly may not be possible for some group members. Therefore, the specific norms and accepted behavior of the group need to be explored and clarified prior to such interviews if at all possible in order to accomplish this goal of clear exchange of questions and opinions.

After the interview is over, the interviewer and interpreter should conduct a post-interview session. During this time, the interviewer should ask the interpreter to discuss anything that he/she was not comfortable discussing in front of the interviewee, any cultural aspects that the aid worker should be aware of, and any other questions or concerns of the interpreter. It is also appropriate, at this time, for the aid worker to discuss his/her thoughts about the interview. This post-interview evaluation will help the aid worker and the interpreter ensure that future interviews will be more effective.

Potential pitfalls

• Bias and distortion – The interpreter may carry his/her own biases to the interview. He/she may take sides with either the emergency responder or the interviewee – either of which will distort communication.

• No confidentiality – The interpreter may be unaware of the importance of confidentiality or the interviewee may not trust the interpreter to maintain confidentiality. If so, the interviewee may not be completely honest during the interview. This situation may be more likely to occur if the interpreter and interviewee are not members of the same social group within the community. If such a situation exists, it is reasonable to assume there will be a lack of trust, or at a minimum, caution about expressing oneself (or alternately, an aggressive expressing assuming an opinion on the part of the interpreter).

• Over-identification with humanitarian assistance agency – If the interpreter over-identifies with the humanitarian assistance agency, he/she may avoid telling the aid worker things that he/she believes will not be approved of or liked.

• Mistranslation – “If you have the feeling that something’s going wrong, or getting distorted, for example if the client’s reply doesn’t seem to fit your question, then take action” (Shackman, 1984, p. 35). Possible actions include:

  ? Checking with the interpreter on what he/she is actually saying to the client and why. Find out whether the question was inappropriate or embarrassed the interpreter or whether the interpreter simply misunderstood a word (Shackman, 1984)

  ? Having a colleague who speaks the language of the emergency settlement community, or another trained interpreter, sit in on the next interview as an observer. After the interview, discuss what happened.

  ? Changing to another interpreter.
While humanitarian aid workers have a responsibility to appropriately select and use interpreters, they also have a responsibility to be respectful of the emergency settlement population and to evaluate their own racial prejudices so that they do not offend either the interviewees or the interpreters. Before the interview, the interviewer and interpreter should discuss behavior and/or speech which would be understood as disrespectful. Aid workers can also give interpreters permission to challenge racist comments at an appropriate time (possibly in the post-interview session). If the aid worker persists in using racist or abusive language, interpreters should be allowed to refuse to interpret for that individual.

Assessing cultural beliefs and practices of the emergency settlement community

Cultural differences between emergency settlement populations and humanitarian aid workers can interfere with an efficient and effective emergency response. For example, cultural differences between residents and camp staff in a Thai refugee camp created problems when an epidemic occurred in the camp. Medical authorities proceeded with a relevant vaccination program for the residents, but a sub-group in the camp resisted the procedure by hiding to avoid vaccination. For these individuals, “contagion” was an inconceivable reality since sickness, in their culture, came from the spirits. When medical authorities became aware of the cultural difference that was impeding their ability to control the epidemic, they were able to temporarily quarantine the individuals who refused to be vaccinated (Bernier, 1992). Thus, understanding the cultural difference enabled the aid workers to implement an effective alternative strategy for dealing with the epidemic.

Because varying cultural beliefs and practices exist among different groups of people, assessing the culture of the emergency settlement community may be an essential part of a humanitarian organization’s emergency response. As discussed earlier, one method of assessing cultural values is to conduct interviews with members of the emergency settlement. By incorporating volunteers from the emergency population, a culturally sensitive questionnaire can be drafted which will cover the information that is needed to determine culturally appropriate assistance.

When conducting interviews, humanitarian aid workers should devote special attention to finding and listening to the usually hidden voices within a community, that is, women, children, elders, and other vulnerable individuals. Slim and Thompson (1995) cite feminist Dale Spender when they discuss the significance of whose voices are heard. “Reality is constructed and sustained primarily by those who talk...those who control the talk are also those who are able to control reality” (p. 6). They conclude that while finding, listening to and incorporating these hidden voices into emergency assistance activities may “complicate the design of relief and development projects, it may ultimately make them more equitable and effective” (Slim and Thompson, 1995, p. 7).

Culture conflict between aid workers and the emergency settlement community

At times cultural differences may result in conflict between humanitarian aid workers and members of the emergency settlement community. Emergency responders may believe that certain cultural beliefs or practices of the emergency settlement community jeopardize the health of those in the emergency settlement or may simply disagree with a certain cultural practice. When cultural beliefs and practices are in contradiction with workers’ beliefs, often the only possible thing to do is to increase awareness, trying to make both groups understand that their practices are cultural practices and that there are other cultures that proceed in different ways. Especially in cases where return to the home community is the preferred long-term solution for members of the emergency settlement, it is best not to impose the cultural values of emergency responders upon those being assisted and to respect the emergency settlement community’s point of view.

In cases where the culture of emergency responders and members of the emergency settlement community come into conflict, one way to resolve the conflict may be to involve members of the emergency settlement community in decision-making surrounding the contentious issue. For example, one issue that may arise in an emergency settlement may be a cultural preference favoring men and boys over women and girls which may mean that men and boys have priority in receiving food, health care and educational services. Should relief providers follow locally accepted preferences or impose their own values on the community? Possible alternatives include:

- Emergency responders should use the community’s own mechanisms for the distribution of scarce resources since these may be the most efficient means to save individual lives. In addition, respecting, rather than undermining, traditional systems will strengthen the institutional framework of the emergency settlement community. Of course, special reasons – for example, the existence of religious or political factions within the settlement – may make it necessary to limit the extent to which existing channels for the distribution of goods and
services should be used for aid. The basic rule, however, should be to use local mechanisms and accept local preferences and assessments unless there are powerful reasons for not doing so.

• Emergency responders should work with members or leaders of the emergency settlement population to educate them regarding the standards by which relief agencies distribute food and provide medical attention. During the time of crisis, emergency responders may need to encourage the local population to abide by internationally acceptable laws which respect the rights and privileges of all people, usually giving preference to the more vulnerable victims of the population – children, nursing and pregnant women, the elderly, people with disabilities. – especially when receiving relief supplies and getting medical attention is a matter of life and death for more vulnerable individuals.

• On issues that are not immediately life threatening, such as teaching literacy or providing vocational training, relief providers should work with the emergency settlement community to identify needs and determine who should be trained. Perhaps, they will be able to agree on a system where men and boys are trained first, or perhaps the relief workers will develop training that is appropriate to the different vocational needs of the community – some being tasks/training acceptable to men/boys, and other tasks/training culturally suited to women/girls. (A more complete discussion of this topic is offered in the topic 22 emergency settlement paper “Education and Training”.)

