

# **ALNAP**

An inter-agency forum working to  
improve learning and accountability  
in the international humanitarian  
system

## **Record of the Fifth Meeting**

**22-23 April 1999**

**Secretariat: Humanitarian Policy Group  
Overseas Development Institute**

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## **DAY 1: Thursday 22 April 1999**

### **Present:**

Mihir Bhatt DMI, Sue Birchmore WorldVision, Richard Blewitt BRCS, Annalies Borrel CONCERN, John Borton ALNAP, Margie Buchanan-Smith HPG, Nan Buzard SPHERE, William Carlos DFA Ireland, Dr. Anne Cockcroft CIET, Sara Davidson People in Aid, Dr. Danielle Deboutte WHO, Dr. Claude de Ville de Goyat, Professor G.O.S Ekhuagere, Shamsul Farooq UNICEF, Theniath Freudweiler ALNAP, Andre Griekspoor MSF Holland, Felicity Heyworth ALNAP, Claude Hilfiker SDC, Pippa Howell Action Aid (representing ICVA), Rolf Huss WFP, Bruce Jones OCHA, Antony Land UNHCR, Natalia Langlais DfID, Judith Large Consultant, Nick Leader HPG, Wayne MacDonald ICRC, Pierson Ntata University of Malawi, Sylvie Robert Groupe URD, Pippi Soegaard MFA Norway, Brian Wall DFA Ireland

### **Apologies:**

Kate Alley UNICEF, Raymond Apthorpe Australian National University, Eva Asplund SIDA, Eric Berg MFA Norway, Jim Bishop InterAction, Matthew Carter CAFOD, Nat Colleta World Bank, Jacqueline Coeffard ECHO, Marco Ferrari SDC, Francois Grunewald Groupe URD, Matthew Law SCF, Bernard Lemaire MFA Belgium, Wayne MacDonald ICRC, Joel McLellan SCHR, Anita Menghetti USAID, John Mitchell BRCS, Frank O'Donnell, Philip O'Keefe ETC UK, Giovanni Ruffini VOICE, Edward Schenkenberg ICVA, Ian Shaw University of Cardiff, Paul Smith-Lomas OXFAM, John Telford Consultant, Laurent Jacques Thomas FAO, Virginia Vaughn CARE, Jeroen Verheul MFA Holland, Peter Walker IFRC

John Borton welcomed participants and introduced Margie Buchanan-Smith HPG Coordinator who would be chairing the meeting for both days. He noted that many Full Members had been unable to attend the meeting due to the Kosovo Crisis. The structure and purpose of the agenda was explained.

**Tour de Table** (the record of the Tour de Table was circulated to all members in June and is included below for completeness)

In addition to the usual request for information on developments and events of potential interest to ALNAP members in their own and other organisations participants were also asked to mention any points of interest and relevance on events in and around Kosovo.

**Shamsul Farooq (UNICEF, Head, Field Support Section within the Emergencies Unit** - standing in for Kate Alley who was unable to attend). Shamsul informed participants on the outcome of a consultation process (informally referred to as the Martini Consultation) involving senior colleagues from UNICEF that had taken place late last year. The decisions taken as a result of the process were having a significant impact within the organisation:

- i) The mainstreaming of emergency responses should be implemented through the identification of a minimum package of core commitments;
- ii) Vulnerability plans and Needs assessments should be undertaken at the country level.
- iii) A human rights and humanitarian principles minimum package should be developed and implemented.
- iv) The capacity for monitoring this package should be developed for emergency affected countries.
- v) UNICEF's work with OCHA on the IDP Guidelines and Best Practises should be continued.

Finally, Shamsul noted that UNICEF has been requested to lead the 2<sup>nd</sup> Comprehensive Child Survey which should be implemented by the end of the year. *Email: [sfarooq@unicef.org](mailto:sfarooq@unicef.org)*

**Bruce Jones (OCHA, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Policy Development and Advocacy Branch).** Bruce pointed out that the Lessons Learned Unit within OCHA is now known as the Policy Unit, reflecting their emphasis on the application of lessons learnt. At present there are 25-26 projects being undertaken by the unit a full list of which shall be distributed on the ALNAP Listserv. Specifically, he referred to Strategic Monitoring and Evaluations and the Strategic Co-ordination function of OCHA. He felt that the setting of Common Humanitarian Action Plans and the need to measure impact were the priority needs at this point and he proposed that an evaluation be conducted examining this issue in 3-4 countries including perhaps Afghanistan and Burundi. He drew attention to OCHA's work with senior officials in certain countries on the issue of negotiating access, and suggested that this could be linked in with a training package for co-ordinators and negotiator experts. Initial discussions of an evaluation of peace-making efforts and humanitarian assistance in Africa were referred to, but work on this will probably be discontinued. The Policy Unit in OCHA is currently advertising for a Chief, Evaluation and Studies Unit (P5 position) and Bruce asked participants to contact him if they were interested or knew of other people who would be. With regard to Kosovo he knew of 2 initiatives to involving academics in advance of any reconstruction projects; one to take place in London, one in NYC. *Email: [jones12@un.org](mailto:jones12@un.org)*

**Mihir Bhatt (Director, Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI), Ahmedabad, India)** Mihir described how DMI has adopted the Sphere standards and has been trying to i) localise them within a specific context, ii) institutionalise them within the sector, and iii) introduce them to the government services and give them an official standing. He also stated that the Sphere Charter has been adopted into the DMI curriculum. He drew attention to the Policy Forum South Asia which DMI participated in and which brought together a unique mix of organisations and institutions examining the future of mitigation in South Asia. This meeting included participation from the media, Government bodies, NGOs and consultants. Mihir then highlighted DMI's work in beneficiary participation; helping to express citizen's voices via the report 'Vavazodou' developed after the cyclone in Gujarat. DMI has also been looking at participatory planning tools in an urban context. Work has also been completed on the evaluation of the governments' expenditure on relief. This had proved to be a successful exercise and will become an annual assessment. With regard to Kosovo, Mihir said he would like to see some feedback from the recipients of the aid programmes. *Email: [mihir@ad1.vsnl.net.in](mailto:mihir@ad1.vsnl.net.in)*

**Wayne Macdonald (Head of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, ICRC)** Wayne has recently joined the ICRC from CIDA and he clarified that he has now replaced Jacques Stroun as ICRC's ALNAP representative. His immediate goal is to refine the ICRC evaluation system with a focus on planning for results. ICRC is currently involved in an inventory process examining: 1) recently completed evaluations/reports, 2) planned evaluations/studies over the next 6-12 months. A report on Unaccompanied Minors in Rwanda was recently completed. ICRC will be engaged in evaluations in the water and sanitation sector, these are scheduled to proceed over the next 6-8 months. ICRC has also been involved in the dissemination of International Humanitarian Law in Brazil. With regard to Kosovo, Wayne suggested that now was the right time to start planning for an evaluation and ICRC would be interested in participating in any such initiative. *Email: [wmacdonald@icrc.org](mailto:wmacdonald@icrc.org)*

**Andre Griekspoor (MSF-Holland, Head Monitoring and Evaluation Unit)** MSF-H have recently completed evaluations on Burma, floods in China, and floods in Bangladesh. As these are approved so they will be placed on the ALNAP Reports Database. The report on MSF-H's response to the 1998 famine in Sudan is still being written; this study is looking specifically at the application of the minimum standards. MSF-H is also undertaking evaluations in Angola and of reproductive health in Azerbaijan and a cholera response in Uganda. HealthNet and MSF-H will be undertaking a joint evaluation on strategic planning. In relation to Kosovo Andre drew attention to a joint lessons-learned workshop MSF had held with other agencies in 1995 in Bosnia; the proceedings of this workshop will be placed on the Reports Database. Coordination had been identified as the main problem area by the workshop. Andre noted two forthcoming events in June: the University of Wageningen is holding a Conference on the Evaluation of Humanitarian Operations on the 25-26 June; MSF is trying to organise a 1 day workshop on natural disasters. MSF-H had recently revised its internal monitoring framework which Andre had given a presentation on at the second ALNAP meeting in October 1997 (copies distributed).  
*Email:* [ang@amsterdam.msf.org](mailto:ang@amsterdam.msf.org)

**William Carlos (Monitoring Specialist, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland)** DFA-Ireland have been reviewing the progress of their education programmes in Palestine and would be interested in receiving feedback from ALNAP members with experience in this area. Also being reviewed is their programme in Somalia. William pointed out that he would be interested in any information anyone may have on the Bangladesh floods. Linked to this, he mentioned that the sharing of information on the floods on Bangladesh via ALNAP had proven to be a very helpful and timely exercise for their programme in Bangladesh. Currently, he is involved in examining proposal guidelines. William introduced Brian Wall, also from DFA-Ireland. Email: [william.carlos@iveagh.irlgov.ie](mailto:william.carlos@iveagh.irlgov.ie)

**Brian Wall (Head of Evaluation Unit, DFA-Ireland).** The Unit has been involved in evaluation of the water and sanitation sector. Evaluations completed and planned in the humanitarian field included the Gedo programme in Somalia (1998), Bosnia (1999) and Rwanda (2000). DFA has been involved in the EU Evaluation of ECHO – the report has now been completed and will be presented to the Council of Ministers on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Brian noted Irish Aid's interest in the whole area of indicators and management response and the importance of networking for a small donor. This year, he will be looking at procurement issues and capacity-building; especially what capacity exists at community levels and participatory techniques. Email: [Brian.wall@iveagh.irlgov.ie](mailto:Brian.wall@iveagh.irlgov.ie)

**Pippa Howell (Research and Programme Learning Officer, Emergencies Unit, ActionAid, representing ICVA)** Pippa has just returned from Ethiopia and is involved in ActionAid's review of its emergency functions. ActionAid have a new policy director who is more interested in contributing to humanitarianism and linking this with policy issues with the focus being is on how to monitor operations and bring them into policy debates. ActionAid has involved its personnel in the research and learning process in programmes, and is particularly concerned with how to operationalise learning. Immediate work includes participation in a workshop on lessons learned on food distribution. Regarding peace building, ActionAid would be interested in learning more on how to build this into future programmes. Also interested in vulnerability analyses. *Email:* [pippah@actionaid.org.uk](mailto:pippah@actionaid.org.uk)

**Pippi Soegaard, Advisor, Evaluations Department, MFA-Norway.** Pippi drew attention to the extensive list of evaluations published by MFA-Norway in conjunction with NORAD. Their most recent humanitarian evaluation 'Relief Work in Complex

Emergencies: The Norwegian Experience' published in 1998. This used a unique methodology in that it was initiated by the principal Norwegian NGOs; was carried out as a joint evaluation; and focussed on resources rather than needs. It concentrated on the place of health care in complex emergencies. The report will be placed in the ALNAP Reports Database. Email: [postmottak@ud.dep.telemax.no](mailto:postmottak@ud.dep.telemax.no) (please note that this is a group address)

**Sue Birchmore (Head of Evaluation, WorldVision UK)** WorldVision UK are currently undertaking an evaluation of their Hurricane Mitch programmes and would welcome any information from other organisations doing a similar exercise. They have also started work on a series of evaluations looking at the use of commodities, specifically those given as gifts-in-kind. The output has been a Manual providing guidance on the evaluation of gift-in-kinds programmes. Recently completed has been an evaluation of Peace-Building in Community Development Programmes. The key points to have emerged from this study point to the existence of peace building strategies within communities where no specific peace building programmes exist, and the need to target programmes addressing these issues so as to build on local initiative. Regarding Kosovo, WorldVision is still in the process of providing aid and are therefore not thinking about evaluation, though she agreed with Wayne Macdonald that the sector needs to start thinking about this now, especially in the light of experience in Rwanda where much information was lost due to the delay in starting the evaluation process. Linked to this is the need to examine the extent to which lessons learnt from previous experiences have been applied. She pointed out that Worldvision would favour examining these issues specifically in any future large evaluation. Sue noted how the media has focused on the slow response of the UK government to the crisis in Kosovo, and mentioned that this would be an area to investigate further. Email: [sue.birchmore@worldvision.org.uk](mailto:sue.birchmore@worldvision.org.uk)

**Sarah Davidson (People in Aid).** With regard to the Kosovo crisis, Sarah drew attention to an article in the latest issue of the People in Aid Newsletter about the difficulty to have staff released to work in Kosovo, Albania or Macedonia from the EFTA and EU countries. People in Aid have also received requests from people on psycho-traumatic training programmes for Kosovo. She has referred them to DFID amongst others, and to the Bosnia evaluations. Any further information on this would be appreciated. Email: [aidpeople@aol.com](mailto:aidpeople@aol.com)

**Richard Blewitt (Head International Planning and Development, British Red Cross Society).**

In terms of support to national societies, BRC have just completed a disaster preparedness evaluation in Central Asia. Some interesting lessons to have emerged from that include Post-Soviet change processes within civil society organisations – of which the Red Cross is one. With regard to Hurricane Mitch he stated that BRC are conducting work in examining cash-based responses to relief efforts. Through the Red Cross system, a large cash-based response for farmers in Hurricane Mitch is being conducted, alongside a research programme. By the end of the year BRC hope to publish a considered piece of work on cash-based responses to natural disasters. On Kosovo, three points. Firstly, it was pointed out that the BRC valued the ALNAP reminder that “a lot has gone on before”, and said that they would value having access to the reports. Secondly, he was aware that CARE UK have been promoting the idea within CARE International that an examination of the coherence of the whole CARE programme in Kosovo be undertaken. This would include asking beneficiaries and key stakeholders what they thought about the CARE programme, and is linked to the Ombudsman concept. Thirdly, BRCS is also supporting the IFRC in a review of the means by which local Societies can generate resources to improve their funding base. Richard noted that the current Kosovo operations would be an

opportunity to learn about the operationality of the 1998 Seville Agreement on the working relations between all parts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Also, BRC is currently commissioning work with the IFRC in Russia looking at issues of vulnerability, but trying to move away from the food model. The objective is to tease out other ways of tackling vulnerability so as to increase effectiveness. Email: [Rblewitt@redcross.org.uk](mailto:Rblewitt@redcross.org.uk)

**Sylvie Robert (Researcher, Groupe URD - attending the meeting in place of Francois Grunewald)** Sylvie has been involved in discussions between Francophone agencies and the Sphere Project, and has been participating on a working group in France on relations between the military and NGOs. Groupe URD is currently involved in an evaluation of post-Hurricane Mitch activities, the first phase of which looks at coordination among the French actors. The second phase will be the evaluation this summer, and the third stage the organisation of a conference reviewing the findings. In response to Kosovo Sylvie said that Veronique de Geoffrey from the Group will be going to Albania to look at the links between military, NGOs and humanitarian actors. Email: [mitch\\_urd@hotmail.com](mailto:mitch_urd@hotmail.com)

**Claude Hilfiker (Controller, Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Disaster Relief Unit)** Currently, SDC are involved in an evaluation of its humanitarian activities. They will also be undertaking a joint evaluation with UNHCR though the topic still has to be selected. SDC is particularly interested in the issue of quality control. Claude provided background information on SDC thinking on conducting a joint evaluation of Hurricane Mitch. They had been interested in sharing this responsibility but ultimately decided against this for the following reasons:

- 1) SDC aid contribution in Hurricane Mitch was estimated to be too small to justify their taking the lead in a joint evaluation.
- 2) The investment and time and money was estimated to be too high
- 3) The administrative requirements that such an evaluation would entail were also considered to be too high
- 4) SDC received little interest from other DAC members in embarking on such an evaluation.

