

Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

The evaluation has found that the relief effort was slow to respond to early warnings given by the two major humanitarian agencies from the field. This resulted in 'start-up' phase of four weeks when relief efforts were being phased in to cater for the massive influx of refugees. At the time of the evaluation, WFP was in a consolidation phase and UNHCR was struggling with their roles of co-ordination, programming and operation.

A major opportunity was lost in the lack of response to the early warnings and this had a significant impact on the effectiveness of the relief effort. The tardiness of the initial relief effort also impacted upon the rate of flow of resources from donor countries who lost time with their donations and gifts although volume of assistance has been generous.

The other major conclusion is the value of the transfer of logistical and communications expertise from the Great Lakes emergency response in Africa. The Great Lakes experience has allowed a series of technological and methodological approaches to be developed, tried and tested. These experiences have also been tested in the Hurricane Mitch emergency in Honduras. This allowed a rapid and effective transfer of expertise directly into Albania. The transfer of this expertise via agency personnel and technological hardware should not significantly affect the Great Lakes region and, elsewhere, as the personnel are only on short term secondment. The risk should however, be noted and remedial action taken where necessary.

The points raised in the last paragraph are encouraging and demonstrate organisational learning, particularly with WFP. It is a point worth noting that the Rwandan and Kosovan crises show a range of similarities which are shown in Table 3.1. This is perhaps a contributory factor to the level of agency and cross-agency learning. For example, WFP in the Great Lakes, as part of their Deep Field Connectivity, created networks amongst and between (I) NGOs working in the field. This has also been done in Albania. UNICEF has also recently subscribed to WFP's information networks. It is a major concern however that UNHCR has not shown the same level of learning as other agencies, particularly in view of the early warnings they received.

Much, however, remains to be done, particularly as one senior WFP staff member noted "we haven't seen the worst of the refugee situation yet". And much remains to be done since, as Table 3.1 indicates, there are only 4 major differences between the Rwanda and Kosova situation. All the agencies are now involved in contingency planning, with OCHA taking a more proactive role in the EMG. Major problems remain with issues surrounding the medium and long term support to host families, the coming winter season, security in the camps, psycho-social and medical support of abused women, support for traumatised children, and the loss of several harvests to come.

Table 3.1 A Comparison of the Emergencies in Kosova and Rwanda

	Rwanda	Kosova
Population	High Density	High Density
Government	Elected Dictator	Elected Dictator
Government Armed Forces	Plus Secret Police	Plus Secret Police
Civil Society	No Middle Class	No Middle Class
Dominant Group Action	Genocide	Ethnic Cleansing
Military Intervention	None	Bombing
Early Warning of Action	Yes	Yes
Accuracy of Early Warning	Underestimated	Some Underestimates
Donor Response to Early Warning	Aid Flow Continued to Rwanda	Aid Flow Continued to Serbia
Affected Population	Refugees and IDPs	Refugees and IDPs
Peacekeeping Forces	Reprisals Faced	Reprisals Faced
Human Rights Report	Negative Before Event	Negative Before Event
Peace Agreement	Near (Arusha Accords)	Near (Rambouillet Agreement)
Local Media	Radio incitement	Radio, TV, Newspaper incitement
International Media Diplomacy	Little Involvement International Contact Group	Large Involvement International Contact Group
Observer Teams	Withdrawn on Conflict	Withdrawn on Conflict
Negotiation Period	Characterised by Military Consolidation	Characterised by Military Consolidation
Agreement Deadlock	Caused by One Man (Habyarimana)	Caused by One Man (Milosovich)
Local War	For Unification	For Separation
UN Role	Limited	None

3.2 Recommendations

The evaluation team has made a series of recommendations that are intended to support the on-going relief effort. These are presented below and are divided into recommendations for the GoA, the UN Agencies, (I) NGOs and finally, general recommendations.

GoA

The GoA, at the prefecture level, is in need of co-ordinated support from the UN agencies to increase GoA capacity as it makes up the central element of the relief effort. The Albanian government should seek to show that it remains lead manager in the total operation with a strengthened UNHCR and NATO as its partners.

Within EMG, the sense of which desks are 'Albanian' varies: there is need for strong Albanian management to be demonstrated at desk level. At prefecture level, there is a need to develop a computerised e-mail system of daily reportage which includes: status, problems and requests. Serious consideration should be given to establishing parallel EMG structures at local level and providing those structures with sufficient computer and communications equipment.

Care must be taken to ensure the enumeration of refugees is accurate so that there are no accusations of over-estimations of refugees and, by implication, need.