**Female circumcision**

Another issue where cultures may conflict is with regard to specific cultural practices such as female circumcision. While emergency responders from western cultures may wish to educate people as to the danger of such a practice (for example, spread of infection, deformity, and/or harm to the girl), the population may not be open to hearing these kinds of messages. The result may be that they will disregard other vital health messages that emergency responders hope to share through the health center. It is important in the short-term to distinguish those factors which will significantly inhibit successful delivery of aid and those factors which, although offensive or even dangerous, will not.

“We must always work from the assumption that human behaviours and cultural values, however senseless or destructive they may look to us from our particular personal and cultural standpoints, have meaning and fulfill a function for those who practise them. People will change their behavior only when they themselves perceive the new practices proposed as meaningful, functional, and at least as effective as the old ones. Therefore, what we must aim for is to convince people, including women, that they can give up a specific practice without giving up meaningful aspects of their own cultures” (WHO, 1994, p. B1).

To accomplish such a goal usually requires long-term commitment and presence as well as the involvement of local persons who have a respected position within the community, are willing to work with outsiders on such sensitive topics, and are committed to the same goals as those of the emergency responders. Medical people who are members of the emergency settlement community may be particularly helpful since they understand the reasons why female circumcision has been performed in the past and the cultural ramifications of such practices. Trained members of the emergency settlement community may be the ones best qualified to make recommendations on subjects such as female circumcision because they understand both the psychological and cultural ramifications as well as the physical ramifications of such practices.

**HIV/AIDS**

Another example may be the conflict that could ensue around public education related to issues such as family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention. In these situations, assistance providers need to study the culture, and learn from the community’s own health care providers. With regard to family planning, emergency responders should try to find out what the local belief is about “family planning.” Then the concerns, values and goals of the emergency settlement community can be incorporated into educational material.

Regarding HIV/AIDS prevention, emergency responders should try to incorporate the help, insights, wisdom and advice of qualified healthcare providers of the emergency settlement who have been involved in the search for acceptable ways to educate and create awareness about current health problems. AIDS prevention material can be presented in culturally sensitive ways, without diluting the reality of the situation. In fact, when communities are open to such material, AIDS education can be done very creatively, using the skills and
talents of people in the culture to get the message across (e.g. songs, skits, posters, AIDS education groups etc.)

The above examples are an attempt to show the various situations in which different cultures can conflict. Unfortunately, no detailed prescriptions can be offered which will apply to all cases. Each must be considered separately so that its characteristics and context can be explored in as much detail as possible. When conflicts occur, as they certainly will, it will be necessary for emergency responders and members of the emergency settlement to work out a compromise, albeit an imperfect one, in the light of local conditions and political realities.

Maintaining culture

Since the great majority of individuals who are forced to settle away from their home as a result of an emergency will someday return to their home community, it is important that they do not lose their cultural identity. Maintaining one’s cultural identity will be a source of stability, comfort and security especially after the trauma experienced in many emergency situations. One way that emergency responders can help members of the emergency settlement maintain their cultural identity is by learning the community's cultural practices related to food, clothing, medicine, etc. and, where possible, adjusting assistance according to these findings.

In addition, emergency responders should support the existing social and cultural networks of the community and try to promote political and economic stability so that members of the emergency settlement can rebuild what has been weakened and/or destroyed through the emergency settlement process. In addition, emergency responders should avoid imposing community−weakening regulations and procedures which are often implemented as part of the delivery of assistance. If emergency settlers feel that they have some measure of control over their own lives, it is likely that their cultural identity – or that part of it which is relevant and adaptively useful – will be maintained.

Involving the emergency settlement population in assistance activities

The effectiveness of emergency relief operations may be enhanced by taking into consideration the culture of the emergency settlement community.

“Projects must be culturally acceptable, that is, understandable, agreed to, and capable of being operated and maintained by the local social actors and their institutions and organizations. For instance, projects may not be successful (or workable) if they ignore the history of relationships prevailing between two (or more) groups. Similarly, the health benefits of improved water supply or waste disposal systems may not materialize unless the intended beneficiaries appreciate the linkages. A judgment on the project’s cultural acceptability and on the beneficiaries’ willingness to contribute to its success must therefore take into account their values, customs, beliefs, and felt needs” (Cernea, 1991, p. 19).

The involvement of members of the emergency settlement in relief activities may be a critical way to incorporate the cultural values of the emergency settlement community into overall relief operations. If beneficiaries are listened to about their needs and their social structure is respected, they will collaborate. It is important that those responding to emergency settlement situations make an effort to identify the natural leaders of the community – both men and women. These leaders can be identified through intentional questioning regarding who people go to for help or information, or who has access to institutional or political powers. Every community has its own leaders, although they may represent only one segment of the population. They are already trusted and knowledgeable. They can facilitate (or block) the total process, save time, and increase sensitivity and accuracy. If the settlement community is expected to be involved, emergency responders should be willing to give members of the community real control over how assistance is provided and distributed. Community participation in needs assessment is not sufficient. Community involvement should be defined in terms of decision−making. It should be judged by the extent to which members of the community have the opportunity to make and affect decisions concerning their own lives.

Emergency responders may be able to promote involvement of the emergency settlement community by:

- respecting the local culture and its channels of authority by actively involving leaders of the emergency population.
- holding regular forums where leaders from the emergency population and the local community along with assistance providers can share and update information.
• holding meetings (of a manageable size) where all interested people of the emergency population have a chance to input on their own situation, and to identify problems, possible solutions and plans of action with the leaders’ insights and cooperation.  

• providing opportunities for and encouraging interested people from the emergency population to volunteer for specific tasks that have been identified from their own plans and solutions.

• encouraging forums that welcome initiatives and plans from the emergency population. The ability to plan and act will empower the emergency population to help themselves.

6 Emergency responders should be aware of the cultural implications of public meetings. In certain cultures, it is unacceptable to offer divergent opinions in public. In addition, emergency responders should be careful to ensure that the “hidden voices” referred to earlier are not silenced as a result of public meetings.

### Promoting positive relationships

In situations where there is long-standing enmity between groups, promoting positive relationships is extremely complex. Each group has its own experiences of pain and its own understanding of the conflict. Therefore, “truth” is unlikely to be an absolute. Emergency responders in these situations should be careful when choosing leaders since certain individuals will instrumentalize and politicize the conflict for their own purposes. When the potential for conflict is great, the challenge may not be one of cultural understanding but rather truth-telling, protection, some level of recompense or response, and reconciliation. Addressing this challenge is a long-term task which may be outside the expertise of emergency assistance workers. A trusted third party can be very helpful, especially when known and trusted by both or all groups.

Even when there is not a history of conflict between groups, it is still likely that cultural differences – and perhaps cultural conflicts – will exist between an emergency settlement population, members of the local community in which they have settled, and humanitarian assistance providers. Therefore, governments and/or assistance providers may need to promote positive relations between distinct cultural groups within an emergency settlement and/or between the emergency settlement and the local community. In general, the more information all parties have about the everyday lives of the others, the more likely it will be that those affected by the emergency settlement situation will coexist peacefully and perhaps even work together cooperatively.