However, SDC would like to stress their interest in impact assessment and effectiveness. With regard to Kosovo, an evaluation of the Swiss Disaster Relief programme will be undertaken, looking at the feasibility of cash for shelter programmes. Monitoring of their education programmes in Bosnia are continuing. Email: [claudio.hilfiker@deza.admin.ch](mailto:claudio.hilfiker@deza.admin.ch)

**Susan Purdin, Global Technical Advisor, Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, Nairobi, Kenya.** In her previous role as Project Manager for the Sphere Project Susan used to attend all ALNAP meetings but now works for the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium and was present for part of the ALNAP meeting as a result of the RRN meeting the previous day. Her current position is now based in Nairobi. The Consortium is made up of 7 agencies – mostly US-based women's and refugee health NGOs. The focus of this consortium is reproductive health for refugees in several dimensions: service provision, advocacy, research, and evaluation of programme performance. The most widely read lessons learned report is titled "Too Deep for Tears" examining responses to sexual violence among Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Also available is a How To? Guide on Adolescent Reproductive Health for Refugees. Some monitoring and evaluation tools have also been developed, specifically a collection called Needs Assessment Tools – both qualitative and quantitative. The output is to be reported at a research meeting in 2000. Topics being addressed will be: unwanted pregnancies, safe motherhood, STD's and HIV exposure, sexual and gender-based violence. In response to Kosovo,

a conference held a year ago was recalled on the military role in humanitarian assistance. It was pointed out that it would be useful to see an analysis of the current situation compared to the outcome of the conference to examine what issues have been raised and what responses have been made. Email: [sjpurdin@aol.com](mailto:sjpurdin@aol.com)

**Jeroen Verheul (Deputy Head, Humanitarian Aid Department, Directorate General for International Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands)**

Jeroen pointed out that a reorganisation of the Ministry was currently taking place. An evaluation of the Dutch relief agency 'Dorcas' had been completed but the organisation had not given permission for the report to be placed on the Reports Database. MFA was about to commence an evaluation of WFP's response to last year's famine in Sudan and the work would be undertaken by ETC – ECHO and DfID were supporting this study. A review of de-mining operations in Mozambique was being undertaken in conjunction with NORAD. Jeroen added his support to the feeling that a close look was needed at co-operation between civil and military bodies. He drew attention to the need to create space for reflection during emergencies, and the extent to which lessons 'learnt' were integrated into programmes. He queried how this dilemma could/should be managed at the sectoral level? He related his own experience that in emergency contexts the time is rarely available to refer back to lessons learnt with the result that 'everyone reverts back to basics'. He also highlighted interest in the issue of psycho-social trauma and pointed to the continuing need to integrate this into policy. Email: [j.verheul@dch.minbuza.nl](mailto:j.verheul@dch.minbuza.nl)

**Rolf Huss (Chief Evaluation Officer, Office of Evaluation, WFP)** WFP had reviewed the role of food aid in development which highlights the need to focus on impact, and the need to redesign projects. The evaluation guidelines for development, emergencies, and relief and recovery operations will be separated. In this context manuals will be developed for the appropriate indicators. WFP's workplan over the next 2 years concentrates on relief operations. It is currently engaged in 1 development project, 9 emergency programmes and 5 thematic evaluations (3 of which are relief programmes):

- 1) Recurring problems of food assistance in complex emergencies
- 2) Assessment of WFP's strategic transport fleet
- 3) NGO/WFP working relationship

Email: [Rolf.huss@wfp.org](mailto:Rolf.huss@wfp.org)

**Dr. Danielle Deboutte (Medical Officer, Emergency and Humanitarian Action, WHO)**

WHO's Strategy Paper is going to be published shortly. A WHO Conference in conjunction with AusAid is planned on "Preparedness of the Health Sector and the Potential for Mitigation in Complex Emergencies". This will examine lessons that can be learnt from the relative robustness or fragility of the health sector in countries of crisis (Mexico, Algeria, Sudan, Sri Lanka). An Advisory Group has been formed on research and emergencies. On-going activities include an inventory of research in emergencies which will be placed on the Reports Database. Another collaboration is with the Harvard Institute to develop ethical guidelines to be applied to research proposals for emergencies. In response to Kosovo, in Geneva an inter-agency task force has been set up to share information and coordinate activities. Email: [debouted@who.ch](mailto:debouted@who.ch)

**Tony Land (Programme Co-ordination, UNHCR).** Tony drew attention to UNHCR's effort to close 'performance-enhancing loops'. He pointed out that the Evaluation and Inspection Unit within the organisation have now been split and that evaluation is now strongly anchored within the Operations Sector. Within this Sector the Unit is now linked in a chain - evaluation, policy and planning, so that evaluations enhance



capacity and feed directly into the policy and planning process. An evaluation of the UNHCR training mechanisms is currently being carried out so as to improve staff capacity before they go out to the field, and to train them in state of the art techniques. This was taking place within the context of the need to rapidly translate results into practise in the field. With regard to Kosovo, he pointed out that the sector should be examining where particular experiences are unique and where there are cases of déjà vu (Croatia and Bosnia), so as to avoid Kosovo-centric thinking. This would relate specifically to the applicability of lessons learned. He agreed that the issue of military and civilian engagement needed to be examined in greater detail but noted that evaluations need to take place currently – even weekly and not with hindsight. He emphasised that the evaluations of military components of programmes need to be considered within their context. He supported work on “in-kind” needs assessments and voiced interest on evaluations of the media. He also welcomed integrating human rights and aid under one roof. Email: [land@unhcr.ch](mailto:land@unhcr.ch)

**Natalia Langlais (Programme Officer, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, DFID)** Natalia pointed out that DFID had acted as an advisor to Honduras as part of the response to Hurricane Mitch. An evaluation of the UK support to Bosnia was being undertaken by CHAD and undertaken by the Centre of Defence Studies at Kings College in London. The Secretary of State for International Development had recently launched a policy document on security sector reform. Email: [ni-langlais@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:ni-langlais@dfid.gov.uk)

**Felicity Heyworth Database Manager, ALNAP Secretariat.** An update on the Reports Database will be provided later on in the meeting. Email: [f.heyworth@odi.org.uk](mailto:f.heyworth@odi.org.uk)

**Christopher Cushing, Senior Policy Advisor, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ontario, Canada.** Christopher pointed out that he had been doing some work with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Peace Building and conflict prevention. He had attended the RRN Advisory Group Meeting the day before and had been invited to attend the ALNAP Tour de Table. Christopher also noted that he was not sure who would be replacing Wayne Macdonald from CIDA as ALNAP Full member representative, but stressed that he would be able to brief the incoming candidate on this meeting.

**Professor G.O.S. Ekhaguere Senior Programme Officer, Association of African Universities, Accra, Ghana.** The AAU (established 1963) represented the apex NGO in charge of higher education management in Africa, with 147 members in 44 countries. Programmes focus on research in higher education, management, quality assurance, gender policies, academic mobility, and regional cooperation; workshops are also organised for university managers. Two years ago at a meeting of Vice Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities in Lusaka, a review of the various crises in the African continent was undertaken. One of the conclusions to have emerged from this was that local capacity to manage such crises was low and it was decided that action should be taken to change this situation. The AAU is therefore currently coordinating a pilot project with the aim of building capacity within Africa in the field of humanitarian emergency work, refugee studies, human rights, refugee rights and obligations, refugee management, conflict resolution, the management of war trauma. The AAU have called for proposals from universities who are interested in developing post-graduate certificates or diploma courses in humanitarian work. These will be examined and 6 Universities will be selected to carry out activities in these areas. A Conference is being organised for the 11-12 June 1999 where the 6

selected proposals will be presented to an audience comprising organisations working in the areas of humanitarian and refugee studies, and aid. The Conference is being supported by Danida and UNHCR is collaborating. Email: [Gose@aau.org](mailto:Gose@aau.org)

## **Report Back from the Steering Committee Meeting**

Andre Griekspoor (Chair of the Steering Committee) provided a summary of the main issues discussed and decisions reached at the Steering Committee (SC) Meeting held the previous evening.

### Southern Membership

The SC had approved Mihir Bhatt Director of the Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad as a Full Member, and welcomed him into ALNAP. The presence of Professor G.O.S Ekhaguere from the Association of African Universities, and Dr. Claude de Ville de Goyet from PAHO was noted and both were welcomed to the meeting.

### Studies

It was noted that progress on the Small Study 'Achieving Greater Commonality in the Monitoring and Reporting of Humanitarian Assistance' had been limited due to the concentration of effort on other studies, notably the Synthesis Study and the DEC Add-On Study. John Borton would be explaining the achievements in relation to these studies in his presentation.

### Funding

The SC had noted that no funding was available for the Financial Year 1999-2000 as a result of the need to approve the new work programme before funding was sought.

### Overall Achievements and Future Directions

The SC had spent most of its meeting time discussing the Vision Paper and issues involved in determining ALNAP's future direction. The Steering Committee had been particularly impressed by the achievements over the last 2 years and appreciated the current efforts to achieve greater focus in plans for future work. The Steering Committee wished to record its appreciation of the hard work and achievements of the Secretariat over the past 2 years.

Andre concluded by noting that the clearer definition of the Steering Committee's role that had been achieved during recent meetings would ensure that the SC would be better able to help the Secretariat make choices with regard to future work and new directions.

## **Brief Up-Dates – Sphere Project, Ombudsman Project and People in Aid**

### **SPHERE PROJECT**

**Nan Buzard** - An e-mail newsletter is now in production. A review of membership and the criteria for Sphere membership has been completed. The concerns of Francophone agencies about the standards are being discussed and constructive dialogue is on-going. A presentation had been given to Groupe URD. The draft Minimum Standards produced at the end of 1998 are now being tested in 20 sites around the world by a variety of agencies. This information is being collected over 6-9 months and will be developed into training modules to be used in 6 locations around the world. The modules will also be available on their website, and be made available to individuals or independent training units such as Red R, IHE, or individual NGOs. Sphere may also try to develop brief guidelines on how to use the standards in evaluation – this is something which some of the donors have requested, ECHO and OFDA in particular. Recent work has centred around working with the UN agencies in 2 ways. Firstly, to disseminate Sphere within UN networks. Secondly, to ensure that the Sphere Manual matches up to the UN emergency manuals (utilised in the field) as much as possible. Work on the latter is being done with UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO. Training materials are also being prepared. Sphere will also be developing complaint handling mechanisms. A year from now an evaluation of Sphere will be underway to look at if and how it is effecting quality in the system, and the extent to which the standards are making a difference, in terms of actual quality of humanitarian response. Email: [Buzard@ifrc.org](mailto:Buzard@ifrc.org)

### **THE OMBUDSMAN PROJECT**

**Richard Blewitt** - The Ombudsman Project is a UK initiative, supported by various NGOs and DfID. Phase 1 was completed satisfactorily towards the end of 1998 but since then progress with Phase 2 has been slow. The main problem has centred around the debate of whether to conduct a pilot project first and demonstrate results; or whether the concept first needs to have a buy-in and be internationalised. Donors and the Ombudsman Steering Committee favour generating an international buy-in first. Two of the recommendations from the 1998 World Disasters Forum are being followed up:

- 1) The Project will be internationalised as soon as possible
- 2) A wide-scale programme of outreach must be engaged in.

A vision statement has been prepared and a series of regional consultations are planned starting in Costa Rica in May followed by consultations in Rwanda and Bangladesh. Consultations at the institutional level are also taking place with: the DAC, IASC, SCHR, ICVA, VOICE. There is an initiative in Central America to establish an ombudsman mechanism for humanitarian assistance and the project will monitor that effort and work with them. CARE-UK had recently approached the project with an offer to host an action research project designed to test mechanisms that might be used by an Ombudsman in the context of ongoing operations in relation to Kosovo. An international law specialist at the LSE has been commissioned to outline the proposed legal framework for the project at a conceptual level. It is hoped that the outcome of the regional consultations, the legal framework paper and other recent initiatives will give a firmer basis for formal approaches to key stakeholders from the middle of the year onwards. A Report will be produced towards the end of the year consolidating stakeholder views, and placing the findings of the research and consultations on to the international agenda. Email: as before

## PEOPLE IN AID

**Sara Davidson** - The People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel was published in 1997 and 11 agencies then volunteered to pilot the Code. The agencies include some of those represented on ALNAP: BRCS, OXFAM, SCF and others. At the end of 1997 it was agreed that a social audit model based on social and ethical accountability would be used to audit performance against the Code indicators. The 2 year implementation phase within the 11 agencies ended in March of this year. The majority of agencies have written an internal review looking at their implementation of the Code and their own performance against the Code indicators. The Code has 7 Principles and 35-40 indicators. At the moment this is being built into a Synthesis Report intended to enable the 11 agencies to learn lessons from it and from each other. The third year of the implementation phase will be externally audited and the New Economics Foundation have been appointed in this capacity. The external audit phase begins on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. The Reports and the Synthesis first look at each agencies' performance against the Code indicators. Secondly, what are the gaps which individual agencies have found, things which have not been embarked upon yet, or more often things which are done with one group of field staff and not with another. Thirdly, looking at plans, what is going to be done next. Generic difficulties in implementation have emerged as expected, and include: lack of time to implement the provisions of the Code; being part of 'a chain' ie. a larger grouping or federation of agencies (more than half of the 11 agencies are part of a such a chain); high rates of staff turnover at the head office level and the consequent lack of institutional memory. These issues need to be examined further in the next cycle and in the evaluation of the whole Code process. An audit review panel will be appointed drawn from employment, relief and development agencies, trade unions, personnel management institutions. It is also intended to audit the pilot work being done in Central and Eastern Africa. It is expected that a Report will be published around April 2000. Email: As before.

The following points emerged during the ensuing discussion:

- The extent to which the Sphere project had contributed to changes in practise was queried. There was a need to bring together this kind of information and it was suggested that ALNAP might play a role in this.
- The current focus of the Ombudsman Project is to develop momentum and build consensus and this process is difficult to force into a rigid timetable. A Conference is planned to take place before the end of the year. The Ombudsman Steering Committee were considering looking for other 'homes' for the Project as it was currently being associated too closely with UK NGOs. The need for greater institutional 'buy-in' at an international level for the Project was identified as a key issue.
- The apparent lack of beneficiary involvement in setting the agenda for the Ombudsman Project was noted which was remarkable in a forum which was attempting to represent their concerns. Richard Blewitt responded by saying that individuals able to represent beneficiary interests had been added to the Steering Committee and that it was the clear intention of the field consultations to provide obtain the perspectives of a range of beneficiaries in different regions on the Project. One of the issues for the Project was the extent to which any international Humanitarian Ombudsman develops a decentralised model – to function independently in different countries. The consultation process would enable these issues to be thought through.

**Presentation on the Santo Domingo Meeting of 16-19 February 'Evaluation of the Preparedness and Response to Hurricanes George and Mitch', by Dr. Claude de Ville de Goyat, Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), Washington DC**

Claude's presentation provided an overview of PAHO's evaluation of regional preparedness and international response to Hurricanes Georges and Mitch (Caribbean, September 1998 and Central America, October 1998 respectively). A review of the basic facts about PAHO, its mandate and its structure was provided. PAHO is the regional office for the Americas of the World Health Organisation. Its priority is to co-ordinate pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness, but it also co-ordinates international assistance in the post-disaster phase. Efforts to prepare governments and communities for disasters take the shape of strengthening national institutions, training in the health sector and the management of special projects. Disaster aftermath efforts include: the co-ordination of international health assistance, the provision of authoritative advice on health damage and needs, ongoing advice and support to national counterparts and the identification of lessons learned. The developmental focus, rather than humanitarian focus of PAHO was made explicit. It was stated that while PAHO does respond to immediate needs, their "concern is to reduce the dependency on external assistance and improve the national health response in the long term."