It is recommended to the GoA that customs and Waybill instructions are given to the Embassies; prefecture meetings are established to ensure authority over NGOs; and requests are made to ensure that the host country benefits, i.e. plan now for a 2 year operation in Albania.

UN Agencies

There must be an insistence that UN agency response is focused on programming/planning issues and not on operations (i.e. activities). NATO and (I) NGOs are well placed and are the appropriate agencies to take care of operational issues.

There is a continuing need for a range of contingency planning to cover, among other things: a large increase in refugees from Kosova and surrounding countries; the impact of a possible ground war on facilities to deliver humanitarian assistance within Albania; and the consolidation of current emergency actions into a two year operation.

UNHCR needs to concentrate on programme and planning co-ordination and clarify responsibilities governing procedures, i.e. who is programming and who is operation. It would be useful if there was a more visible and powerful head of the UNHCR operation linking the programme and planning issues much more strongly to donors. UNHCR's operations have also been hampered by a rapid staff turnover, with key personnel sometimes only staying for two weeks. Key UNHCR staff should be placed on longer field missions.

UNHCR needs to select lead NGOs, parallel to the practice of WFP. As this emergency is likely to last over one year, NGO contracts should be offered on a minimum three month basis.

WFP remains short on pre-positioning food for contingency in the event of an increase in the number of refugees. Attention needs to be paid to the transition when experienced staff move out of Albania to return to their original stations or move into Kosova.

UNICEF should concentrate on schools and service provision for children, including the employment of Kosovar teachers.

WHO needs to carry out blanket immunisation of both refugees and Albanians. Female refugees are extremely vulnerable, having experienced the loss of male relatives and undergone sexual atrocities, and need focused and intensive support in the form of psycho-social counselling and gynaecological facilities. This is presently not sufficient. WHO needs to concentrate on co-ordination rather than operations. UNFPA can play a supportive programming role with reference to gynaecological services.

NATO should concentrate on the rehabilitation of buildings, roads and bridges, helping in new camp establishment and the provision of transport.

OSCE should be central in organising camp security and providing security overview for the humanitarian effort.

(I) NGOs

Larger (I) NGOs, with a history of good professional practice, should be directly engaged in camp management; smaller foreign NGOs should be welfare programme targeted and be urged to seek partnerships with local NGOs and organisations. UN agencies already have a formal Memorandum of Understanding with larger (I) NGOs (WFP) or operational experience with them (UNHCR).

There is a need to select lead NGOs and to strengthen the NGO information centre so that the EMG is programme not operations focused. There is also a need to recognise that NGOs can usefully feed information to the EMG; standard forms, requesting information on a weekly basis should be devised; non-provision of information from the field should lead to NGO de-registering.

The role of the IFRC in relation to the host families must rapidly be determined and protocols developed for medium to long term support. Lead partners must also be identified for food delivery by IFRC.

General

For donors, at the level of the national EMG, there is need to know planned activity and output on a weekly basis so that planning and achievement can be accurately monitored.

It is recommended that the quality of border camps be lowered to facilitate the movement of refugees deeper into Albania. More stable camps need to look beyond basic needs to service provision as populations lack stimulus and activities. For example, there is need for the provision of a 24 hour radio service. There have been implications of Mafia control within camps and further sexual exploitation of already vulnerable women. It is vital that this is prevented and the situation monitored. It is likely that health and sanitation will become more problematic as the summer months progress, especially in coastal camps where the water table is high.

Because of a lost harvest, early preparations for a transition from commodities to cash, for both refugees and local families offering shelter to refugees, must be addressed. Therefore preparations are needed for no harvest in Kosova, in 1999, the rebuilding of livestock herds, and the hardships of the coming winter season. Action which needs to be taken in response to these issues including: the rehabilitation of buildings drainage and sewerage systems, the provision of electricity and space heating, and employment provision for the refugees.

Non-food goods coming into Albania as gifts must to be standardised. The non-standardisation of non-food goods is causing distribution problems, i.e. how are a mixed range of non-food goods targeted and distributed? Their often unannounced arrival into Albania is also causing port blockage and therefore hampering the arrival of essential items. The standard list should be distributed to donors and NGOs to ensure compliance. Warehouses should also be cleared of non-uniform materials to increase storage space. The non-uniform materials should be distributed, via the prefectures, to host families.

It was found that the ability and performance of agency response was compromised by the exhaustion of many critical staff members. Key personnel (and support staff) were often working more than 100 hours per week with no breaks. It is recommended for reasons of performance, that staff be obliged to take regular rest periods.