Cultural orientation programs are one way of providing information to the various parties. Since orienting emergency assistance providers is discussed above, the following section will only discuss cultural orientation programs for emergency settlement and local communities. Although these programs may not always be practical to implement, particularly in the initial stages of an emergency, humanitarian aid organizations should consider the benefits of offering such programs – especially when the two communities are in conflict or when the potential for conflict exists.

For cultural orientation programs to be effective, it is essential that members of both the emergency settlement and local community are involved since it is unlikely that aid agency staff will be able to set up and run cultural orientation programs for people whose cultures differ from their own.

### Cultural orientation programs for emergency settlement communities

When members of an emergency settlement have been displaced from their local community into a community with different cultural beliefs and practices, the elements of an effective cultural orientation program for the emergency settlement community may include:

• incorporating leaders and members of the local community into presentations informing the emergency settlement population of the culture and practices of the local community;

• offering language courses (if applicable) to the emergency settlement population so they can relate and associate with the local community;

• offering specific information to the emergency settlement population that will help them adjust to the local community. Such information may relate to currency, communication, local
government, customs, etc.;

• instilling in the emergency settlement community an appreciation of the local community, and awareness of their needs, by helping the emergency population to consider the effect of their presence on the local community. Realization of the hospitality and generosity of the receiving community will help the emergency population not take their welcome for granted.

These types of programs are common in refugee camps – especially when it is unlikely that refugees will not repatriate in the short-term. Such programs were made available to Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. “The aims of the project were to better prepare themselves (the refugees) to function as dignified human persons, to cope for overseas settlement and to better adjust to the local community life after the liberalization of the camps” (Chan, 1991, p. 107). The programs included information on laws of Hong Kong such as labor laws, criminal and civil laws; legal rights; personal hygiene and medical services; banking services; and education and communication systems (Chan, 1991). A component of the program involved small group activities which focused on topics such as geography and human living; community life, various types of social services and facilities (e.g. postal and police); transportation (e.g. different types, passenger classes, bus routes, road safety); shopping and money; social atmosphere (e.g. the general feeling and attitudes of Hong Kong people towards Vietnamese refugees); customs, taboos, major festivals and some simple Cantonese (the major dialect used by the Chinese in Hong Kong); sex roles/parenting, the importance of women and children, and clarification of the views about women’s status, wife battering and child abuse in Hong Kong (Chan, 1991). These programs were beneficial for refugees who were able to move freely in Hong Kong before their resettlement; similar programs helped resettled refugees adjust to their new environments.

**Cultural orientation programs for members of the local community**

Consideration should also be given to cultural orientation programs for the host community. The elements of such a program for the local population might include:

• providing the local population with the history and current situation of the emergency settlement population,

• involving leaders and other members of the emergency settlement population in sharing vital aspects of their culture and customs,

• offering sessions where members of the emergency settlement and local community share their different cultural practices so that each can become aware of the other’s culture and note differences that need to be respected,

• encouraging participants from the local community to be involved in educating and informing other members of their community about the situation and needs of the emergency population.

The potential for conflict between an emergency settlement community and the local population may increase when the cultural practices of an emergency settlement population are forbidden by the cultural beliefs and practices of the local community. Cultural orientation programs may be able to address these issues, but humanitarian assistance providers may also need to:

• work with leaders of both communities to identify the cultural practices that are in question and not acceptable to the local community.

• check to see whether the local community is at all open to allowing the emergency population to continue their practices. Emergency responders should be careful to look at the effect of the cultural beliefs and practices on both the host community and the emergency settlement group.

• sensitize both groups as to the situation. Let them come together in a forum to discuss their differences, the problem it is creating, and a solution that is acceptable to both.

• work with the emergency settlement population to choose solutions, at least temporarily while they are in crisis situation, which will not jeopardize their welcome and will show respect for the host community. It is important to keep channels of communication open between the two communities to prevent undue conflict/tensions.
In addition to fostering understanding between the emergency settlement population and the local community, governments or other emergency assistance providers can promote positive relations between distinct cultural groups that exist within an emergency settlement or between an emergency settlement and the local community by activities such as the following:

- ensuring fair and equal treatment of all beneficiaries receiving assistance by following set guidelines.
- considering the needs of the host community, often in great need themselves.
- setting up a committee with representatives from the different cultural groups and the local and emergency community to handle any grievances that may arise. This will provide a place for people who feel they are not being treated fairly to make known their complaint.
- recognizing the support, cooperation and help that the government and local community have rendered the emergency population.

In addition to the above activities, aid agencies can provide information by leaflets, notice boards, or community centers where members of both the emergency settlement and local community can share information, hold group meetings, or participate in recreational activities. These types of activities may help to encourage communication and dialogue within the settlement population and may help build bridges between the settlement community and the local population.

Conclusion

The principles and best practices offered in this paper suggest the importance of respecting cultural beliefs and practices other than our own. During an emergency settlement, humanitarian assistance providers are primarily concerned with saving lives and restoring some sense of order to the community. It is important to recognize, even in emergency situations, that the task of humanitarian assistance agencies can be facilitated by respecting the cultural beliefs and practices of the emergency population. For this reason, it is important that humanitarian assistance providers consider the cultural beliefs and practices of an emergency population when planning and implementing emergency assistance.

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Topic 24 − Monitoring and Evaluation

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Introduction

With a growing worldwide demand for a decreasing supply of emergency response resources, donors are expecting an ever greater and more comprehensive level of accountability from emergency response agencies. In response, these agencies are increasingly emphasizing to operational staff the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation activities in their relief programs.

In the past, these functions − monitoring in particular − were often accorded less than top priority. They were carried out with relatively small budgets and with little enthusiasm by the operational relief agencies. As donor attention to resource delivery and end−use has increased, however, agencies are now viewing with utmost seriousness their capacity − or lack thereof − to monitor and evaluate programs effectively and report results. Training in emergency operations is focusing more on available techniques of monitoring and evaluation as well as on staff capacity to develop appropriate program objectives to guide the response.

With this increase in donor demands, it is no longer acceptable for a relief provider simply to channel resources to local implementing partners and then claim that its responsibility for those resources has ended. While all may agree that the relief provider’s physical control over the resources has ended, donors increasingly insist that the relief provider’s responsibility continues through end−use. Thus, it is essential for effective monitoring and evaluation systems − systems which can examine resource use, assess outcomes and/or achievements, and recommend needed changes − to be designed into the response plan from the outset.

This paper is an attempt to outline current trends in monitoring and evaluation with particular regard to emergency settlement program design and delivery. It is important from the outset to define the differences between these two activities which are so often classed together.

For the purposes of this paper, “monitoring” is a function carried out essentially to advise decision−makers of actual or impending deviations from plan in the emergency response program; it is performed to ensure that any events or actions which could cause the program to diverge from planned objectives are fully understood and communicated to those in a position to take corrective action if needed. Generally, the monitoring staff is concerned about compliance with approved policies and procedures, and is closely involved with the program on a day−to−day basis. The monitoring function is an ongoing activity which continues as long as emergency resources are programmed.