Closer analysis of the PAHO co-ordinated response to the two hurricanes followed. Hurricane George affected St. Kitts-Nevis, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Cuba. It hit on September 19 and was classified as a category 4 hurricane. Its path was tracked by PAHO staff throughout the Caribbean and response teams were on standby. The hurricane affected one million people, with over 500 dead or missing. Some of the lessons that Ministries of Health had failed to learn from previous experiences were made apparent by its impact – particularly the vulnerability of hospitals to high winds. PAHO implemented a routine post-disaster evaluation after Hurricane George, which included an internal enquiry on their own procedures, a meeting with national partners to implement lessons learned, and the formal publication of a disaster report to ensure the preservation of perishable data. The meeting with national counterparts was scheduled to take place in Santo Domingo in early 1999 to identify lessons learned and attempt to close the loop between preparedness and response. In the meantime, Hurricane Mitch hit central America in late October. It was classified as a category 5 hurricane, displayed very erratic behaviour and an unpredictable trajectory and hit several poor and war-torn countries, including: Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. Some of these areas were not considered at risk by the authorities during the preparedness stage, and were thus taken aback by its impact.

The death toll was reportedly 9000, but there were few traumatic injuries. Another three million people were affected and in need of long-term routine primary health care. The implementation of this care was complicated by the fact that severe damage had been caused to the health infrastructure and water supply systems. Although the magnitude of Mitch was unprecedented, this failed to fully explain the very high levels of attention and aid it received as compared to George.

Many mistakes noted by PAHO in previous follow-ups to past large-scale disasters seem to have repeated themselves in the response to Mitch. These include: the use and production of unreliable data and statistics, unjustified fears of epidemics, unsubstantiated rumours of major outbreaks and the receipt of unsolicited donations due to emotional and political responses. It was suggested that this inability to learn was partly due to high staff turnover among government authorities and partly to the

few original challenges presented by each disaster for which there is no known response.

An evaluation of the response to Hurricane Mitch was added to the agenda of the meeting in Santo Domingo scheduled for early 1999. What was supposed to be a routine review among disaster co-ordinators and a few interested agencies became a major event with new objectives and organisational requirements. The PAHO mandate was soon overstepped, as many of the problems in preparedness and response at local and international levels were not health-related. The agenda, organisational components and discussion guidelines for the meeting had to be revisited in response to multi-agency attendance. In the end, there were over 400 participants representing governments, NGOs and UN agencies. This large number had several implications for the procedures and outcomes of the meeting: discussion groups were too big to allow for critical exchange and specific conclusions, national and institutional posturing was evident, debate focussed more on questions of “how to” than on more fundamental ones of “what” and “why”. But the size and scope of the meeting also ensured several benefits, including the participation of many national actors, the high visibility of the topic of preparedness and the improved co-ordination of UN agencies. In conclusion, Dr. de Ville de Goyat reviewed the factors for successful evaluation. He listed these as the involvement of a neutral and respected agency with the ability to call together the relevant agencies, agreed-upon goals and with clear indicators of success.

### **Questions and Discussion**

How would the conclusions and recommendations from the Santo Domingo Meeting be used in the context of the up coming Stockholm meeting, with regard to reconstruction in Central America. How would this information be used in the long term? Claude noted that the disaster programme of PAHO represented primarily the mitigation of damages, intervention, preparedness, response, and included some rehabilitation where possible. PAHO's involvement in Stockholm would be to ensure that a strong mitigation and preparedness component permeates the process. PAHO is working with CIGA (a Central American organisation) and working with countries to make sure that every project has elements of mitigation built in. PAHO's reconstruction work is limited and generally involves the provision of advice on setting planning priorities, producing papers, etc.

Had there been indications from organisations at the Santo Domingo Meeting about intended evaluation work with regard to Mitch, and whether these had been inventoried. How might the different findings, conclusions, and recommendations that would emerge as a result of different evaluations be brought together? Claude said he was aware of some of the planned evaluations, but not all. He added that all organisations were currently engaged in conducting evaluations, but pointed out that a distinction had to be made between evaluations undertaken by national organisations and international organisations. He did not think that national organisations were likely to accept the recommendations from the evaluations by international organisations and vice versa. From PAHO's perspective, he would be willing to help any organisation in such an evaluation.

There had been a discussion on the ALNAP Listserv in February about the need for a system-wide joint evaluation of the response to Hurricane Mitch. Was there still a need for such a system-wide evaluation? Were there some key issues that were not being fully addressed? Claude replied that the Santo Domingo Meeting had been superficial in many ways, and that there was a need for evaluations of particular issues particularly those relating to the longer-term. Large sums of money had been

pledged for the initial emergency, but that organisations were now having problems raising any funds for more long-term projects. This issue itself needs to be evaluated.

Claude was commended on a brave, open and self-critical presentation which set a benchmark for other organisations. However many organisations found it difficult to be self-critical when it might jeopardise their funding. Did he think evaluations conducted by institutions which were not wholly independent and were dependent upon external sources of funding could be self-critical and totally transparent. Claude responded that the degree to which organisations are able to be transparent about their work depends on the quality of their work.

To what extent were people using quantitative indicators instead of qualitative information? Had mechanisms been developed to allocate funds between sectors? What is the decision process involved in distributing funds to different parts of the health sector? Claude said that the development and use of measurable quantitative indicators represented an extremely difficult area where little progress had been made. With regard to evaluation, he added that in fact too much use was made of quantitative data and that qualitative information was often more useful. Addressing the second question, he said that there existed no real mechanism for the allocation of funds and that this was decided arbitrarily by the donors and NGOs, largely based on a political and emotional appeal. In the context of Latin American, there exists no mechanism to assign resources to different parts of the health sector; instead donors usually decide.

Other participants felt that whilst it was often difficult to collect quantifiable indicators it was not impossible. The underlying issue was that of whose responsibility it was to set the indicators. Multiple stakeholder participation was required in the setting of indicators

In response to a question about military-civilian co-operation in the context of Hurricanes Mitch and George, Claude replied that this relationship took on a special status in South and Latin America due to the large presence of the US Army and their involvement in the delivery of humanitarian aid. PAHO does not compete with the US military in this regard, but aims to be the main source of information for the US Army.

Had the humanitarian sector learnt enough from the experience of Hurricanes Mitch and George to be able to react more constructively and competently to other such disasters? Claude identified the high incidence of staff turnover in the sector as the key factor in determining the institutional memory of an organisation. If this can maintained lessons learnt from Hurricanes Mitch and George could be applied, however if this memory is lost then the response would be very different.

What were the most effective approaches towards promoting change in the sector? Was it more effective to organise a meeting such as the Santo Domingo Meeting or to organise an evaluation similar to the Rwanda Joint-Evaluation. Claude stressed the importance of working with national governments and added that both approaches can only aim to complement their work. He pointed out that donor driven initiatives tended to provide quick fix solutions, especially in Central American where the real work is done by the national governments. However, he cautioned that the same could not be said for Rwanda, where government involvement was minimal and where most humanitarian assistance was provided by international donors. The main actors in the relief effort following Hurricanes Mitch and George in terms of number, communication, services, and money were the national governments.

One participant felt that part of the problem in developing appropriate quantitative indicators in the humanitarian sector has been the attempt to transplant models from

the development area to the humanitarian sector without much success. The development sector has managed to identify proxy indicators for some issues. He suggested, referring to the “Factors for a successful Evaluation” in the presentation, that the Terms of Reference should be developed so as to include the widest possible stakeholder in-put; as this had been identified as a significant factor in contributing to a successful evaluation. As a result of the Santo Domingo meeting, would it be possible to say that PAHO’s programme of mitigation and preparedness had been effective? Claude believed that PAHO had made a significant impact in contributing to the relief efforts for Hurricanes George and Mitch. He emphasised that the real stakeholders are the national governments and not the NGOs and International organisations.

A donor representative commented that a recent study commissioned by them had estimated that in general 70% of relief resources were provided locally and only 30% from external sources. Another participant said that the proportions varied very widely. In many refugee situations, the contributions by local governments are not given a monetary value by the international community.

The Chair brought the session to a close and thanked Claude for his presentation and those who had contributed to the discussion. It appeared that the holding of large, inclusive meetings soon after a response was useful and could complement and perhaps partly replace the conventional evaluation process. The discussion had highlighted the need for the sector to ask questions about who the learning is for and how effective it is, and be more aware about where change is taking place.

### **Report on the Evaluation of Peace-building activities in Eastern Slavonia, by Judith Large, Independent Consultant and Fellow at the University of Kent**

The Chair introduced the presentation and said that it followed on from previous work by ALNAP specifically Tanya Spencer’s Synthesis Study work on Peace Building and Louisa Chan’s suggestion that this evaluation of WHO’s experience in Eastern Slavonia should be included in the next ALNAP meeting.

The presentation provided an overview of the evaluation conducted by the author and two consultants, on the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) programme to facilitate reconciliation via healthcare in post-war Eastern Slavonia. It was pointed out that Eastern Slavonia is very small, and that this allowed the team to conduct very practical and detailed ground-work, and therein identify some universal problems and principles which had been replicated in the region. The country presents a complex demographic picture due to porous borders and the resulting constant movement of peoples. The evaluators felt that it was essential to examine figures and population census materials in the course of their work, considering that the evaluation would examine the case of a technical agency undertaking a political role in the implementation of a peace settlement.

A brief summary of the recent history of the area was provided. It was noted that events in Eastern Slavonia in 1991 marked the first signs of the troubles that would soon spread throughout the Former Yugoslavia. These were largely ignored because international attention was focused on the Gulf War at the time. Eastern Slavonia was seized by ethnic Serbs with support from the Yugoslav army in 1991, prompting the flight of over 100,000 Croats and ethnic Hungarians. The ‘Erdut’ peace agreement was signed in 1995, at which time the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) team of 5,000 armed peace keepers and 20 civil affairs staff moved into the area. This small group of civil personnel were



charged with the daunting task of designing and implementing the reintegration of the country's infrastructure, institutions and populations. Although signed mandates existed promising equal access to health care, pensions, employment etc., these systems were all fractured and could not be easily reintegrated and made accessible. A key element of the process was the establishment of 20 joint implementation committees (JICs), which would draw together representation from the various populations involved and coordinate efforts to unite the different sectors. The health JIC had stalled due to the highly political nature of the sector and WHO were asked to get involved. Their task was to conduct joint implementation meetings and their objective was to integrate the Serbian population into the community.

The two main questions prompted by the involvement of WHO and addressed by the evaluation team were as follows: why was WHO, a technical health organisation, asked to intervene, and how does one measure the outcome of their efforts? Firstly, it was apparent that expertise and proven effectiveness of WHO in the sector had prompted its involvement. Secondly, a large Log Frame had been developed covering the various branches of activity and this enabled outcomes to be measured quite effectively. Only a few findings of the different branches of activities were reviewed in the presentation. It was pointed out that one branch of the Log Frame examined the effectiveness of the JIC meetings, keeping in mind that the populations involved had recently been at war and that hatred was deeply rooted. The evaluators asked what tactics had been used to overcome this hatred and/or accommodate it. Another branch examined the various programming approaches, and studied the ones that had been implemented. WHO adopted an approach often used in conflict situations, this entailed the specific encouragement of 'functional cooperation' through the identification of points of agreement on practical issues as a way of promoting cooperation and reconciliation. In the case of Eastern Slavonia, the health sector provided this arena. Programmes revolved around four areas: physical rehabilitation, community mental health, epi-systems and the negotiation of contracts.

Once these programmes were implemented and the transition period ended, WHO and UNTAES pulled out of Eastern Slavonia in line with the 'Erduť' peace agreement. The evaluation team noted the degree to which the government began to find ways of bypassing the guaranteed rights of the Serbs after the withdrawal of outside agencies. Examples of this include: the withholding of health care on the grounds of a lack of proper documentation among many Serbs, and the creation of situations in which Serb health care workers could not retain employment due to constant redeployment in a region where transportation infrastructure was severely damaged. It was felt that the lack of a developmental view toward the situation among WHO staff and their inability to penetrate the official hierarchy impeded the positive effects of their work in the longer term. It was concluded that access to those working against the established hierarchy and struggling to take ownership of the situation must be involved in the work of agencies and in the evaluation of their programmes. It was further suggested that Eastern Slavonia represents a microcosm of the problems of reintegration and fairness of implementation, and expressed the hope that the evaluation would prompt a civil affairs policy review.

## Questions and Discussion

The experience would seem to highlight the need for agencies to raise staff awareness on the issues of fundamental rights – human rights, equal opportunities, etc. Judith agreed and provided examples in former Yugoslavia of situations where these rights were neglected. She drew attention to the implications of privatisation for the local population.

Another participant had worked in Ethiopia with doctors who had fought in combat and WHO had sponsored a re-training programme to re-establish their credentials, facilitating their employment by the Ministry of Health. This had represented a useful mechanism for de-militarising and re-integrating the group a previously divided group.

What was the management response to the findings from the evaluation, and would this evaluation influence future policy? Judith replied that there had been a vigorous attempt within WHO EHA (Emergencies and Humanitarian Affairs) to acknowledge the need for training. The Report was well received, though it did arrive during a transition phase in WHO when Ms. Bruntland was entering office. However, early indications are that it is being taken on board, and acknowledged. For example, similar work in Bosnia on functional co-operation in health has been conducted. It was hoped that this evaluation would influence policy.

What criteria were used for evaluating WHO's performance, and had WHO succeeded in its objectives? Judith responded that in a comparison between the 3 regions of the Report, integration in the health sector seemed to have taken place in areas where the Programme had been run and not at all in the other 2 areas. She added that in addition, what little that could be scrutinised in terms of the legal framework of rights and employment permit realities, the situation was far worse in the areas where the Programme had not been run. The programme held well for the full two years after the exit of the UN, and it only really collapsed after the organisations pulled out from the area. When pressed for clarification with regard to WHO's performance Judith drew attention to the difficulty of collating hard data in post-war situations, and said that the team had had to rely on evidence which was often uncorroborated. Anecdotal evidence had demonstrated that the programme was successful. Criticism of WHO centred on their lack of transparency in planning.

Had peace-keeping operations been undertaken in the two areas where the programme had not been run? Had WHO's approach contributed to peace-building or not? To what extent had the OSCE presence in the region contributed to the integration of the population, rather than the programme. Judith replied that no peace-keeping operations had been run simultaneously to the programmes, and that the OSCE had not been present in the beginning.

The Report seemed to suggest that humanitarian action is a very poor substitute for political action, and that the main point was that the intervention was let down by the environment in which it worked. Judith agreed, but mentioned that there are many forces other than purely political which defeat humanitarian intervention. However, it could be said that the programme enabled local people to buy 2 years worth of time in a context of social and political upheaval – though this could be disputed.

To what extent had there been political monitoring to keep the actions of the authorities in the spotlight during and after the UN presence? Wasn't a wider lesson from this experience that an imposed Peace Agreement required a careful monitoring process so as to continue to inform the actions of the international community and bring pressure to bear on the groups responsible for undermining the process. Judith concurred, and said that local multi-cultural groups are actually conducting monitoring exercises. She drew attention to the Reports major recommendation which was develop mechanisms to strengthen these local systems.

Clarification was requested specifically on WHO's performance in relation to health delivery as this had not been covered in the presentation. Judith accepted this, but stated that her role as a representative of DfID was to look specifically at the degree of functional cooperation in the health sector, and not actual health delivery. This

included examining whether such an approach would be possible or feasible in the future.

It was noted that solutions to post-war re-integration and peace-building often took place within timeframes lasting generations. How had the evaluation process taken account of such timeframes? Judith pointed out that the WHO programme and thus the evaluation process was obliged to take a two year timeframe as a result of the 'Erdut' peace agreement. Complete reconciliation may well take generations. The Strategic Health Plan developed by the Croatian government used a timeframe of 5-10 years.

What was the composition of the research team, and what lessons could be drawn from that experience. Judith said that the evaluation team included: herself, Anthony Zwi from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine looking at the health systems, and Dr. Laurent Subilia from the Geneva Foundation specialising in rural trauma and displaced populations and their health. Their agenda had been to talk to as many people as possible, but to also draw from other teams. In the region, they were joined by a Dutch national and his associate (of mixed Croat-Serb parentage) from the PRONI Foundation in Osijek. This team helped with transportation, translation, and with meeting people who would not ordinarily have had a voice. They also met with members of the local legal rights centres and with members of medical staff.

How important was the health sector for reconciliation in Easter Slavonia, as compared to other sectors? How well placed was WHO as an intergovernmental organisation to have led such a programme, and wouldn't other organisations with similar expert status and technical standing (eg. Red Cross) have performed equally well? Judith responded that the Red Cross or UNICEF could also have led the programme, but it was important that it was undertaken by an organisation with an international standing as a reassurance for the local people and the health profession in the region. She added that one of the positive outcomes of the process had been that the Croatian Red Cross is modelling itself on the health JIC and is working with members of both communities.

What body was responsible for choosing WHO? Judith replied that the UN had chosen WHO for this role. She explained that compared to other sectors such as education for example, the health sector was relatively problem free. Though the education sector is important and potentially powerful vehicle for reconciliation efforts it was burdened by myth, the rewriting of history by different groups and issues of identity and self, and was therefore too complicated to use as a tool for peace-building and reconciliation. The health sector was also the largest employer in the area.

One participant felt that the assessment of a programme in a post-war situation was extremely difficult unless there is a sense of the workings of the political process and its success in achieving objectives. In their experience functional co-operation took at least a generation to work. Given the reality that the international agencies would have to pull out of the area within 2 years, the aims of the programme were achievable? To what extent had WHO examined these issues, and had the limited timeframe had been challenged in any way? Judith responded that the timeframe had not been challenged, but that this did not imply that functional co-operation was unworkable in shorter timeframe.

## **Report of the Preliminary Findings of the ODI Study on Humanitarian Principles and their Implications for Accountability and Effectiveness – Presentation by Nick Leader, Research Fellow, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI**

The presentation was based on the report currently being finalised by Nick Leader which synthesises the results of a literature review two case studies and a paper on the legal aspects of the principles of humanitarian action. The final report of the year-long study would become available within the next few weeks. The objective of the presentation was to clarify the meaning and use of humanitarian principles in the context of complex political emergencies, and their implications for programme accountability and effectiveness. The questions the presentation sought to examine centred around the definition of the term 'humanitarian principles', and the way in which this was interpreted by agencies, the conceptual changes such action entailed and the difference a principled approach would make to humanitarian programmes. The outputs of the study are 4 self-standing reports: (i) Legal Basis of Principles of Humanitarian Action, (ii) South Sudan Case Study: The Ground Rules, (iii) Liberia Case Study: The Joint Policy of Operations and the Principles and Protocols of Humanitarian Operations, (iv) Synthesis Paper.

First, definitions of various terms were provided. 'Humanitarian principles' are different from 'principles of humanitarian action'. Humanitarian principles represent the responsibilities of warring parties to respect the 'laws of war'. Principles of humanitarian action however, refer to the responsibilities of agencies working in conflict situations and cover for instance neutrality and impartiality.

It was pointed out that the nature of conflicts had changed, characterised by the diminishing accountability of warring factions to civilian populations. In this context, a 'principled approach' has now come to signify the promotion of respect for IHL and human rights, and the minimisation of negative political impact. In other words, principles represent an approach which humanitarian organisations seek to impose on warring parties. There has been an increasing qualification of the humanitarian imperative. This has come about because of the increased recognition of the risk that aid may 'fuel' war and conversely an expectation that humanitarian action can be used positively to influence the course of a conflict.

In this context, the relationship between humanitarian action and political action has become increasingly blurred. The main issue addressed related to the extent to which humanitarian organisations could be political without being partisan.

An important distinction was drawn between 'conditions' and 'conditionality'. All humanitarian work is subject to certain conditions being in place, in that sense it is conditional. The JPO in Liberia is conditional in another sense, it tried to use the suspension of humanitarian aid as a way of pressuring the warlord into certain types of behaviour.

It was stressed that the real meaning of principles lies not so much in the abstract realm of certain ideals but rather in operational practice. The study had suggested that aid organisations can be placed along an idealised continuum according to their operational strategies – with 'Food' agencies at one end of the continuum and 'Health' agencies at the other. 'Food' agencies are seen to be: developmental, preventative, community-based, partner-orientated, predominantly 'American', faith-based. 'Health' agencies are seen to be: emergency-based, curative, objective/scientific, operational, predominantly 'European'.

Approaches to humanitarian principles were then discussed in relation to three inter-agency agreements – in South Sudan the Groundrules agreement between the SPLA and OLS, and in Liberia the PPHO between UN operational agencies and NGOs; and the JPO between NGOs only.

The process employed to develop the agreements was considered to have facilitated shared analysis of issues, though often processes were dominated by ‘health’ type agencies, and focused on external relationships rather than internal procedures. Compliance mechanisms were informal (peer pressure, eyeballing, dialogue, negotiation), and compliance was not evaluated externally or internally.

Problems in attempting to measure the impact of a principled approach were pointed out – for instance, the limited systematic analysis of the abuses of IHL or HR law, or the rates of food diversion, done by agencies.

Within the wider context, it was made evident that promoting respect for human rights primarily entails the development of mechanisms to enhance the accountability of warring parties to the civilian population under their control. Various strategies were developed by humanitarian agencies to contribute to this – (i) Humanitarian conditionality: withdrawal and suspension, (ii) human rights monitoring and advocacy, and (iii) dissemination.

Overall, it was suggested that humanitarian agencies could only influence the accountability of warring parties to the extent that they can reinforce, rather than substitute for, existing political processes. Further, humanitarian conditionality was seen as unable to threaten factions whose legitimacy does not depend on the provision of welfare or development. However, human rights advocacy can influence the conduct of warring and may influence positively where they are interested in achieving international political legitimacy. In cases where this interest is lacking, attempts to impose conditions will be severely limited.

The implications of a principled approach to humanitarian assistance was then discussed in relation to operational practise, in particular for assessment, distribution and monitoring procedures. In relation to the latter, the following issues were highlighted by the case-studies: the limited impact of agreements on the internal procedures of relief agencies; the limited systematic analysis of diversions of deliveries or other negative impacts; and the degree of control of the types of assistance delivered – e.g. wet feeding versus general distribution.

Manipulation of agencies through negotiation for access was highlighted, where it was noted that all agreements served to reduce this type of manipulation through: joint negotiation, the adoption of a principled position, high-level negotiations, and principled dialogue with warring factions.

It was pointed out that all inter-agency agreements had a tendency to revert from the defence of principles to the defence of agency space. But it was mentioned that inter-agency agreements worked best when the issues promoted were in the collective interest.

The role of the donors in this area was said to have been characterised by the promotion of multiple and inconsistent approaches to the problem of aid manipulation of warring parties, without donors prioritising humanitarian principles.

The adoption of a principled approach to humanitarian assistance will imply that agencies undertake: greater long-term political and military analysis; the systematic monitoring of human rights abuses and of diversion and manipulation; investment in

staff training; and contacts with military and political organisations. In terms of operations, it will entail: a greater emphasis on control of relief goods; the re-examination of internal agency procedures; a greater readiness to engage in human rights advocacy in certain conditions; and the development of a strategic alliance with human rights organisations, but recognising their limitations with respect to the needs of humanitarian organisations.

Inter-agency agreements are most likely to work where there are issues of common interest across the human system. Encouraging greater compliance to humanitarian principles across the sector will require much more investment in developing compliance, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The role of the donors in supporting a principled approach would involve requiring greater emphasis on principles from agencies seeking funding, and the ability to reward principled behaviour. It was emphasised however, that independence remains an important principle and that it is important to ensure a consistent approach to the promotion of principled behaviour.

### ***Questions and Discussion***

In commenting on the presentation one participant commended Nick on a very useful presentation and agreed that all aid is political but some is more political than others and said that more work needs to be done in this area. What was particularly noteworthy about the study was that it highlights the different actors working within the sector and encourages organisations to think more strategically. He recommended that ready-to-use typologies should be developed emphasising negotiation.

Another participant felt a focus upon the warring parties would divert attention from the needs of the beneficiaries. Agencies had the right to withhold assistance if they disagreed with the approach. Where does accountability to beneficiaries stand in this situation? Nick responded by saying that the issue of accountability in these circumstances was very complex, and that humanitarian principles and surrounding issues had to be addressed. It was also necessary to break away from the belief that beneficiaries could only be victims, in some contexts they could also be viewed as political actors.

Another participant noted that whilst agencies may not have the right to withhold humanitarian assistance from needy populations, they did have the right to withhold resource flows into territories where aid fails to reach the populations. Unless agencies negotiated with the warring parties, the delivery of aid could be held to ransom.

One participant felt that such a complex analysis of the situation would be difficult to implement and integrate into programmes. In response Nick stressed that the 'complexity' of the issues in the sector could not be avoided and had to be faced if solutions to these problems were to be found. Other participants agreed saying that there was a very real need to understand the political, economic and social complexity of the environment in which agencies functioned. It was necessary for agencies to work out a variety of strategies to enable negotiation with warring parties so that humanitarian principles could be applied strategically in different kinds of contexts.

Commenting on the key issue of the definition of terms another participant questioned the perspective from which 'neutrality' was viewed. In Sudan the definition of 'neutrality' shifted depending on the perspective from which the situation was viewed.

For instance MSF is not considered 'neutral' by the Government of Sudan because of their operations in South Sudan.

Another participant felt that all humanitarian aid had a political edge and questioned why humanitarian actors were not assigned more specific roles. Political action had become enmeshed with the technical provision of services and one way forward would be for agencies to adopt a more rigid approach by only fulfilling their mandates and delegating any work outside these boundaries to partner organisations. Nick's view was that humanitarian actors had become political actors by default and it would not be possible to deny this political role.

Another participant felt that for the most part the technical provision of services by humanitarian agencies was separate from the political, but that it was the need to negotiate access to conflict areas which introduced a strong political element for humanitarian organisations. For this reason individual health workers needed to recognise the political dimension of their work environment, although they may not be directly involved in the political negotiation. It was her view that the work of human rights agencies had to be kept separate from the work of humanitarian agencies due to the risks involved of humanitarian workers being exposed as sources of information and in partnership with human rights groups. Nick agreed but felt that there are specific circumstances when humanitarian agencies collectively need to work with human rights agencies. Sophisticated political analysis was needed to distinguish between different contexts and identify those cases necessitating action and those which don't. He affirmed that a blanket policy of not examining these issues or getting involved is not helpful either.

Are there areas within the sector which are non-negotiable? Nick said that there was very little that is non-negotiable. He remarked that one of the problems with the principle of 'humanitarian conditionality' is that agencies often negotiate inappropriately.

There was a discussion about the categorisation relating to 'Food' and 'Health' organisations in the presentation. Whilst some felt that such a categorisation was problematic or inappropriate, others felt that it had value in highlighting differences of approach by agencies involved in the provision of different types of assistance. Agencies involved in food distributions often faced different problems than those confronted by agencies providing less valuable and desirable forms of material assistance.

One participant felt that humanitarian principles were being viewed as a panacea to many of the problems which humanitarian organisations face though it was apparent that humanitarian principles in themselves do not provide all the answers. He felt that it is necessary to be clear about the purpose of the principles. Are these principles to be employed to gain access to difficult areas and victims, impose political pressure on factions in conflict, or to provide a means of accountability for implementing agencies and donors? Why was it that humanitarian principles had been developed in Sudan and Liberia and not in Kosovo or Bosnia? From a donor perspective how could adherence to these principles be measured? With regard to accountability to the civilian populations – he said that one often sees that organisations serve as a substitute for the civilian population and that this was a dangerous role. Humanitarian principles expressed themselves in black and white whereas practise tended to be grey, and asked how agencies succeeded in compromising one principle against another – eg 'humanity' vs. 'neutrality'. He asked for example, how much food needed to be negotiated away in order for some to reach the needy population. He stressed that in these cases humanitarian principles did little to help, but that common sense was most useful.

In response to the Sudan question, Nick said that the Sudan and Liberia agencies had been sucked into a political vacuum whereas the Kosovo Crisis gave rise to a different set of imperatives guided by another political and technical context.

Another participant proposed using evaluations as one way of measuring adherence to humanitarian principles. If this requirement were built in to the TOR for evaluations it would treat agency behaviour in terms of humanitarian principles in the same way as agency performance was going to be assessed in relation to the standards of the Sphere Project and the NGO/Red Cross Code of Conduct. If this were required of evaluators at the very least it would throw up a body of useful empirical data on how agencies viewed and dealt with such issues.

### **Update on the Reports Database and the Results of the Listserv Questionnaire, by Felicity Heyworth, Database Manager, ALNAP Secretariat, ODI**

Felicity gave a brief presentation on progress made on the ALNAP Evaluations Database, Web site and the Listserv.

The total number of evaluations catalogued in the database at the time of the meeting was 262. Of these, sections of text from 140 of them had been scanned in and were available on the Internet, with the inclusion of another 30 pending. Copyright continued to be the major impediment to progress; 92 documents were still waiting for clearance. Three quarters of these had already been scanned in and were ready for immediate inclusion onto the Internet site once copyright was granted. Thus far, copyright had only been denied for six documents.

A software component that will strip the format codes off incoming documents had recently been acquired, which will significantly speed up the process of preparing scanned text for the Website. Until now the codes had been stripped manually, which could take up to three hours per document.

A core collection of approximately 30 documents on the subject of evaluation techniques and guidelines has been compiled by the Secretariat, and a separate cataloguing system will be implemented for these so that users of the database can distinguish between titles on evaluation and the evaluations themselves. This new system will also have to differentiate among publication formats. Cataloguing procedures and the indexing vocabularies currently in use will be revised, with input from the ODI Librarian, as part of a wider HPG/ODI review.

The HPG section of the ODI website had been redesigned since the last ALNAP meeting. The ALNAP section now includes a page of links to the sites of member organisations and an ALNAP publications page which provides the full text of the Records of the Meetings and all completed ALNAP studies. Fully searchable versions of these will also be added to the Open Access section of the Reports database. Usage statistics for the database had been generated by IDS, who host the site. The average number of visits per month was 95 (22 per week, 5 per day). The overwhelming majority were from Western Europe and from non-commercial domains.

The ALNAP Listserv was launched early in the new year. It is currently maintained on the ODI server and access is closed to all but the forty Full ALNAP members. An e-mail survey of initial reactions to the service was conducted before the meeting as part of a review within the Secretariat of its scope, functions and usefulness.



Response to the survey was limited (11 out of a potential 40). All respondents said that it was a useful innovation. Most felt that the discussion should be steered to some extent by the Secretariat, although suggested ways of doing this varied greatly. They included: soliciting set topics from among the membership and synthesising them; periodic encouragement from the Secretariat for continued and thoughtful submissions; the initial filtering of messages before they are posted; and the designation of 'experts' on sub-themes from among the membership that particular issues could be discussed with added input from that person.

With one exception all respondents supported the idea that the Listserv be opened up to Observer members. It was suggested that interest be solicited from among the observers, so that only those with a genuine interest and commitment be included. Most felt that a wide audience combined with self-moderation would provide the best atmosphere for informed and useful discussions.

The problem caused by travel among members was flagged by several respondents. Many members returning to their desks read the Listserv discussions 'mid-conversation' and felt that the opportunity to make their own contribution had been missed. Another suggestion was that a summary of the Tour de Table from the meetings be posted to the Listserv immediately after the meeting in order to remind members of current activities being undertaken by member agencies. It was also requested that the *subject* of the message be carefully considered and that it reflect the content of the message. This would enable recipients to immediately judge the relevance of the message to their current work and/or their general interest in the topic. A final suggestion was that Listserv membership be expanded to enable more than one member from each organisation to participate and responsibility for forwarding information within an organisation not be limited to just one person. It was pointed out that this would be particularly useful in organisations which have several departments interested in discussions on the Listserv – such as Policy, Humanitarian Affairs and Evaluations departments.