“Evaluation” is an activity carried out to determine the actual value of the program itself. The initial design and fundamental assumptions of the designers are necessarily the purview of the evaluator. While the evaluators, unlike the monitors, may not necessarily be connected with the program on a day−to−day basis, they must, as well, understand the operational environment in which they are working. Evaluations have traditionally been carried out as end−of−program activities (also known as “terminal” or “retrospective” activities) to ascertain
final impact and to measure actual achievement of planned objectives. Some organizations as well carry out mid–term evaluations to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the program activities to date.

A number of organizations increasingly stress the importance of ongoing evaluation (i.e., throughout the life of the program) – particularly for social impact programs – to ascertain changes in social awareness, local capacities, and coping mechanisms. In such programs, observable increases in the capacities of the affected population are considered the best determinant of the actual value of the emergency response. Some agencies recommend as well that long–term evaluations be carried out years after the response has ended to assess impact and sustainability. Such long–term evaluations may be useful to assess whether the emergency response has actually contributed to a change in behavior – especially in long–term emergency preparedness – of the affected population. In such terminal or long–term evaluations, evaluators should seek to identify “lessons learned” which can guide future responses.

1 In UNDP parlance: “ex post”

Each of the activities – monitoring and evaluation – depends upon the findings of the other. The monitoring staff produces information which is consequently used by the evaluator. As well, the findings of the evaluation are fed back into the program design process, in turn, generating subsequent activities for the monitoring staff to follow.

Where the two activities are, perhaps, most closely related is the emphasis each has on determining impact and accountability. Each activity stresses the importance of ascertaining beneficiary impact to ensure that the emergency response program is, in fact, able to achieve its stated goals of addressing the needs of the affected population. Each activity is, as well, concerned with accountability, i.e., ensuring that the relief provider can document that resources have in fact been used in accordance with donor intent.

Principles

1. Monitoring and evaluation are basic functions essential to the effective management of emergency response programs and to the achievement of program objectives. These inter–related functions should be planned from the outset of the response to ensure timely adaptation to changing needs and to minimize unintended negative effects.

Monitoring is carried out to (1) detect changes in emergency conditions which may impact achievement of planned program objectives, (2) ascertain operational problems or program constraints, and (3) ensure that resources are used in accordance with the approved plan. Evaluation is performed to determine the actual value of the emergency response, to recommend improvements in future program design, and, in some cases, to transfer knowledge to local nationals. Both activities should be viewed as essential management activities and designed from the outset as integral parts of the overall emergency response.

2. Programmatic or operational problems identified by monitoring and evaluation activities must be followed by the appropriate corrective action.

Monitoring and evaluation activities are intended to detect needed changes in the emergency response. However, the mere capacity to identify problems is insufficient; corrective actions must be taken to improve the present – or similar future – programs. Indeed, in the absence of the political will and/or programmatic capacity needed to take corrective action, monitoring and evaluation activities can be considered an unfortunate waste of valuable emergency program resources.

To ensure that decision–makers can in fact take advantage of monitoring or evaluation findings, the establishment of a clear, understandable reporting system to facilitate the use of information is essential. Information fed into the reporting system should satisfy the “necessary and sufficient” criteria; i.e., it should be both necessary and sufficient to inform needed decisions.

3. Monitoring and evaluation systems in an emergency settlement should, to the extent possible, make use of the community–management capacities of the affected population. Self–monitoring by the population should be encouraged wherever feasible.

Self–monitoring by emergency program participants is often the most effective – and most inexpensive – means of ensuring that information concerning the quality of emergency goods and services delivery is made known to the relief provider. The design of a program making use of local capacities implies that program developers are both knowledgeable about the affected population and willing to include the affected
population in the design of the monitoring program. To be sure, monitors should always seek information from a wide range of sources: local authorities, community leaders, other emergency response agency staff, etc. Monitoring by a motivated community, however, will often provide the best source of information concerning the actual functioning of planned services.

4. Regular on−site visits by monitors and ad hoc visits by supervisory staff – e.g., to the emergency settlement, the warehouse, the distribution center, or the beneficiary's household – to observe conditions first−hand and gather information are essential.

While field reports from operational staff and/or implementing partners in the emergency settlement do, in fact, serve as an important monitoring tool, visits by staff from agencies channeling funds or in−kind resources should be planned as a regular part of the monitoring program. Both planned visits and random checks should be carried out.

5. The primary purpose of ongoing evaluation is to ensure that program objectives are sound and achievable, and to ascertain needed modifications in those objectives. The primary purpose of a terminal or retrospective evaluation is to educate: to determine the ultimate effects of and draw lessons from the emergency response.

The cliché of “reinventing the wheel” applies only too well to the field of emergency management. Emergency response agencies should ensure that lessons learned are available to agency, government and community leaders for future emergency response programs. Emergency response agencies must be prepared to spend the resources needed to develop, maintain, and make use of institutional memory. Documentation and staff training are the keys to this process.

6. Evaluation of an emergency response should include an assessment of the degree to which the processes of participation by and empowerment of the affected population have been supported by the response. Such an assessment should be considered complementary to the evaluator’s usual focus on quantifying the progress made in achieving program objectives.

As such, both qualitative and quantitative indicators of progress should be included in the evaluation design. The evaluation must make an effort to understand the changes in capacity – both increases and decreases – of the emergency settlement population brought about by the response. Consideration should be given to the type of participation (economic, political, cultural, etc.) as well as to the degree of participation (control of or involvement in the planning process, implementing an already planned response, etc.)

Best Practices

Planning for monitoring and evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation systems must necessarily serve decision−making. To do so, it is essential for emergency respondents to consider the components of those systems from the outset of the response: essential material and human resources, appropriate information gathering methodologies, and effective mechanisms for the feedback of findings and recommendations to decision−makers should be planned in conjunction with the design of the emergency response. These efforts can often reduce the costs of corrective action and other forms of “damage control” needed later in the response.

Design and communication of program objectives

The writing of clear program objectives is accepted as one of the most critical and difficult program design tasks. The objectives will serve as the guide points by which the importance of the monitors’ findings can be judged and by which program evaluators can measure program results. It is understood that clear objectives for a relief program designed to serve the needs of an emergency−affected population should include information on population, location, and duration; i.e., the objectives should clarify – at a minimum – who the targeted population is, where the program is to be carried out, and how long the particular intervention is expected to last.

More and more, emergency respondents are accepting that the long−term value of the intervention is the degree to which it assists the capacity of the affected population to take care of its own needs. In such cases, the writing of program objectives takes on a somewhat “softer” edge with concepts like “coping mechanisms,” “capacity levels,” and “degrees of participation” resisting hard measure or quantification. Evaluations which seek primarily to ascertain the numbers of bags of cornmeal distributed or the numbers of pit latrines
constructed may not offer much information concerning the response’s social impact on the emergency settlement population. It is, then, incumbent upon planners to develop new indicators of progress which can ascertain changes in beneficiary capacity, and design the response program’s objectives accordingly.

The aims of the program must, as well, be clearly communicated to all concerned with program design and implementation. This includes the affected population in the emergency settlement as well as the resident or host population. If those potentially affected by the program understand its intent, then members of that population will become, in effect, monitors of the program. They will know when and if the response is no longer meeting planned goals and will, if encouraged, find a way to communicate those deviations to implementing agency staff.