## Questions and Discussion

The Chair stressed the importance of the Reports Database and Listserv to ALNAP's operation and opened the discussion on Felicity's presentation.

As background John Borton briefly summarised the subjects that had been covered in the Listserv discussions since its launch in January. These had included: (i) the number of parallel evaluations taking place in Sudan, (ii) request from WFP for key texts on evaluation (which had generated a good response and saved WFP from undertaking a desk study), (iii) Hurricane Mitch and how to encourage a joint system-wide evaluation of the response. This issue had been discussed at the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation but unfortunately none of the donor organisations had felt able to lead such a process and it now looked unlikely that a system-wide evaluation would be undertaken. John felt that the nature and range of the discussions illustrated the potential of the Listserv. He reminded participants that the Listserv was had been limited to only Full members, partly it was thought that some of the discussions would include confidential material and partly because the fact that Full Members meet each other twice a year encourages responsible use of the Listserv. He asked whether it was felt that limiting access to the Listserv had constrained discussion in any way; and whether opening up the Listserv to Observer members would impinge on the potentially confidential nature of the discussions.

In response to a question about the logic of differentiating Full and Observer members within the same organisation John replied that Full members are the principal points of contact and it is they who are invited to the meetings. The number of Full Members is deliberately limited in order to keep the numbers participating in the meetings at levels that would encourage free ranging discussion. Moreover restricting organisations to one Full Member per organisation made it easier to manage the 'balance' between bilateral donors, NGOs, and UN agencies in the meetings.

Other participants spoke of the difficulties of only having one Full Member per organisation due to the heavy travel schedules of many Full Members which could limit the participation of other personnel with an interest in ALNAP's activities and discussions. It was agreed to consider allowing an increase in the number of Full Members per organisation to 2 or 3 and that the Secretariat would develop guidelines for organisations in nominating Full Members.

Generally it was felt that the discussions would be enhanced by including Observer Members and that it was anyhow preferable that ALNAP's entire membership be reflected in the participation in Listserv.

The possibility of the Secretariat moderating the discussions was raised but it was felt this would place an additional burden on the time of the Secretariat and could reduce the flow of ideas.

The Chair concluded that the general consensus from the group seemed to be that the Listserv should be expanded to include Observer members, and that the Secretariat should try and develop guidelines to facilitate utilisation/management of the Listserv. She thanked all the members and participants for attending the first day of the meeting and brought the meeting to a close.

## **DAY 2 – ALNAP MEETING APRIL 23 1999**

### **Themes for the day – ‘Learning and Voice’**

Margie Buchanan-Smith welcomed all members and participants to the second day of the ALNAP meeting, and highlighted that this was the first time that a theme had been chosen for the day bringing together presentations and thinking on particular issues.

### **Sentinel Community Surveillance and its Utility in Relation to Humanitarian Programmes, presentation by Dr. Anne Cockcroft, CIET Europe.**

Anne began the presentation with a brief history of CIET (Community Information Empowerment and Transparency) and of their recent work in the developing world. CIET specialises in conducting surveys, collecting information, and examining evaluations from the local community's point of view. The methods currently utilised were initially developed in response to the 1985 Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India. Since then, CIET have been involved in evaluations of humanitarian responses to civil wars in Central America and Africa, to natural disasters in Central America and to land mine awareness efforts in Afghanistan and Angola.

The CIET methodology is a community-based one of information management, based on the premise that measurement processes should support development. Data is seen as a tool of empowerment for individuals and society as well as being helpful to planners. Quantitative and qualitative data are considered to be complimentary and are thus combined. Measurement and risk analysis results are fed into future planning efforts. The building of local capacity and skills is seen as part of the process and an emphasis is placed on the utility of findings for local planners. Findings are sub-divided into sectors, enabling the exploration of specific risk factors, and specific sites are revisited at different stages, allowing trends to be identified and mapped out.

The CIET survey methodology is viewed as a cycle. Firstly, the central issues of the project are framed within their larger context. Existing data is analysed before research instruments are designed. These instruments are then tested in the field, and initial results are fed into the full-scale field survey. Information and data from other sectors is also examined as part of this survey and data collection process. These findings are fed back into the cycle and contribute to a preliminary analysis. A detailed analysis incorporating all views takes place after this and then all information is incorporated into a communication strategy that is used to disseminate the findings. It was stressed that the cycle was designed to be a reiterative process through which local skills and confidence could be strengthened. High quality local measurements are necessary for conducting social audits and ‘projectising’ accountability. The need to generate local ‘buy-in’ and ownership at every stage of the project was emphasised, as was the importance of the accuracy and quality of the findings.

Anne briefly summarised five recent surveys conducted by CIET: one of vulnerability in Bosnia, one of relief work in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch, one of land mine awareness programmes in Afghanistan, one of service delivery in Uganda and one of a health and population baseline survey in Bangladesh. Contracts are mostly

worked out with governments with support from external organisations. In Bangladesh, a consortium of donors was involved.

The key point to make from CIET's experience was that evaluation from the point of view of the intended beneficiaries is feasible, even in emergency conditions, and can be important for accountability, governance and programme effectiveness. However, programme managers are not always comfortable with the approach.

## Questions and Discussion

In response to a question about the timeframe involved in the examples provided – from the design of projects to their implementation and findings – Anne replied that in the case of Bosnia this had meant 3 months of work, whereas in Bangladesh this had entailed 4-5 months of work. Asked to explain the ways in which the surveys were utilised Anne explained that the process was utilised in different ways which were very context specific. To a large degree the way in which they were utilised depended on the perception of high-level officials and their understanding of its application. The type of dissemination after completion also influenced utilisation.

Anne disagreed with a point about the surveys representing 'one-off' studies and said that CIET generally preferred to work in programmes where there was follow-up work involved. In response to a question about the cost-effectiveness of such surveys she said that the large surveys were expensive but often involved very large samples – for instance the Bangladesh baseline survey had cost \$ 195,000 but had covered 26,000 households. The survey methods could be employed on a much smaller scale – examples existed in Uganda where community groups were adopting the same mechanisms, in addition to municipalities in Mexico.

In response to a question about lesson-learning as a result of surveys Anne replied that the lessons from each programme were internally circulated within CIET and that it was possible for others to tap into this knowledge through participation in the various courses run by CIET such as the 2-8 week courses run for programme managers. Such training was worthwhile for although the research may seem easy, the process was actually quite complicated and easy to get wrong.

In response to a question about mechanisms to avoid receiving inaccurate responses Anne replied that through its experience CIET had developed a range of techniques to avoid this. She commented however, that one of the difficulties in this process was disaggregating information. For example, this can be complicated in cases where individual agencies require information about their performance, whilst beneficiaries respond to questions in terms of overall service provision. She remarked that teasing out this information was possible, but means that specific questions have to be posed.

Questioned on how the tension between the contractor and the local community was managed she replied that CIET's responsibility to the local community was primary and any work which compromises this level of commitment towards the community is not undertaken. In terms of the heavy reliance on external specialists and how knowledge and expertise were transferred she agreed that this kind of work required a high level of expert input in the initial stages of the project but that skills and information were subsequently transferred to local staff and people and the process carried forward with much lower levels of external input. In response to a question about CIET's view of PRA techniques she said that CIET utilises many of the techniques developed through PRA but finds they are amplified if used in conjunction with quantitative data.

Questioned on the involvement of government and NGOs in the surveys Anne said that projects often ended up being 50-50 exercises between government bodies and NGOs. CIET prefers not to work with private polling agencies as this would not contribute towards institutionalising processes.

In response to a question about the ability of the approach to provide quick feedback in emergency situations on management decision-making, such as in Kosovo, Anne replied that the approach was designed specifically for such purposes and that the sooner surveys were conducted in such situations the better.

Questioned on the organisational structures used for the studies carried out in Bosnia, Nicaragua and Afghanistan Anne replied that the Bosnia study had been conducted over a 3 year period between from 1994 to 1996. The partners CIET collaborated with in Bosnia were not always the same, but the experience had proved that it was possible to collect consistent data from the same area over this period. One participant observed that it would be useful for OCHA to possess or at least control this sort of capacity, and that it would be beneficial for the humanitarian sector if this capacity was built-in within the system

Anne was asked about the specific difficulties of conducting such surveys in war zones and whether problems of access led to bias in the results of such surveys Anne said that problems were encountered such as researchers being arrested but stressed that each case had to be considered individually. In the case of Bosnia, one of the samples had included a UN designated 'Safe Area' with the research conducted by local staff and members of the particular community.

The Chair commented that CIET's work represented a potential tool for change and management within the system, and thanked Dr. Anne Cockcroft for her presentation.

### **Participation by the Affected Population in Relief Operations: A Review of the Experiences of DEC Agencies during the Response to the 1998 Famine in South Sudan. Presentation by Pierson R.T. Ntata, Chancellor College, University of Malawi**

John Borton introduced Pierson Ntata and provided some background on the origins of the study and its link with Raymond Apthorpe's and Philippa Atkinson's study on beneficiary participation. At the last meeting in October 1998 Matthew Carter from CAFOD had suggested that the DEC Evaluation in South Sudan might be used as a vehicle for an investigation into agency performance with relation to beneficiary participation in relief programmes and due to the positive approach to this suggestion by the DEC agencies, the DEC Secretariat and ETC (the team which had been awarded the contract to undertake the evaluation) it have proved possible to 'piggy-back this study onto the ETC evaluation.

Pierson provided an overview of the historical and political context of South Sudan including reference to the role of the OLS. The term 'beneficiaries' and 'affected populations' as defined by an OLS task force, was clarified to include: indigenous communities affected by disasters, or wars, internally displaced populations, returnees, the old, sick and weak. This differed however from agency definitions of the term which tended to reflect the type of programme implemented. Various ways of involving (identifying and reaching) beneficiaries were pointed out, and an

important distinction was made between 'involvement' in terms of the provision of physical labour by the affected population to the programme, and 'involvement' which allowed the engagement of the 'community mind' (i.e. social involvement). The critical issue in the study relates to the extent to which the views of the affected population can be taken into account by agencies involved in humanitarian programmes.

Short summaries of the experiences of different agencies to participation and social learning were provided. The analytical issues addressed, related to (i) vulnerability, (ii) humanitarian space versus participatory space and (iii) emergencies and participation. The importance of considering community perceptions of vulnerability for effective rehabilitation programmes was demonstrated. It was noted that the agency's approach to the acquisition of humanitarian space was partly responsible for determining the degree of participatory space. With regard to emergency and participation, the forces which may limit participatory approaches in humanitarian programmes were examined. The study found that in emergency situations many agencies found it difficult to utilise participatory approaches during the planning stage of their programmes - planning usually being agency dominated. However, the experience of the agencies showed that beneficiary participation or 'social learning' may be almost indispensable in any attempt to save livelihoods. Livelihoods constituted a complex web of socio-cultural relations which criss-cross with environmental conditions. Consequently, local views are critical to any efforts geared at saving livelihoods.

In principle, many agencies placed a high value on the participation of their beneficiaries, and in practise participatory approaches were utilised, though with varying success. However, it was possible that agencies manipulated participation to suit their own needs. The benefits of participation and social learning were highlighted, with particular reference to two questions. Firstly, what had agencies achieved that could not have been possible in the absence of participation. Secondly, what 'mistakes' or unintended consequences of an intervention had resulted from the lack of participation but which could have been avoided had there been participation. The following propositions were made based on the experiences of the various NGOs covered by the study.

- a) Participation enabled agencies, especially those which utilised the traditional social structures, to arrive at a wider, more comprehensive and more accurate understanding of vulnerability and beneficiaries.
- b) Participation contributed to the protection and efficient use of resources.
- c) Participation helped prevent the creation of community tensions or conflicts among different social groups within the affected communities. In addition, it helped to strengthen existing capacities, making the employment of large numbers of staff unnecessary.
- d) Participation provided significant added value beyond immediate relief.

The conclusions of the study were summarised by drawing attention to certain core issues: ethics, structure, operations, targeting, 'smart relief', information, and accountability.

- a) Ethics – It was suggested that the issue of participation of the affected population in humanitarian programmes represents a moral and ethical argument, in addition to an operational one. It was stressed that the way in which agencies view humanitarian aid has important implications in terms of how beneficiaries are considered. It pointed to the need for agencies to confront a set of ethical

issues pertaining to humanitarian assistance, and to take a clear stand on these issues.

- b) Structure – This related to the ‘top-down’ and ‘supply-driven’ approach to humanitarian programmes, despite existing social structures within the beneficiary population which would facilitate local decision-making and enhance an understanding of their needs.
- c) Operations – It was shown that the limited involvement of beneficiaries can introduce inefficiencies into the programme. Unless the social structure has been completely disrupted, it was emphasised that in principle it is always desirable and appropriate to utilise participatory approaches.
- d) Targeting – Beneficiary participation was considered crucial in the targeting of vulnerable groups. The case of South Sudan demonstrated that agencies have realised that it is impossible to understand vulnerability without making concerted efforts to involve the affected communities in defining it. Only after such a process, was improved targeting and better programme delivery achieved.
- e) ‘Smart Relief’ – Participation was found to offer a channel for understanding and addressing such issues as gender relations and the impact of relief on the livelihood system and the social structure in general. In addition, participation also offers agencies the opportunity to disseminate its own messages (eg. health education and sanitation) that may increase the effectiveness of the relief intervention.
- f) Information – Agencies frequently lack institutional memory and this often inhibits the collection of relevant social or geographical information essential for programme implementation. In such a context local communities are often the best source of information and should be consulted.
- g) The experience of some agencies demonstrated that increased involvement of beneficiaries in the programme constitutes an in-built monitoring and evaluation mechanism, despite the difficulties encountered in putting this into practise. The difficulties relate to the identification of individuals within the community who can take on the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.
- h) Need to act? – The general belief is that there are some special circumstances in which participation may be deemed inappropriate or undesirable – for example where high rates of morbidity or mortality exist. It was stated that in such cases participation becomes appropriate when emergency situations improve and when the affected population can participate effectively. However, what still requires further examination is the basis upon which agencies can make unilateral judgements regarding intervention. Also required is investigation of the extent to which particular types of investigation, participation and social-learning might delay action and introduce inefficiencies into the programme.

### ***Questions and Discussion***

Pierson was asked about Dinka culture and attitudes to the sharing food amongst the community, and the extent to which this definition concurred with that of the humanitarian agencies. He said that food sharing among the communities was carried out in normal circumstances in any case and that the tradition was continued and amplified during war time. Food received from relief was often distributed amongst the community, making it difficult for agencies to target particular groups of the population. .

One participant referred to the work of aid agencies in South Sudan during the 1970s and 1980s, noting that a lot of experience had been gained in the sector during that time, and questioned whether agencies currently working in South Sudan were reinventing the wheel. How much of the agency information from those years has been passed on to current agency personnel? Pierson said that there was very little

if any institutional memory from the 70s and 80s, primarily he thought as a result of the high turnover of staff prohibiting continuity in programme thinking.

Pierson was asked to summarise the key incentives and disincentives to increasing participation in programmes amongst the affected populations. He said that it was not necessary to provide material incentives for participation, but that it was better to create the opportunity and environment so as to facilitate feedback from the local community. He added that the provision of incentives would complicate matters by introducing the issue of 'who' participates. He highlighted the importance of maintaining an open dialogue throughout the process, but stated that in some cases this was not possible.

He was asked whether there any evidence to suggest that beneficiary participation in programmes increased agency awareness of community signals and whether specifically targeted programmes were not able to pick up these type of signals. He replied that this was not as straightforward as it appeared, and that participation in programmes and agency response was not necessarily connected to the time/length/experience of an agency in a particular area. Also agencies that did not react directly to signals from the community may have been aware of the situation, but instead chose to respond to the situation differently. There was often considerable variation between agencies in the way that they responded to the community.

In response to a question about whether a particular agency's decision to enter South Sudan specifically to conduct a supplementary feeding programmes had hampered their ability to explore beneficiary participation issues, Pierson said that agencies involved in therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes did have problems responding to community requirements. For example, standard height-weight food ratios were not applicable to the Dinka people as they are much taller.

A participant with extensive experience in South Sudan said that local community's were often marginalised despite SPLA and SRRA involvement. Flexibility and context specificity were important in South Sudan particularly in relation to therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes – experiences could not be generalised over an entire region. Pierson said that agencies were compelled to talk to the local networks and organisations. Though the SRRA may have its problems – it would be impossible for agencies to penetrate the local community without their co-operation.

Attention was drawn to the influence of the particular characteristics of the logistics in South Sudan on the ability of agencies to achieve participation and understand the structure and dynamics of the communities they were assisting. Frequently food was delivered to airstrips and members of the community walked long distances to the airstrips to collect the food. Often these members were unrepresentative of the whole community and the agencies were not able to make many useful judgements about the community on the basis of their interaction with those who came to collect the food.



**‘Towards Shared Social Learning for Humanitarian Programmes: Approaches to Consultation with, and Participation by Beneficiaries and the Affected Population in the Planning, Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of Humanitarian Programmes’**, presented by Philippa Atkinson, freelance researcher and PhD student at the London School of Economics and Political Science

John Borton provided summary information on the second synthesis study conducted by Raymond Apthorpe and Philippa Atkinson on Shared Social Learning for Humanitarian Programmes. He pointed out that Raymond Apthorpe had completed the research with Philippa Atkinson’s help but that he was not able to present due to his teaching commitments in Australia.

Philippa explained that the premise of the study was that humanitarian programmes should treat beneficiaries more as subjects than objects, and that by doing so interventions may gain relevance and effectiveness. In the context of the paper, it was noted that the phrase ‘shared social learning’ referred to the process of working with beneficiaries to identify and understand their social and cultural realities, and their practices for meeting immediate survival needs in times of stress. It also involves examining the context of the emergency, including the history, geography and demography of the area concerned, and the specific dimensions of the emergency itself, including the stage of the project cycle, the characteristics of the agencies and donors involved and sectoral factors.

It was emphasised that the synthesis study is intended to be the starting point for a proposed global study. The findings of the study were found to be robust, contributing strong justification for a global study exploring the relationships between the right of affected populations to be heard and involved and the principle that any intervention should build on and not bypass local capacity feeding into improved practice. It was proposed that research, documentation and analysis of the particular applications of social learning methods would inform the global study.

It was noted that interest in the subject is based on concerns with rights, technical efficiency and improved practice, but that the practical mechanisms for the translation of theory into practice needed to be taken into account. Political, institutional and financial factors were seen to potentially inhibit the application of social learning, though the potential gains in terms of the appropriateness, effectiveness and accountability of programmes were stressed. Additionally, it was emphasised that in order to be effective, shared social learning must involve *all* aspects of learning about *all* affected populations, so that an understanding of the needs, coping mechanisms and general context of the situation informs all aspects of programming, from planning to evaluation.

An overview of the methods used to conduct the synthesis study was provided. This included: searches of the ALNAP evaluations database, an exploration of general academic and grey literature in the area of humanitarian and development programming, conducting interviews with interested practitioners and researchers and a small roundtable consultation meeting held at ODI.

A brief review of the different methods of social learning followed, including an examination of the potential and constraints of each. Among those discussed were: social anthropological fieldwork, social observation and semi-structured interviewing, event-led narratives, action-research, rapid collaborative and participatory assessments, social surveys, focus groups and representative bodies, policy

dialogue with implementation partners and learning through evaluation and social audit. The application of each method to the various aspects and dimensions of humanitarian programming was outlined.

It was evident that the methodological constraints to the application of shared social learning in humanitarian programmes are numerous. The variety of methods for operationalisation represented the most obvious constraint. Major constraints to the application of shared social learning included: the lack of staff training in research and analysis; the external and ethnocentric attitudes of researchers; the inherent difficulties in understanding the complex realities and social organisation of other cultures; and the failure to acknowledge ways in which the techniques used can shape results. These constraints were seen to be heightened in emergency and conflict situations by a tendency among outsiders to see affected populations as homogenous victims. This was in addition to an increased distrust among subjects of the research process, and greater incentives for affected populations to give misleading information. Nonetheless, it was felt that these constraints could be overcome, and key aspects of successful social learning could be identified. These include: flexibility, creativity, and the willingness to combine techniques. While it was considered indisputable that the methodological constraints are substantial, they were not seen to prevent further attempts in the area of shared social learning.

The examination of shared social learning in practice was seen to offer many examples of gains in relevance, effectiveness and accountability through its application to development programmes. Social learning is increasingly seen as part of 'good practice' by development agencies, and that although it receives much less attention in emergency programming, examples of its successful application in such situations do exist.

An example of the inclusion of a social learning element in a project was identified in work conducted by Oxfam in Ikafe, Uganda. In this case, it was demonstrated that social analysis and the participation of beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of a refugee assistance programme were considered to have been highly successful. Another example provided, is in the use of research narratives by the Disaster Mitigation Institute in India as part of its attempt to develop a deeper understanding of vulnerability and poverty in recurrent natural disaster situations. In both cases, social learning was applied at all stages of the project cycle and was thought to have made significant contributions to the work.

The role of social learning was thought to be particularly clear in certain cases, such as in efforts to identify and assess vulnerability for targeting purposes. The example provided drew attention to the work of Oxfam in northern Kenya in the mid 1990s, where greater consultation with beneficiaries resulted in effective targeting of the most needy. An example of the potential difficulties of applying shared learning to targeting efforts is of ActionAid's experience in Ethiopia, where the use of credit schemes, as suggested by the affected populations, resulted in an increased debt burden on the poorest people. Nonetheless, in both cases it was stated that greater consultation and participation resulted in more effective, transparent and accountable operations.

Social learning was also seen to contribute to programming at the policy level. It was argued that its application is essential for the attainment of certain strategic policy goals, such as the strengthening of local capacity and peace-building efforts. Recognition of its importance is reflected in the current funding among donors of in-depth social analyses, particularly of conflict situations.

In conclusion, the constraints to translating shared social learning into effective policy were reiterated, and are thought to be exacerbated by the rigidity and biases within institutions, limited institutional memory and the standardised designs of some humanitarian programmes. However, it was noted that the increased attention given to issues of consultation and accountability by donors and agencies alike is very encouraging.

### ***Questions and Discussion***

The Chair thanked Philippa for the presentation and asked that questions be related to humanitarian assistance programmes.

One participant welcomed the study, but felt that the introduction of the concept to the humanitarian sector would be difficult due to the language utilised in the study. The use of more accessible and practice-oriented language was suggested. Philippa accepted the point, but said that the available concepts and language had certain associations or conceptual problems identified with them, which they had wanted to avoid.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to examine of the War-Torn Societies Project's understanding and use of the term 'participatory appraisal'., though another participant drew attention to the differences between the War Torn Societies Project and other research in the sector, highlighting the political objective behind the Project.

Philippa was asked why the study had not as yet raised the question of 'community responsibility' and she replied that the study had concentrated on the responsibility of humanitarian organisations towards the local community and in trying to find community structures and partners through which to work.

A second participant expressed concern at the introduction of new concepts and 'another level of complexity' and suggested that this be simplified. Philippa stressed that humanitarian agencies remained ignorant about a number of important issues, and that the information to be gained by such a study would be useful to them. She agreed that the area is complex but urged that further investigation was necessary. John Borton explained that the study had used new terminology because the term 'participation' had too many different meanings and connotations in the humanitarian and development context, depending on where one stood in the system. The study sought to neither 'demonise nor mythologise' a term which is automatically equated with PRA. Instead they intended to investigate other existing options in different contexts. It was wrong for agencies to utilise only one participatory tool - PRA - when so many others could be used. The new term was introduced so as to lift the discussion of a difficult debate.

In response to a question about the final products that were envisaged at the end of the study, Philippa replied that it was hoped that the study would be developed into global project, at the end of which a 'Best Practise' or 'Best Analysis' summary of findings would be published. She added that this could even constitute another section of the SPHERE Project Manual.

One participant disagreed with the approach saying that agencies need to examine local community relief efforts, and participate in these rather than agencies trying to integrate local community voices within their own programmes. He remarked that 90% of local community's survive due to their own resources and coping mechanisms, and that the sector needed to recognise this and work along side these

initiatives. Philippa agreed with the need for agencies to support local efforts but stressed that this would not be possible without a greater understanding of the communities and of the ways in which they 'cope' and learn.

Another participant put forward the view that increasing beneficiary participation in humanitarian programmes would in fact reduce the levels of complexity within the system and cited the experience of the 'Disaster Mitigation Institute' in India. He suggested that unless programme costs, effort and time are reduced as a result of listening to community needs, real participation was not taking place or was not being sufficiently integrated into programmes.

Another participant said that if the two main justifications for a global study were the need for a rights-based approach and to promote project effectiveness this was too narrow as it failed to capture the issue of donor resource allocation, and their 'participation' in the process. He added that by focussing on agency 'learning', the sector avoided facing certain important questions and challenges. Another participant remarked that there was a need to examine local community resources rather than their needs, and to strengthen local capacity to deal with humanitarian crisis. She commented that the term 'participation' has been misused misinterpreted over the last 10 years.

Another participant felt that as well as social learning a better understanding was needed about the mechanisms and systems that enable organisations to learn about their own research as he felt that most organisations tend to only utilise information and research generated within their own organisation, ignoring research published elsewhere. He highlighted the inefficiency with which humanitarian organisations learn lessons, and implement these in programmes. He said that there was a need to address the outcomes of these exercises so as to maximise the process. With regard to 'shared social learning', he remarked that there exist a number of anthropological studies which examine some of the issues and which are never used. Philippa concurred and said that any research conducted in the sector should aim to be applicable beyond the agency conducting the research.

At this point it was decided to here Mihir Bhatt's presentation and introduce the perspective and experience of the Disaster Mitigation Institute into the discussions.

**Institutionalising Victim's Voices**, presentation by Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director, Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad, India

Mihir explained that the overall purpose of the presentation was to explain the mechanisms used by DMI to institutionalise the voices of the affected population in their work. The presentation was divided into three parts covering: the institutional structure of the organisation, a summary of its activities, and the lessons learned from these experiences. Within the context of the theme of 'Learning and Voice', areas explored included: the incentives for monitoring and rewarding team performances in listening to the affected populations 'voices', and flagship projects.

It was noted that DMI's view of a 'disaster' differed from that of the humanitarian sector and referred to: manmade and natural disasters, and riots and conflicts. Responses to these involved: relief, rehabilitation, mitigation and prevention. DMI's programmes are integrated and take place simultaneously in the following areas: food, water, shelter and work security.

A brief summary of the origins of DMI and an overview of its institutional structure was provided. DMI was established as a result of the development work that commenced in 1987-89 in response to the repeated droughts experienced in Gujarat. The drought prompted a demand for disaster mitigation work from the local People's Organisations (POs). This disaster reorientation work was supported by the Foundation for Public Interest (FDI), and DMI was encouraged to develop an institutional structure once projects developed into programmes. The structure sought to: institutionalise local knowledge and practise, represent local demands and be driven by them, invest in the articulation of these demands, undertake action research, planning, performance rating and advocacy. This is undertaken in four principal ways: (i) by working with the local population via direct action, (ii) working jointly with POs, (iii) working with NGOs through system wide joint action and (iv) influencing policy at the state level. A key role for DMI as facilitator in the exchange of information between government, NGOs, community groups and 'victims' of disasters was highlighted. It was demonstrated that DMI sought to transfer information and knowledge on the different stages of the project cycle from government bodies and research departments down through to the affected local population, making it more accessible and relevant.

With regard to working with the affected local population, the need to involve 'victims' at every stage of the project cycle was highlighted, where both projects and processes were demanded, produced, managed and owned by 'victims'. Selected projects were chosen to explain how these had been implemented in different contexts. Urban risk reduction in Ahmedabad and Delhi sought to integrate participatory methods in action planning with urban development bodies. This was achieved through the utilisation of risk reduction tools such as: the provision of tool kits, the establishment of an action planning school with 'victims' teaching as faculty, and the use of 'victims' voices' as a planning tool. Another example was the Public Expenditure Review of Relief of the Government of Gujarat's 5 year budget. This entailed a review of their budget, allowance, expenditure with the results related to performance in the sector. The results were published in Gujarati so as to be more easily accessible to the local affected population. The findings were published in the newspapers, discussed at a policy forum level. Also mentioned was the People's Coalition for Cyclone Relief and Rehabilitation in 1998. This involved the state level coordination of voluntary efforts after the cyclone, the establishment of the Gujarat Disaster Preparedness Forum, and created opportunities for POs to be involved in decision making. The 'Vavazodu' newsletter published in Gujarati represented a tool enabling the affected population of the cyclone to articulate their grievances, and experiences. 1000 copies of the newsletter are published. One third of its readership are 'victims', while others include organisations linked to DMI. Finally, the Case studies Series on Food and Water Security was a main part of DMI Publications, documenting the experiences, activities and processes of 'victims' and field workers in food and water security related disasters. Many other examples were mentioned.

Mihir made a number of key points with regard to the voices of 'victims' in disasters including the following: people without a voice are invariably the vulnerable and those without economic power; the articulation of such a voice is able to influence outcomes; the market can respond to these voices when they are articulated in terms of demand; project planning can respond to such voices if these are articulated through a lobby or constituency.

The lessons learned from these experiences demonstrated the collective strength of the victims and the need to invest in capacity-building of the local affected population.

Further, the need to focus on the relationship between this part of the population and the State was highlighted, and the need to implement this through building more project-policy linkages. More specifically, these also related to the need to continue to work with POs, and other community groups, and to take account of the three key aspects of planning, performance rating and budget analysis in programmes. Following DMI's Strategic Review and taking account of the above lessons, DMI will work towards 2 goals: that DMI's growth should incorporate and increase the participation of 'victims', and those of the Institute's projects which fail to integrate these voices in their processes should be reviewed and reconsidered.

### ***Questions and Discussion***

Mihir was asked how DMI ensured that the affected population is able to articulate its demands clearly and he answered that this entailed working at two distinct levels – the local community level and within the organisational structures of agencies and the State. At the community level, he emphasised that it was important to spend time with the local people in order to accurately document their experiences, views and thoughts. He said that this information was then submitted to agencies and the State, taking into account which departments were most likely to make use of it.

One participant suggested that simply reacting to the voices of the affected population could potentially be misleading and dangerous and that it was equally important to observe and listen to the community.

During the tea-break an ad hoc meeting was held to discuss ways in which use could be made of the CIET survey approach in the context of the ongoing refugee emergency in Albania and Macedonia and it was agreed propose the value of such a survey to a donor organisation with an interest in supporting such efforts.

### ***Continued Discussion on the Synthesis Study on 'Shared Social Learning'***

In returning to the discussion on the Synthesis Study, John Borton explained that a potential next step was to develop a Global Study on 'Shared Social Learning', and it was necessary to hear from the meeting whether this should be a priority activity for ALNAP and views on ALNAP's role in relation to this. He suggested that the final output of the study could perhaps be an additional section of the SPHERE Project. ALNAP could be involved in managing the preparation of this in conjunction with the SPHERE Project, though this needed to be discussed with the Management Committee of the SPHERE Project. If it was decided to proceed with the development of the Global Study it would be necessary to modify the current 'Beneficiary Voice Reference Group' and suggested Nan Buzard Raymond Apthorpe and Pierson Ntata in order to maintain continuity with the earlier work and with the SPHERE Project. He felt that the study should not be located within ODI in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest with the ALNAP Secretariat and suggested that UNRISD or some other research centre might be an option. The reference group would be responsible for overseeing the project.