Ideally, program design and communication of its aims are carried out in close collaboration with representatives of the affected population. In so doing, the emergency response agency maximizes the potential for partnership and credibility.

Planning the M&E methodology

The success of the methodology employed by monitors and evaluators will often hinge upon the number and type of information sources. Generally, a successful methodology will require that monitors and evaluators interview a significant number and a wide variety of people involved in the emergency response. The Rapid Rural Appraisal concept of “triangulation” applies – information must be gleaned from a variety of sources, using a variety of techniques, by a multi-disciplinary team or group.

Sub-contractors, donors, local and national authorities, other agency staff are all obvious sources of information. Even more importantly, however, the interviewer must ensure that the viewpoints of the affected population are heard and recorded. Monitors and evaluators must make a concerted effort to interview the affected population and ensure that a cross section of that population is included in the interviewing process – women and men, young and elderly, healthy and disabled/vulnerable, low and high income, skilled and unskilled, etc.

To be sure, interviewing beneficiaries can be a difficult and time-consuming process. Communications are often constrained by language differences and/or a lack of cultural awareness. Nonetheless, there will inevitably be some beneficiaries who will have a perspective on the response that differs significantly from that of the “official” emergency respondents – and sometimes even from that of their own leaders. It is incumbent on the interviewers to develop as complete a picture as possible of the emergency response.

Emergency response staff may view monitoring and evaluation activities as intrusive or as a threat to their reputation or jobs. Monitors and evaluators should strive to counter such attitudes by demonstrating that their purpose is to highlight and reinforce the strengths of the program as well as to identify any existing or potential obstacles to an improved implementation. They must talk to as many program staff and other interested parties as possible to create an atmosphere of transparency. In a program evaluation, one often useful method of limiting staff misgivings is to gather the entire staff together at the start of the process to outline the intended scope of work and then to meet again with the entire staff after the evaluation to review preliminary observations.

Monitors and evaluators can minimize suspicions that tend to develop by assuring interviewees that confidentiality will be maintained. If the intent is to obtain frank feedback on a program, then interviews should be conducted in private – i.e., in the absence of project managers or donor representatives.

Monitoring indicators and information sources

Monitoring is more than the mere tracking of emergency program resources. Rather, the monitoring system should generate the data by which outcomes and effects of programmed activities can be determined and operational problems resolved. It is the function of the monitoring system to alert management when there is a likelihood of the emergency response veering “off-track.”

Each agency will determine according to its mandate, information needs, and resources the indicators to be examined by the monitoring staff. Choice of indicators to be monitored should be based on program objectives ensure that management. Some of the more critical indicators to be followed in an emergency operation and possible sources of information concerning those indicators include:
• Logistics: The well−being of the emergency settlement often depends upon the proper functioning of the logistics system. While program monitors are rarely trained logisticians, it is essential that they at least be made aware of the need to watch for critical changes in the operating environment which could hamper the relief operation, e.g., worsening road conditions, increasingly corrupt transporter practices, declining security, loss of storage capacity within the emergency settlement, decreasing availability of fuel or spare parts, increasingly inadequate truck fleets.

Information sources: Interviews with key informants (e.g., commercial transporters, suppliers, vendors, government transport ministries, World Food Program staff, other NGOs involved in the transport of relief goods, etc.)

• Distribution: Distribution system monitors should consider efficacy, efficiency and equity of the response, and answer questions such as the following:

1. Efficacy: Are the items being distributed according to plan? Does the current system ensure that the targeted recipients are receiving goods and services as planned? If not, why not? In the case of food distributions: Is a wet feeding program preferable to a dry feeding program? Should distributions be directly to women to ensure that children are fed? Would a women−directed distribution system pose an extra, unacceptable burden on their time?

2. Efficiency: Does the current distribution system seek a balance between the aims of minimizing transport costs and maximizing beneficiary access? Is the current level of centralization efficient, or should there be more/fewer distribution points? Are distribution losses minimized? Are there significant leakages into local markets though losses, sales by recipients, or misuse? Are there sufficient/too many staff involved in the distribution?

3. Equity: Is the current system fair for the maximum possible number in the emergency settlement? Are the same distribution units/measures used throughout the settlement? What groups are gaining/losing access because of the current system of distribution?

Food aid monitors should take note of the adequacy of the general ration being distributed to the emergency settlement population. If the general ration (coupled with other food stocks to which the population has access) cannot ensure the minimum needed for survival, then selective feeding programs are unlikely to function as planned, targeted food supplements are likely to be shared by entire households, and the most vulnerable members of the population will face extreme risk of malnutrition.

Information sources: Interviews with key informants (representatives of the emergency settlements population – women in particular; distribution agency staff; warehouse staff; etc.); visual inspection by the monitors of the actual distribution process; examination of distribution agency reports.

• End−use: Monitoring of end−use of distributed relief goods should generate information on the access of households – and of vulnerable groups in particular – to program resources and on the appropriateness of those resources for the targeted population. Monitors should be trained in basic interview techniques (e.g., RRA or PRA methodologies).

Monitoring of food commodity end−use at the household level would include an assessment of the potential impact of the emergency response on household food security, defined as having physical access, economic access, and longer−term sustainability of access to food. Ideally, that assessment would “reveal whether households are currently securing food at the expense of their longer−run capability to do so” (FAO, 1992), i.e., whether users must continue to sell assets or borrow against future assets to obtain food.

End−use by the emergency settlement in general can sometimes be monitored by visits to local markets to ascertain the type and amounts of relief items for sale. Substantial amounts being sold might indicate (1) improving overall conditions (i.e., beneficiaries are no longer in
need of the goods), (2) the wrong basket of goods is being distributed, or (3) major diversions by corrupt individuals or groups in the settlement.

**Information sources:** Semi-structured interviews with household members or other agency staff who visit households; visual inspection of local markets and interviews with local sellers (monitors can learn much about the reasons that goods are in the market by talking incognito to sellers; indeed, the actual path of the diversion can sometimes be determined through such talks.)

- **Market conditions:** Other economic indicators such as local market prices for essential food items, livestock, seeds, etc. are useful for respondents to be able to gauge the changes in economic conditions, understand the changes in magnitude of the emergency, and plan the eventual phase-out of the relief program and the transition to longer-term recovery efforts. Monitors must be trained – and encouraged to take the extra time – to visit markets and record prices.

**Information sources:** Interviews with household members, local market sellers and buyers, transporters, local authorities.

- **Implementing partner performance:** Monitors are often asked to report on the progress made by an implementing partner in carrying out agreed tasks. The assessment of a partner’s performance requires that the monitor understand his/her own agency’s plans and information systems and the partner’s agreed roles and responsibilities. To perform such a function, the monitor must possess strong inter-personal, diplomatic skills and have a willingness to listen to the partners’ complaints. Skilled monitors are sometimes used to train implementing partner staff in basic administrative systems such as bookkeeping, reporting, warehousing, etc. to help ensure that performance goals can be achieved. A monitor performing this role fosters a spirit of cooperation; in so doing, the monitor performs a positive, developmental function and is not viewed simply as a “watch dog.”