One participant felt that the objective of the study was the reverse of what it should be. He remarked that the questions that should be asked relate to how humanitarian agencies can participate in the relief work of the affected population. Another suggested that it was important to examine how the community's voice can best be brought to bear on programmes.

Another welcomed the initiative, but put forward the idea of first looking at the evaluation processes of mechanisms which have already been put into place, such

as the NGO Code of Conduct, Sphere Project, the Ombudsman Project. Other participants asked about the methodologies would be utilised in the study, and proposed that an exploration of other existing research on this topic be made in different areas. One participant observed that there remained a number of question marks around the proposed Global Study and that more thinking was needed to sharpen its focus. A starting point would be to clarify the attitude of the SPHERE Project Management Committee towards the proposal that the Global Study lead to an additional section of the Sphere Handbook. Another participant pointed out that the SPHERE Project had just recruited a Training Officer who was based in London, and that this might be of relevance in creating linkages with the proposed study.

Another suggestion was that high staff turnover in agencies kept emerging as a problem in the ALNAP discussions and that the development of basic training material for new agency staff would be very useful in helping them to deal with immediate problems. It was pointed out that the World Disaster Report 2000 is focussing on the issue of beneficiary participation. If the proposed Global Study went ahead it should also seek to develop links the World Bank's Disaster Mitigation Unit.

In drawing the session to a close the Chair said that the discussion had provided valuable insights which would enable initial steps to be taken in relation to the proposed Global Study. She pointed out that it was important to ensure that the other ALNAP Full Members who were not present at the meeting have a chance to voice their concerns, perhaps via the Listserv.

### **Learning in the Food and Nutrition Sector: A Preliminary Mapping of Learning Processes – Presentation by Annalies Borrel, Food and Nutrition Adviser, Policy Development and Evaluation Unit, Concern Worldwide**

John Borton explained how Annalies who was planning a 3-month sabbatical had approached the Secretariat in December 1998 for suggestions on issues that she might focus upon. He had suggested learning in the food and nutrition sector and had agreed to cover her expenses in carrying out the study on a part time basis during February and March.

The objective of the preliminary study was to identify mechanisms and processes that have both facilitated and constrained learning in the humanitarian food and nutrition sector over the past decade, by drawing on agency and operational experience. The methodology involved collecting information from active representatives in the sector including from the UN and NGO agencies, independent consultants and academic institutes.

A brief historical perspective of the Food and Nutrition Sector was provided, starting from the 1940s and 50s up until the 1990s. During the 40s and 50s, it was pointed out that research had been focused on the physiology of malnutrition, and on the victims of concentration camps in Europe and in Medical Research Centres in tropical colonies. The Biafran War in the late 1960s had made mass malnutrition visible to the Western world through the media for the first time. This led to an initial recognition of the lack of knowledge and skills in the area and the need for a more professional approach towards malnutrition. In the 1970s, there was increasing recognition of the need for the promotion of an independent academic discipline examining food and nutrition issues. Despite the establishment of such centres (such as at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), the links between

the food and nutrition, and humanitarian sector were still weak. It was stressed that up until the 1980s, the word nutrition was synonymous with malnutrition. The 1980s represented a watershed in the sector for both technical and conceptual reasons. Technically these related to: the sharp increase in the frequency, scale and severity of famines and the outbreak of micro nutrient deficiency diseases, the development of epidemiological tools, the notable lack of guidelines and mechanisms to share information amongst agencies, and the ad hoc treatment of malnutrition. Important conceptual changes included: theories of famine and causal models of malnutrition which influenced the field of nutrition, the sectoral shift from a narrow medical perspective to a population-based discipline with inputs from expertise in other areas, and the development of early warning systems providing the rationale for early intervention in famine. By the end of the 1980s, the confluence of these two bodies of knowledge prepared the stage for a clearer understanding of the role of food and nutrition in humanitarian crises.

An overview of the sector in the 1990s was provided, focusing on learning, technical and policy changes, and constraints to further development. Learning in the management of severe malnutrition was facilitated by various factors: the analysis of outcome data as scientific research, the contribution of advisory bodies with specific interests in pursuing issues and the dissemination of guidelines through various fora. Issues that constrained learning were pointed out such as the association of good practise with only a few select agencies, and the dependence on limited resources, access and skilled staff. The widespread use of anthropometric surveys and the recognition of the need for contextual information represented another significant technical change which facilitated learning; but was also constrained due to dependence of the process on resources and the difficult of interpreting qualitative information. The critical review of supplementary feeding programmes also contributed to the sector, encouraging learning in a number of ways. Additionally, traditional definitions of vulnerability have been challenged affecting learning in the sector. Progress in the area of adult and adolescent malnutrition, aided by the provision of evidence from mortality data had helped in the design of programmes targeting this group. However, the lack of agreed cut-offs for the definition of malnutrition in adults and appropriate information on reference populations, lack of agency experience, complexities in programme design and donor reluctance to consider adults as a priority, had all served to limit progress in this area.

Collaborative research had contributed to policy changes in the field of micro-nutrient fortification and were put into practise by WFP and WHO. Learning in this instance was constrained by: a lack of practical diagnostic tools for assessing underlying deficiency diseases, and by appropriate technical and distribution mechanisms. Finally, the development of vital logistical systems and support services for emergencies has also contributed significantly to improved performance in the sector.

Wider issues and policy changes in the 1990s were then examined, identifying internal and external changes. Changes within the sector included: the refinement and further application of analytical frameworks, food security assessment tools, the development and use of Food Basket Monitoring highlighting the need to target more effectively, and the establishment of important working networks within the UN system. External changes to the sector have been substantial, characterised in particular by its connection to complex humanitarian emergencies in the 1990s. These have highlighted the need for agencies to operate differently, in the context of increased conflict and security risks. While these factors have precipitated learning in the sector, the lack of on-going political, economic and cultural analyses of complex emergencies has inhibited further progress. Certain critiques of



humanitarian work, such as the 'Do no harm' theory, have stimulated more thorough analyses and contributed to the increased importance of monitoring and evaluation in the sector. But this has nonetheless failed to provide a practical framework and analytical tools to enable the widespread application of these ideas. Additionally, the Sphere and Ombudsman Projects represent a significant shift within the wider environment, drawing attention to the sector-wide obligations of accountability and adherence to professional and ethical standards. These developments are set within the larger context of the 'Rights based' framework – where the 'right to food' has assumed particular salience and legitimised interventions.

Key constraints to learning in the sector were divided into agency constraints and sector constraints. Agency constraints include: the inadequate representation of food and nutrition technical staff in decision-making processes; the learning process being over-reliant on individuals; the rapid turnover of staff; the 'charity-professional' dichotomy and the failure of mandates and policies to endorse learning. Sector constraints involve: the narrow perception of nutrition; the failure of post-graduate training to address operational issues; the relative lack of literature and case-study analysis; the semi-formal and *ad hoc* nature of networking in the sector; the weak inter-sectoral links; the lack of sector and technical links with donor agencies and the lack of a proactive role by donors in the learning process.

Overall, mechanisms that facilitated learning in the sector in the 1990s were listed as follows: the collaboration between agencies resulting in the consolidation of the sector; opportunities for networking; a willingness to share and exchange information; the documentation and dissemination of practical lessons learnt reflecting operational experience; the contribution of academics; improved data information systems and problem based research; the application of a more holistic conceptual frameworks resulting in a shift away from narrow definitions of malnutrition; the contribution of non-nutritionists to the knowledge base and the increased number of nutritionists at head-quarters and project level.

In conclusion, various challenges to the sector were pointed out. These included: the application of economic, political and cultural analyses in programme design; the integration of food and nutrition into a broader public nutrition and health approach; the strengthening of sectoral links; the further development and strengthening of academic links with humanitarian agencies; the diversification of the range of response strategies; the development of literacy and expertise in the human rights framework; the development of strategies for nutrition emergencies in industrialised countries and urban environments; and finally, the development of mechanisms to integrate professional and ethical standards into programme design.

### **Questions and Discussion**

The Chair thanked Annalies for the presentation and commented on the extent to which the lessons highlighted in the presentation appeared to be applicable to other sectors.

One participant felt that several donor organisations had done a lot over the past 2-3 years to incorporate food and nutrition in project design and asked what more donor agencies in particular could do in order to improve their input in this area. He further asked what opportunity costs this would involve for the agencies, and what kind level of donor engagement was being sought. Annalies said that whilst some donor organisations had made progress others had not and high staff turnover in some agencies created very real difficulties. She said that donor agencies could play a more pro-active role in the sector by: sharing and disseminating information, funding

workshops and models, and ensuring that the voices of nutritionists within agencies are heard and taken account of.

There was some discussion about the extent to which nutritionists have been able to influence the development of policy initiatives. It was noted that nutritionists were already involved in research and in the setting of agendas in Universities such as Aberdeen, Columbia and Harvard and that there were opportunities for agencies to establish their own links with specialised food and nutrition organisations or institutes with links between Merlin and LSHTM and between MSF and Epicentre being mentioned as examples.

One participant pointed out the necessity to consider the extent to which learning in the food and nutrition sector had been transferred to government departments. Annalies responded that this remained a challenge for the future and that the food and nutrition sector was still on uncertain ground. She noted that current challenges included the institutionalisation of the Food and Nutrition standards of the Sphere project in local hospitals.

Another participant noted the apparent differences between 'technical' learning and other types of learning, such as managerial. Another drew attention to the difference between Nick Leaders presentation in relation to food agencies which had focussed on issues in bulk food distribution and Annalies which had focussed on therapeutic nutrition. He felt that the Nutrition sector had not 'owned' conflict situations or felt a part of the wider humanitarian sector, and were not engaged in adapting feeding programmes so as to avoid the problems associated with the diversion and delivery of dry food supplies. Annalies replied that the sector was now in a position to face the challenges imposed by conflict situations.

Another participant commented that the list of the people interviewed in the report represented the 'crème de la crème' of the Food and Nutrition sector and said there were many examples of continued poor practice in agencies which were not represented on the list and that it would be wrong to treat the sector as a homogeneous entity when considering learning .

### **ALNAP's Future Development and Activities, presentation by John Borton, Co-Ordinator ALNAP Secretariat**

The objective of the presentation was to provide an overview of ALNAP's activities and experiences since its inception in May 1997 and make proposals for ALNAP's future role and activities. The paper was initially prepared for consideration by the Steering Committee and was now being presented to the Full Members.

ALNAP's principal achievements in terms of its contribution to the sector were identified as: the holding of four successful meetings; the development and operationalisation of a fully searchable website database of evaluative reports on humanitarian assistance programmes; the piloting of a Listserv for Full Members as a means of encouraging information flows and discussion on issues of interest to Full Members; and embarking on a variety of studies designed to further understanding of selected aspects of accountability, performance and learning within the international humanitarian system. More broadly, the institutional framework developed by ALNAP within the international humanitarian system, notably the 'balanced' representation among Full Members, the structures and procedures of the two-tier membership and the Steering Committee, was considered its most significant

achievement. The structure is believed to provide a unique forum encouraging innovative thinking and a range of activities which would be difficult or impossible to achieve otherwise.

The process by which ALNAP selects its activities was described, giving prominence to the way in which these have 'added value' to the system. Together with the Reports Database, the 6-monthly meetings were considered to be core activities and to have contributed to the sector in significant ways. Topics for the meetings are selected through a combination of ideas by the Secretariat and suggestions by members. The Reports Database represented a unique collection and an important asset for the international humanitarian system. Its value was demonstrated during the Bangladesh Flood Emergency in September 1998, when the Database was used to remind those involved in new relief operations of lessons learnt in earlier operations. In this context, the centrality of evaluations as a key tool enabling learning and accountability in the system was reiterated. Other activities undertaken by ALNAP are the Synthesis Studies, Background Papers, 'Small Studies' commissioned by or undertaken directly by the Secretariat, and the information sharing activities – most recently the Listserv. Studies commissioned by ALNAP and completed were listed as follows: two Synthesis Studies (on Peace-building and Participation/Social Learning), two Background Papers (on Organisational and Institutional Learning and on Learning in the Food and Nutrition Sector) and one Small Study (on Achieving Greater Commonality in Reporting Requirements). In addition a one-off 'Special Study' was conducted (the ALNAP Add-On to the DEC Sudan Evaluation).

The contribution to the sector of each of these studies was considered. The studies on 'Learning' were seen to have helped sharpen thinking in this area. Consequently, it was proposed to make 'learning' one of the organising themes for ALNAP's future activities. Work on peace-building was thought by many members to be marginal to ALNAP's central concerns, but had nevertheless generated much interest amongst organisations working in this area. It was pointed out that the Small Study on Achieving Greater Commonality in Reporting has not been carried forward due to staff changes and progress on other studies, but that this was now a priority. In addition, attention was drawn to the Secretariat's responsiveness to member suggestions e.g. 'add on' to the DEC Sudan Evaluation. Changes in methods of sharing information were highlighted, focusing on the initiation of the Listserv as a more efficient and less labour-intensive means of information exchange between Full members than the Monthly Updates.

Overall, it was noted that the various studies had not shared a common focus, and that the capacity of the Secretariat had presented a constraint in carrying forward a varied group of activities. These experiences have pointed to the necessity for ALNAP to develop a clearer focus in the activities it initiates and a more prioritised work programme.

The areas of 'learning' and 'accountability' were considered to offer the two most fruitful areas of focus for ALNAP's attention over the next 2-3 years, as these were seen to represent core concerns in improving performance within the international humanitarian system. Accountability was seen as particularly important because of the unusual complexity of the system, in terms of: number of actors; funding organisations; irregularity of funding; the responsibilities of different organisations; its operation in areas of weak governance or disputed sovereignty and the poorly developed international legal framework. The centrality of 'learning' to ALNAP's agenda and its links to work already undertaken was made explicit. Learning in the sector was prioritised for the following reasons: the event-based nature of the

system; the complexity of the contexts in which the system frequently operates; the heavy reliance upon expatriate personnel and their high turnover; the highly context-specific nature of individual operations and the particularities of the affected populations and their traditional livelihood systems. Though ALNAP was initially established to examine these areas more closely, the Secretariat wanted to clarify the members attitudes to the breadth of focus.

Other current and potential areas of work within ALNAP were considered. These included: keeping track of the evolution of the various codes and standard setting initiatives; social and ethical auditing; the Ombudsman Pilot Project; a potential study on 'lines of accountability' within the international humanitarian system; the notion of 'international duty bearers'; and preparing an annotated bibliography of useful texts on evaluation to be placed on the ALNAP website. A possible role for ALNAP could also be that of filtering relevant and useful information for the international humanitarian system from other literatures and domains on 'learning' and 'accountability'. It was mentioned that it would also be desirable for ALNAP to establish links with other organisations with related concerns. Such links have already been established with the Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability. Other institutes of interest are the Tavistock Institute (an action-research oriented organisation focussing on problems of institution-building), the UN Joint Inspection Unit based in Geneva, and management consultancies.

In bringing together knowledge in these sectors, ALNAP's unique standing within the system as an inter-agency forum was pointed out in relation to its capacity to examine issues of learning, accountability and organisational change in the international humanitarian system **as a whole**.

The prioritising of topics to be addressed was discussed, and the following list of suggested topics provided:

- i) Completing the Small Study 'Achieving Greater Commonality in Reporting Requirements';
- ii) Working up a 'Global Study' on Participation and Shared Social Learning with budget and proposed institutional arrangements;
- iii) Preparing series of annotated bibliographies on evaluation, learning, accountability and other subjects;
- iv) Deepening the analysis of learning in the food and nutrition sector;
- v) Extending the approach by initiating studies on learning in relation to other sectors;
- vi) Undertaking a study on 'lines of accountability' within the international humanitarian system and the notion of international duty bearers;
- vii) Exploring the potential value and likely use of social and ethical auditing approaches within the international humanitarian system.

Due to limitations on the capacity of the Secretariat, it was mentioned that only three or at most four of these activities would be undertaken in any year.

In the context of the explicit proposed focus on learning and accountability, the revision of some of ALNAP's objectives as stated in the 'Groundrules' document was suggested by the Secretariat. In particular, references to 'best practise' were considered inappropriate and misleading. As a result, the rewording of the original objectives, particularly the specific objectives, would be required.

The location of the Secretariat and its relationship to other activities within ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) were discussed. The advantages of its location were noted – in particular the Groups' objective research base, its access to other information networks in the sector, and its track record on humanitarian assistance evaluations.

In particular, the funding of the different activities within the group were given prominence. It was pointed out that ALNAP, the Relief and Rehabilitation Network (RRN) and other research and evaluation activities operated as separate activities with their own budgets. Three of the bilateral donor organisations funding ALNAP also support the RRN (DfID, Sida and Irish DFA), and each had expressed their preference for HPG to forge more explicit relationships between the two activities, including a broadening of the funding base. This was echoed in the HPG strategic review process and peer review conducted at the end of 1998. The principle outcome of this review process was a commitment to develop an HPG three year integrated programme during the coming year. It was emphasised that this would not alter the structures and procedures which ALNAP has developed over the last two years. Thus, the Steering Committee would continue to guide the activities of the Secretariat. However, it would be desirable for representatives of the ALNAP Steering Committee to also participate in the governance structure to be developed for HPG. It was highlighted that the views of the ALNAP Steering Committee and Full Members on the proposed development would be appreciated. The ALNAP Steering Committee would be kept informed of the discussions.

The budget for the financial year 1999-2000 was then discussed. In view of these developments, it was stated that ALNAP's budget had been prepared to cover the period FY 1999-2000, but was almost identical to the budget of FY 1998-1999. Principal areas of difference were the following: the creation of a full time post for the Reports Database Manager; a modest provision for literature searches and access to commercial journal databases; the provision of ten days input by the HPG Coordinator in the role of Chair of the meetings and in assisting the Coordinator in planning and setting directions. Thus, the total projected costs for FY 1999-2000 were estimated at £176,930.

### ***Questions and Discussion***

John Borton first asked the Steering Committee for comments in the light of the discussions at the Steering Committee meeting two days previously.

Bruce Jones suggested that ALNAP focus on active learning exercises, training and workshops so as to effectively help organisations learn. He proposed that a workshop following on from Annalies Borrel's study in the Food and Nutrition sector be arranged for workers in the sector, aiming to build methodology into study.

Andre Greikspoor observed that ALNAP had achieved a lot of good work, and mentioned that Members were able to benefit from the studies in an unanticipated way. He congratulated John Borton and the Secretariat on their hard work. He noted that only one study had not been completed, but stressed that many other studies had been developed and had contributed to greater understanding in specific areas. He said that ALNAP had shown sound judgement in choosing to prioritise subject areas and studies, and pointed out that Members would not be able to provide clear guidance in this area owing to their diversity and differing interests and priorities.

Margie Buchanan-Smith drew attention to the comments made during the Strategic Peer Review about ALNAP. She mentioned that ALNAP's institutional structure and processes were regarded as being critical to the way in which ALNAP has developed.

Andre Greikspoor remarked that it would be useful to examine the number of occasions where agencies and individuals have been able to establish contact, or make connections due to ALNAP and where this has led to project collaboration. He noted that as a whole this benefited the system in more ways than one.

The discussion was broadened to include Full Members. Two Full Members recommended that ALNAP 'keep it simple' and emphasise practical issues within the sector – methodology, tools, etc. Another proposed that ALNAP capitalise on the current recommendations from existing evaluations and their results. She added that these could be developed further and applied to other contexts, eg. Kosovo and Albania.

John Borton said that an attempt had been made to gather together evaluations undertaken of programmes in Bosnia with a view to making the lessons available to all agencies working in Kosovo and Albania but there did not appear to be so many evaluations undertaken of programmes in Bosnia and anyhow the context in Kosovo and Albania was proving very different. He agreed that the Secretariat needed to be more active in promoting contacts between different organisations in such large operations.

Bruce Jones suggested that these ideas should be teased out. He added that he could envisage ALNAP being more involved in the application of lessons learnt and in action-orientated learning, perhaps an action-learning meeting in Albania could be considered. John agreed to develop ideas along these lines.

Wayne MacDonald felt that the Secretariat's acknowledgement of its shortcomings and those of ALNAP were refreshing much appreciated, and agreed that a lot of good work had been achieved in 2 years. He concurred with John that ALNAP should focus on, and prioritise work to do with the issues of learning, accountability and the development of practical tools. He said the list of proposed work would encourage active as opposed to passive learning. He added that ALNAP's objectives needed to be reformulated in order to accord with this and the capacity of the Secretariat. He questioned the implications for ALNAP of the proposed HPG One-Programme Approach, with regard to ALNAP's identity and independence.

John responded that some issues still needed to be worked out by HPG, but emphasised that this would not affect Steering Committee or Membership decisions and was not anticipated as generating any conflict of interests between the ALNAP governance structure and that which was being considered for HPG. He explained that the Integrated-Programme Approach would mean that both the RRN and ALNAP would be able to help each other in terms of establishing wider networks and developing thinking on how the system learns. HPG viewed this change very positively – as being both complementary and creating good synergies. He stressed that ALNAP's voice would not be lost.

One participant who had previously worked in a donor organisation said that there had been uncertainty over where ALNAP's main outreach was in terms of departments within a typical donor organisation – evaluation, research, operations, etc. He recommended that the Secretariat make this very clear in their funding application, and that this be considered when thinking about ALNAP's future

direction. However, another participant cautioned against losing the cross cultural and cross departmental diversity which characterised ALNAP by focusing too much on the interests of a specific department.

Another participant congratulated the Secretariat for its achievements and commended the studies for being thoughtful and reflective pieces of work. He felt that the real challenge for the participants at this meeting was to take this work and the ideas and promote them within their own organisations. He asked how former studies were being utilised within the system, for example Tanya Spencer's work on Peace Building. He also asked whether John Borton's Vision paper would be available on the Web. He suggested that in 2 years time ALNAP conduct an external review of its work.

One participant questioned whether there was a role for ALNAP to tour around countries and stimulate workshops so as to participate more actively in the learning process. She drew attention to the valuable nature of the work being conducted, but asked how it was being disseminated.

Mihir Bhatt commented on what he has been able to learn from the ALNAP meeting and its activities, and been able to implement within DMI and the wider network in South Asia 'Duryog Nivaran'. These include the inclusive structure of the ALNAP forum and the range of actors represented and also knowledge of the Sphere Standards and of the Humanitarian Ombudsman projects. He felt that his organisation has gained immensely from its association with ALNAP.

John addressed the previous questions. On the 'marketing' of ALNAP he said that a text describing ALNAP's work would be published in the 1999 World Disaster Report, and that a leaflet was being prepared. He planned to visit Brussels and Washington DC so as to strengthen relations with ECHO and with the American agencies. Referring to the utilisation of the studies, he pointed out that ALNAP could only take the studies so far, but that copies of Tanya Spencer's study have been requested by a number of different organisations, and that all completed studies would shortly be available on the Web. He explained that ALNAP had until recently restricted its outreach so as to gauge its relationship to the sector. However, this will shortly be changing when the Listserv will be widened to include Observer Members, engaging ALNAP with a broader range of people. He felt that this discussion had been extremely helpful, and stimulating and helped demonstrate the value of such a process. He informed Members that this was Andre Greikspoor's last meeting as Chair of the Steering Committee, and thanked him for all the hard work he had put in over the last two years. He felt that having an NGO representative as Chair of the Steering Committee had conveyed a positive image of ALNAP's usefulness and proposed that Andre be retained as a Full Member of ALNAP during his studies.

The date of the next meeting was discussed. Though the exact dates were not fixed, it was decided to have the meeting in October 1999, and to coordinate dates with the RRN Advisory Group Meeting during the same month.

**RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION FORMS COMPLETED BY  
PARTICIPANTS AT THE 5<sup>TH</sup> ALNAP MEETING  
22-23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 1999**

16 forms were completed by participants. Of these, 3 were prepared by representatives of bilateral/multilateral donors, 5 by representatives of UN agencies/departments, 5 by representatives of NGOs, 2 by Red Cross representatives and 1 by an academic.

Donors	3
UN Agencies	5
NGOs	5
Red Cross	2
Consultants, Academics	1

Format of meetings/number of presentations

Too many presentations	5
About the right number	11
Too few	0
No comment	0

Results of the Usefulness/Relevance scoring of the main sessions and presentations

'Limited use' was given a score of 1; 'relatively useful' a score of 2; 'useful and relevant' a score of 3; 'very useful and relevant' a score of 4.

<b>Maximum possible score</b>	<b>64</b>
Progress Reports – Sphere, Ombudsman, People in Aid	45
PAHO – Evaluation of Preparedness and Response to Hurricanes George and Mitch	38
Report on Evaluation of WHO Peace-building Activities in Eastern Slavonia	38
Report on the Preliminary Findings of the ODI Study on Humanitarian Principles and their implications for Accountability and Effectiveness	50
Update on the Reports Database and the Results of the Listserv Questionnaire	37
Sentinel Community Surveillance and its Utility in Relation to Humanitarian Programmes	41
The Approach of UK NGOs to Involving the Affected Population: Findings from the ALNAP 'Add-On' to the DEC Sudan Evaluation	46
ALNAP Synthesis Study and Discussion of the proposed Global Study 'Towards Shared Social Learning for Humanitarian Programmes'	46
Institutionalising Victims Voices	29
Learning in the Food and Nutrition Sector	37
A Vision for ALNAP and its Future Work Programme	32



Was sufficient time allowed for ALNAP management matters?

Too little	0
About right	13
Too much	0
Don't know	3

Food/refreshment arrangements

Good	12
Adequate	4
Poor	0

Are you satisfied with the way ALNAP is developing?

Not satisfied	0
Satisfied	10
Very satisfied	3
Can't comment	3

Are you satisfied with the way the Reports and Evaluations Database is developing?

Not satisfied	0
Satisfied	9
Very satisfied	1
Can't comment	6

**Comments made in response to specific questions:**

In what ways do you think the Reports and Evaluations Database might be improved?

- Reports and evaluations do not represent an end in themselves.
- The advance sharing of reports and evaluations allowing sufficient time to read and comment on reports would be useful.

In what ways do you think ALNAP's structure and activities might be improved?

- Establishing closer links with academic networks like the Association of African Universities, Accra, Ghana.
- ALNAP needs to be more focused to enable higher level quality discussions to take place.
- 1) As an 'active learning network' ALNAP needs to concentrate on closing the performance engagement loop between evaluation and training. Training materials will probably be more useful than reports, perhaps 'best practise' and standards could include levels of training for field staff. 2) It continues to be important to firmly establish humanitarian assistance as a separate discipline.

- ALNAP should be more focused, and clearly spell out the value-added for member organisations.
- ALNAP should retain a practical issue/pragmatic approach focus.
- More NGO presence and participation should be encouraged, as should that of field practitioners. ALNAP work risks being marginalised if it is not published.
- 1) The focus on learning and accountability is timely. 2) More time to meet and interact with participants of the meeting in a social setting would be helpful, perhaps a second dinner could be organised.
- 1) Making the Listserv work. 2) A greater strategic sense to ALNAP's programme of work should be developed. It is good to be opportunistic, but the programme of work also feels a bit ad hoc. 3) A mechanism to encourage feedback from new ALNAP members, and to bring in the knowledge within/around their organisations would be useful.
- 1) There are too many presentations in too short a time, perhaps have fewer presentations and more time for questions and debate would be more appropriate. 2) Many of the presentations were too difficult to follow due to the speed at which they were presented.
- Meetings should be more discussion-oriented, focusing on a few issues which ALNAP has selected and coordinated beforehand.
- More work on 'tools/guidelines' would be useful.
- 1) Focus and consolidate rather than expand further. 2) Develop simple guidelines on best practise. 3) Restrict presentations at meeting to very few themes.

What key issues do you think ALNAP should prioritise over the next 12 months?

- Possible areas to investigate: joint assessment of needs in sudden impact disasters, when and how to sacrifice short-term response to long term objectives, post Mitch joint evaluation.
- Suggested topics: How to ensure accountability to affected populations, hard information of what works in practise in terms of participation/evaluation from an angle of recipients or intended recipients.
- Suggested topics: The evaluation of the programmes in Kosovo and Albania, utilising previous evaluation results in order to establish recommendations for the future, recognising the link between research and action.
- Comments under structure are probably important here. Indicators (and their use), and humanitarian principles ought to be developed into 1-2 day training programmes, with each topic having one structured day each.
- 1) Create mechanisms to encourage/facilitate the publication of experiences. 2) Encourage management 'buy-in' and create space and opportunities for institutionalising and operationalising programme learning.

- Learning, accountability and information technology.
- 1) Evaluation methodologies: local ownership/driving of the evaluation process, 2) More work on donor policy, in terms of processes of public accountability.
- 1) Beneficiaries participation and articulation of their voice. 2) Relation of standards/monitoring/evaluation, 3) Practical issues should receive priority – for example common reporting, collaboration on policy studies, evaluations, information sharing.
- 1) Accountability and its differing influence over performance. 2) Performance measurement tools and techniques, 3) How international humanitarian organisations can become learning organisations.
- Review of tools for project identification, planning, evaluation and monitoring at the field level.

Can you think of anyone from the North or South who really ought to be an ALNAP member who is not already either a full member or an observer member?

- It would be possible for Groupe URD to suggest contacts in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Try and keep the Full Member group tight and manageable.
- 1) Some form of Eastern European research or involvement, 2) ECHO – their participation needs to be pursued, perhaps Mukesh Kapila could be persuaded to encourage them in this regards, 3) Inter African Groups
- Larry Minear – Humanitarianism and War Project, Francis Deng- Brookings Institute, representative from VOICE/Brussels
- 1) International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Ottawa, Canada, 2) North-South Institute, Ottawa, Canada

#### Suggestions for improving the food and refreshment arrangements?

- Too much!
- Fruit availability appreciated. Tea a little unpleasant on the second day.
- None – good restaurant.
- More vegetarian sandwiches, and perhaps a cheeseboard
- Very good

#### Any other suggestions?

- Present the conclusions and recommendations of the post Mitch evaluation which will be conducted during the summer at the next ALNAP meeting.

- Following one topic in a structured way through one or two days may result in a more useful discussion and may enable the identification of an 'end product' from the meetings.
- More frequent exchanges between meetings would be helpful.
- ALNAP could act as a 'clearing house' for the evaluation of common responses, to encourage collaboration/optimum use of resources/dissemination of learning.
- Time to read the presentation papers prior to the meeting is limited, less volume of material should be sent.
- 1) Presentation papers and most of the presentations are too long (less paper – more pepper) – presentation papers should have maximum 1 page executive summaries, presentations should be limited to 15 minutes with the focus on discussing key issues with the group. 2) Meeting objectives should be established and assessed once the meeting has finished. 3) The overall approach should be less academic and more practical.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian assistance
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CIET	Community, Information, Empowerment, Transparency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DMI	Disaster Mitigation Institute
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ETC UK	Development Consultants
EU	European Union
FAO	(United Nations) Food and Agricultural Organisation
Groupe URD	Groupe Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HR	Human Rights
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UN)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council for Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IHE	International Health Exchange
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
LSE	London School of Economics
JPO	Joint Policy of Operations
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Development Agency
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PPHO	Principles and Protocols of Humanitarian Operations
RRN	Relief and Rehabilitation Network
SCF	Save the Children's Fund
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	United Nations World Health Organisation