**Information sources:** Interviews with implementing partner staff, representatives of the affected population, representatives of donors or response agencies who also may be working with the partner in question. A quick and simple source of information on implementing partner performance is the actual body of reports generated by the partner; the monitor should review these reports prior to visiting the partner’s offices.

- **Financial:** Proper financial monitoring requires a plan, i.e., a budget that has been designed around the needs of the program and approved by the agency’s financial authorities. Effective financial monitoring will follow rates of expenditure against specific budget lines over time. The level or intensity of financial monitoring will depend upon agency management needs. Generally – at a minimum – monthly comparisons of actual vs. planned expenditures should be carried out.

- **Security:** As emergencies become increasingly complex in cause and effect, monitors must increasingly concern themselves with conditions of insecurity. The monitoring system should be designed to generate and disseminate information on changes in security risks, particularly those risks that threaten the monitors themselves and those that cause bottlenecks in other sectors of the emergency response.

**Information sources:** Interviews with key informants (e.g., local authorities, peace-keeping troops, recently-arrived displaced persons, journalists, etc.)

Monitors are often asked to perform what could be considered more precisely a “situation assessment” function in those cases where changes in prevailing emergency conditions are likely to affect directly the capacity of the program to achieve planned objectives.

Examples of emergency conditions that could directly impact the capacity to achieve program objectives – and would therefore be appropriate subject matter for monitors – include:

**Mortality rate:** In an emergency response program whose objective is to save lives, the “crude mortality rate” (i.e., of the entire affected population) should be monitored on a weekly basis. Monitors should take note that a sudden drop in the mortality rate might not necessarily imply that conditions are improving. It may be that
high mortality rates have declined momentarily simply because the most vulnerable members of the emergency settlement – infants and young children – have died. Given the relatively high susceptibility to malnutrition and communicable disease of small children, another indicator of emergency conditions to monitor is the “Under-Fives Mortality Rate”, calculated for under-five-year-old children.

**Information sources:** Community health center records and community health workers. If possible, in the early stages of the emergency, the emergency response agency might consider paying for members of the affected or host population to act as “burial attendants” or “watchers” who should be trained to track the number of burials/day.

**Health and nutrition indicators:** In programs whose objectives are to improve health and nutrition status, emergency program monitors may be asked to monitor:

- **Morbidity rates:** For serious diseases that are communicable and/or related to nutritional deficiency. Rates are expressed as percentages of the population sampled. Diseases to be monitored include, among others, measles, cholera, diarrhea, meningitis, and acute respiratory infections.

  **Information sources:** Community health center records and community health workers.

- **Nutritional status and Protein-Energy Malnutrition (PEM):** In emergency conditions, nutritional status should be continuously monitored by community health center staff or other response agency staff experienced in nutritional assessment/monitoring. Agencies responsible for addressing emergency food needs should regularly monitor changes in nutritional status to determine the value of the current general ration and to ascertain if supplementary or therapeutic feeding programs are needed.

  **Information sources:** Interviews with key informants (community health workers, public health officials); semi-structured interviews with members of the emergency settlement (particularly members of vulnerable groups); examination of community health center records (to determine immunization rates, changes in medical or severely malnourished referral rates, quantities of Oral Rehydration Treatment distributed, etc.); records of other local implementing agencies (particularly those engaged in W/H measurement and health screening.)

- **Water and sanitation conditions:** Poor conditions in crowded settlements may account for abnormally high mortality and morbidity rates.

  **Information sources:** Interviews with key informants (community health workers, public health officials); semi-structured interviews with members of the emergency settlement (particularly members of vulnerable groups); examination of community health center records (to determine immunization rates, changes in medical or severely malnourished referral rates, quantities of Oral Rehydration Treatment distributed, etc.); records of other local implementing agencies (particularly those engaged in W/H measurement and health screening.)

**Human rights:** Complex emergencies may engender changes in prior social hierarchies; traditional leadership structures may evolve or disappear altogether. In programs whose objective is to secure human rights (including women’s rights), monitors should observe the impact of these social changes on human rights in the emergency settlement; e.g., does the rise to power of a private militia mean that the relief item distribution system is likely to be hijacked for the benefit of that militia and its followers? Are there basic guarantees in place for the protection of women if the distribution system plans to target women with direct distributions?

  **Information sources:** Private interviews with members of the affected population (in addition to discussions with their leaders); with implementing agency staff; with the local host populations; the media; military or armed faction representatives.

**Focus of emergency evaluations**

The focus of the evaluation will depend on the original assumptions of the planners of the emergency response and on the objectives conceived for that response. Traditionally, evaluators have sought whenever possible to quantify progress achieved in terms of those objectives. Such quantitative indicators of change would be developed such that both program proponents and “informed skeptics” could agree whether or not progress has in fact been achieved (Turner, 1976).

Some advocates of quantitative approaches consider plans well-written only if they offer clearly measurable objectives. Conversely, plans which do not provide such measurable objectives are viewed as “ill-conceived”, the work of subjective, “unscientific” minds. Others, however, increasingly view a strict adherence to quantitative, measurable objectives as insufficient if the social changes engendered (or ignored) by the emergency response are to be understood.
Increasingly, emergency program planners view the processes of capacity-building, participation, and/or the empowerment of affected populations as the critical aims of the emergency response, at least as important as the efficient delivery of relief commodities or the effective establishment of a functioning distribution system. The actual process of implementation becomes an equally important focus of the response and, consequently, of the evaluation as well. Given this change, it is incumbent upon evaluators to develop the qualitative tools necessary to gauge progress according to these social indicators. The “objective” monetary values sought by the cost/benefit analyst may not easily be ascribed here; indeed, they may not be appropriate.

Thus, an evaluation of an emergency response today will not only compare the costs and benefits of repairing the settlement’s water and sanitation system, it will assess, as well, the degree of emergency settlement community participation in the program, from the outset of the design stage. An evaluation of the food distribution system will focus not only on the size of the ration distributed or the number of cans of vegetable oil lost, it will examine whether, for instance, women in the community have gained or lost control of their lives because of the distribution system adopted.

Increasingly, the evaluator will consider whether a particular response has increased the capacities of the emergency settlement to deal long-term with their own problems or has worsened the underlying vulnerabilities of that population. The focus of the program planners – and consequently of the evaluators as well – will more and more center around such process-oriented aims as “helping the population to recover traditional coping mechanisms”, “assisting the population to restore its sense of dignity”, or “empowering women to gain control over their lives.”

Whatever approach is taken by the evaluators, the assessment of value will most likely consider the evaluative criteria of “appropriateness and cost-effectiveness”, “coverage and clearance”, and “connectedness and impact” (ODI, 1995). Questions to be investigated by evaluators according to these criteria might include:

a. Appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of the response
   - What were the actual needs of the population? How were they assessed? Were the assessments accurate?
   - What were the needs of the affected population actually addressed by the intervention’s design?
   - To what extent did the actual response(s) meet the needs of the affected population? Were the responses appropriate given (1) needs and (2) available resources?
   - How might such a response be better designed in the future to meet those needs?

b. Coverage and coherence of the response
   - How were beneficiaries in the affected population identified/targeted?
   - What were the principle gaps in the response? Were attempts made to fill those gaps? If no, why not?
   - Were the various responses adequately coordinated? What were the results when they were/were not coordinated?
   - How might the response be redesigned to ensure coherence among the various actors and responses?

c. Connectedness and impact of the response
   - What was the impact of the response on, e.g., mortality and malnutrition rates, security and protection, restoration of coping mechanisms?
   - How did the relief effort impact longer-term recovery efforts?
• How might future responses be redesigned to ensure connectedness between the relief program and longer-term recovery needs?

Monitoring via reporting systems

For those unable to visit the emergency settlement, the reporting system is, in effect, the primary monitoring system. In designing the reporting system, the “necessary and sufficient” rule should be invoked: Is the information to be collected necessary? Do respondents really need this particular information (whose collection, analysis and dissemination always carry a cost)? As well, is the information to be collected sufficient for the effective management of the response? Do respondents need more? If information satisfies the “necessary and sufficient” rule, than it should – assuming availability of resources – be included in the reporting system.

• SITREPS: Generally, “situation reports” or “SITREPs” become the effective monitoring tool for those geographically or organizationally removed from the actual emergency settlement. The frequency of situation reporting will vary with the rate of change of emergency conditions. While each organization maintains its own policies and procedures on situation reports, monitoring via the situation reporting system generally requires information on actual or expected changes in the following categories:

- Prevailing Emergency Events, Conditions (deaths, casualties, infrastructure damage)
- Security Conditions (for agency staff, for beneficiaries, of resources)
- Target population (number and composition, vulnerable groups, etc.)
- Basic needs of the affected population (medical/food/water, etc.)
- Logistical needs and concerns
- Other government, agency responses to-date (planned and actual) and coordination issues
- Internal management/operational needs
- Implementing partner needs
- Proposed corrective actions
- A narrative describing actual vs. planned levels of output

• “Pipeline” Analysis Reports: Pipeline analysis is a monitoring activity performed by respondents to predict potential ruptures in the supply and delivery of relief supplies to the emergency settlement. The capacity to produce a pipeline analysis report depends upon the availability (and accuracy) of the following information (by type of resource):

- Opening resource balances (financial and material)
- Expected arrivals, purchases, borrowings or other increases to resource inventories
- Expected deliveries/distributions, loans, losses, or other reductions to resource inventories
- Planned allocations
- Beneficiary totals

Generally, a pipeline analysis should forecast at least three to six months ahead so that emergency program respondents will have adequate time to take action against a potential rupture in the supply line.

Organizing monitoring and evaluation activities

Setting schedules: determining frequency of monitoring
There is no hard and fast rule concerning the frequency of monitoring visits although generally it can be said that the monitoring program should be intensified when the rate of change of emergency conditions increases. Obviously, the availability of resources will play a major role in the decision to send monitors to the emergency settlement more frequently. Generally, agencies should plan to monitor more closely when the program involves large volumes of assistance or when there is a high risk of improper resource usage. As well, when phase−out of the relief response is being considered, the level of monitoring should increase to detect possible critical changes in the operating environment.

Monitoring schedules should be worked out in advance and coordinated with local government authorities as needed. It is also important to explain to local authorities the importance of an occasional unscheduled, random visit to the emergency settlement.

**Monitoring and evaluation team composition**

Monitors and evaluators should have strong inter−personal and analytical skills. Particularly in complex emergency situations, the need to interact with such diverse groups as local authorities, implementing partner agency staff, beneficiaries, and – increasingly – the military or members of armed factions demands an extraordinary level of diplomacy and tact not heretofore required.

Experience with rapid rural appraisal techniques (particularly semi−structured interviewing skills, the willingness and ability to listen, the ability to foster discussion among participating beneficiary groups, social organization and labor mapping skills, etc.) is increasingly viewed as useful by emergency program planners. Keen observation skills and a deep sense of curiosity are also needed.

Evaluators should be able to apply basic cost/benefit analysis techniques (as well as other basic indicators: present value, rate of return, payback period, etc.) all the while understanding that these measures should be complemented by more qualitative indicators of the social impact of the response. Obviously, monitors and evaluators should have strong writing, numeracy, and accounting skills as well.

Familiarity with the day to day operations of the program is often essential for the monitors who must fully understand expected program outputs to be able to determine if the current implementation practices are unlikely to produce those outputs. Such familiarity is also needed in a process of ongoing evaluation in which evaluators are asked to ascertain changes in local capacities brought about by the program. For terminal or long−term evaluations, this day−to−day familiarity is not essential. Ideally, evaluators should be able to work from program documents and interviews and determine whether or not planned objectives were in fact achieved.

The decision to perform an external evaluation (i.e., contract evaluators from outside the agency) will depend on the contractor’s intentions. Such a practice is well−advised in situations where managers are too “close” to (i.e., personally involved with) the program and clearly in need of a fresh perspective. A mid−term evaluator hired from outside the implementing agency can offer new insight and recommendations to move the program along. Outside evaluators are also hired to support and give credence to decisions that managers wish to take but, for political reasons, find it difficult to announce or implement.

Organizers of the monitoring and the evaluation teams should consider various factors: e.g., leadership, gender, language, ethnic composition of the emergency settlement, experience, religion, ability to function within the operating environment of the emergency settlement, etc. In some cultures, for example, it may not be possible for male members of the evaluation team to address female members of the emergency settlement directly; gender factors, therefore, become critical. It is essential that members of the team be able to speak the local language (through an interpreter if need be.)

The required background or skills will depend upon the type of program. Monitoring the progress of a water supply project will most likely demand the inclusion of a hygiene or sanitation specialist on the team. Evaluating the achievements of a community health program will require that a public health nurse or other type of community health specialist be present.

What is always required is a clearly designated and highly skilled leader who can maintain motivation among team members, negotiate a path around the many bottlenecks that may arise, and ensure that the needed report is produced and disseminated with a high degree of team support.

**Preparing the monitoring and evaluation teams**
Emergency respondents should take the time to ensure that monitoring and evaluation responsibilities are clearly defined and assigned. Specific guidelines or terms of reference should be prepared, preferably for each visit but certainly as a minimum for each sector and/or phase of the emergency response program to be monitored or evaluated.

Reporting structures and schedules should also be worked out and explained to the teams in advance. Monitoring and evaluation teams should – to the extent possible – know in advance who the users of their findings will be and what, if any, are the particular needs of each of those users.

Where training is needed, respondents should ensure that staff with experience in the functional and/or geographic area are included as resource persons. Of particular importance is training in team-building. The increasing difficulties in working in complex emergency situations call for an ability to function together as a team. Basic training in semi-structured interviewing techniques is advised as well.

Material resource issues

Too often, monitoring or evaluation capacity has been reduced because of budgetary limitations. Emergency respondents establishing monitoring and evaluation programs should plan and budget for these activities from the outset. Budget considerations should include:

- Vehicle(s).
- Other travel/transport costs (per diem, fuel, spare parts, etc.)
- Communications equipment (primarily for monitors posted in high risk zones)
- Recording equipment (cameras, tape recorders, calculators, etc.)
- Reporting equipment (computers, printers, etc.)
- Other office supplies (notebooks, pens, etc.)

Staff security concerns

The personal security of the monitoring and evaluation staff must be a primary concern of the emergency intervention. Staff should receive training in basic security management issues (e.g., mine awareness, stress management, negotiating under duress, etc.) Respondents should develop adequate evacuation plans for all parts of the country where monitors or evaluators are to be sent. Communications policies and procedures should be established with radio check-in times planned and agreed prior to departure.

Travel routes should be planned, mapped, and filed with supervisors and/or security officers before monitors or evaluators leave for emergency settlement sites. Travel plans should also be communicated to host government counterparts, faction leaders, peace-keeping troops, etc., and all necessary permits obtained before entering potentially hostile or sensitive secured areas. In the case where the local authority refuses to grant the needed travel permit, emergency respondents should make it clear that such action risks a cutoff in the flow of relief commodities to the area.

Feedback of results and corrective action

Admittedly, adequate feedback of “lessons learned” from evaluations into future responses is infrequent. The inability of many organizations to develop, maintain, and make use of their own “institutional memory” has become a sad cliché. What is needed to reverse this usual trend is a system-wide commitment to ongoing staff development where newly hired emergency operations staff are introduced to the lessons gleaned from past responses and more experienced staff receive refresher training courses. For all staff, a review of agency policies and procedures and case study presentations of former emergency response successes and failures are warranted.

Examples of corrective action: A few examples of possible corrective actions to be taken by decision-makers in response to the findings of emergency program monitors follow:

- Increasing, decreasing or shutting off the supply of relief items to the emergency settlement.
- Altering the distribution mechanism to increase equity or target particularly vulnerable groups (e.g., direct distribution to women or household heads instead of indirect distributions to corrupt emergency settlement block leaders; decentralized instead of centralized distributions, etc.)
• Changing the composition of the relief supply basket (e.g., corrugated iron roofing instead of plastic sheeting; micro-nutrient fortified foods instead of unfortified foods, etc.)

• Redefining the actual target group (e.g., vulnerable groups instead of the entire affected population of the emergency settlement.)

• Re-registering the affected population (i.e., conducting a new census.)

• Improving or augmenting the logistics systems to handle new inflows of displaced people.

• Training in-house staff or those of implementing partners in agreed policies and procedures.

• Hiring or firing staff, writing or voiding contracts.

Standards

Some of the standards – or of the concerns about the lack thereof – for monitoring or evaluation activities include:

Interviewing methodology: Standards or guidelines concerning interviewing techniques, team composition, acceptable numbers and types of interviewees would be useful. In effect: can a definition of a “rigorous” interview be developed?

Site visit frequency: There is no standard at present for the number of times that a particular site should be visited during the emergency response although some observers note that a site should be attended by monitors during the delivery or the distribution of a major supply of relief items. Frequency of visits may also be a function of the type of commodity or program being monitored. Programs which distribute goods with a very short shelf-life, for instance, may need more frequent visits to ensure against spoilage. If the beneficiary population is motivated and integrally involved in monitoring activities, then the need for site visits declines. Without such motivated participation, the relief provider will have to plan more frequent visits to the emergency settlement site.

On-site monitoring presence: Most observers agree that there should be no relief item distributions undertaken if the local authorities or faction leaders do not permit monitors to be on-site during the distribution.

Reporting frequency: Relief providers should be able to present – at a minimum – monthly details of actions taken; resource/commodity arrivals, deliveries, and distributions; and recommended changes.

Mortality rates: In monitoring the magnitude of emergency conditions within the settlement, can the following standard measurements be used?

Normal developing country rate 0.5/10,000/day
Relief program (situation under control) < 1.0/10,000/day
Serious emergency > 1.0/10,000/day
Emergency out of control > 2.0/10,000/day
Major catastrophe (severe famine) > 5.0/10,000/day

Nutritional status: In monitoring or evaluating nutritional interventions, emergency respondents should ensure that households have access to (from existing household stocks and distributed rations) a minimum of how many kcals per person per day? 1900? 2000?

Water and sanitation indicators: In monitoring the needs of the emergency settlement population (or evaluating the capacity of services), what are the minimum acceptable standards for water and sanitation/hygiene? Are the following acceptable?
Average number of liters of water available/person/day > 15
Number of persons/latrine < 20
Distance from latrine to dwellings > 6 m
Distance from latrines to drinking water sources > 30 m

Key Resources for Monitoring and Evaluation

Resources (guidelines, checklists, manuals, computer programs, or case studies) which may be useful to field officers responsible for monitoring or evaluation emergency settlement programs include:


Conference Contributors

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Theme THREE: Basic Assistance Needs
Theme FOUR: Social, Psychological, Economic and Developmental issues


These individual contributors come from more than forty organizations which are acknowledged as project collaborators.

Project Collaborators

The Emergency Settlement Project emphasizes collaboration among national, international and non-governmental organizations through the sharing of proven practices, latest lessons learned and new strategies. Individual contributors are affiliated with the following organizations, in addition to the organizations represented on the Board of Advisors. This list does not necessarily constitute official organizational or institutional endorsement.

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USAID/OFDA
USAID/Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
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Emergency Settlement Project Background

Today, more than 40,000,000 people are displaced by natural and human-made disasters, forcing many to reside in emergency situations making this a major issue that affects an increasing proportion of the world’s population. The Emergency Settlement Project consists of a series of activities to:

- propose solutions to the international issues of emergency settlement
- study ways to incorporate mitigation and development perspectives into settlement management

A major thrust is to collect and analyze global experiences of professionals from developing countries, international organizations and NGOs who have worked with emergency settlement, and to assist developing countries to use the results by providing training, a field handbook and an information network.

The increasing impact of human-made, technological and natural disasters/emergencies has led to a growing number of hastily conceived zones of human habitation often called “emergency settlements.” Such settlements are often the result of civil or international conflict. They are also typical in the aftermath of industrial accidents, tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Other populations may become trapped in emergency situations in their home communities.

There is more to emergency settlement than just food, water and shelter. The issues are more numerous, urgent and poorly understood. Worldwide, information about the numbers and characteristics of inhabitants is missing or misinterpreted. Political factors have uncertain impacts on such settlements and the most appropriate ways to provide protection and security are not always apparent.

We do know, however, that the uprooting of a community causes social and psychological problems and special development needs. Even those basic human needs for food, water and shelter are not always met. All this may threaten social stability and undermine development and progress. But solutions are possible for many management and technical issues. Such solutions can also contribute to long term development.

*If you would like additional information about the Project, please contact the UW–DMC by phone at 608/262–5441, by fax at 608/263–3160 or by email at <dmc@engr.wisc.edu>*