Chapter

WAR IN CITIES: LESSONS LEARNT FOR THE NEW CENTURY OF URBAN DISASTERS

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ABSTRACT

The challenges encountered by the humanitarian sector in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) after the 12 January 2010 earthquake and in Lybian and Syrian cities in 2011/2012 underlined the difficulties of working in urban settings. Not only are urban settings complex, multi-layered and often dangerous, but they are also alien to mainstream humanitarian agencies. Technical solutions are often not at hand, and with their methods still largely based on rural contexts and camps, humanitarian organisations do not have sufficient understanding of urban contexts. In view of the challenges posed by increased global urbanization, the author calls for a paradigm shift in order to ensure that relevant humanitarian aid is being given in cities affected by war.

INTRODUCTION

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Rampant urbanization is without doubt one of the major challenges of our century. Cities are increasingly the scene of conflicts and extreme violence. Therefore humanitarian aid in urban settings will account for many of the new challenges facing humanitarian actors. The war in Mogadishu, the crisis in Abidjan and war in Libyan and Syrian cities have helped to draw attention to one of the greatest issues facing the contemporary world: its fragile cities and the conceptual and technical difficulties humanitarian actors face to operate in these very specific contexts.

In chapter 1, we will look at some historical aspects to put the future into perspective. In chapter 2, the key features of urban settings are analysed. Chapter 3 focuses on the most important aspects of the paradigm shift that is necessary in the sector. And finally, chapter 4 looks in greater detail at the challenges ahead.

1. A BIT OF HISTORY

Cities, wars and natural disasters have been inextricably linked since the earliest days of civilization (Braun, 1617). Increasing population density and wealth accumulation, two of the features of urban life (see Box No. 1), exacerbate the risk factors(of natural events or conflict) . The memory of humanity is full of images of ravaged cities. Centuries before modern history, there are examples of cities that were so badly affected by natural phenomena that civilizations vanished (Babylon) or were seriously shaken (Lebanon[1]). As the growing urbanization of the planet and increasing numbers of mega-cities accentuate the concentration of the human population in and around cities, there is an urgent need to look at these "fragile cities", which will soon accommodate over 80% of the world's population, and how the humanitarian sector can conduct operations in these situations. War and cities have long been associated in human history, but in different ways (see box N° 1 and 2).

The anti-colonial wars and conflicts of the Cold War were largely rural, as were most of the post-Cold War so-called "ethnic" conflicts. The last two centuries have involved predominantly rural conflicts, pushing urban vulnerability to the margin of analytical frameworks. Whether in Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia and Afghanistan), Africa (Somalia, Angola, Great Lakes Region, etc.) or Central and Latin America (Nicaragua and El Salvador), wars, disasters

[1] During the Byzantine period in 551 A.D a devastating earthquake destroyed Beirut and many coastal cities of Lebanon (known as Phonecia). It killed an estimated 30.000 people.

and humanitarian operations have often taken place in rural environments. Guernica, Dresden, and Hiroshima were soon forgotten. Even when cities were besieged during conflicts, such as the siege of Phnom Penh in the 70s or the siege of Huambo two decades later, the center of gravity of the wars were rural. However, urban wars made their comeback due to demographic, political and economic changes (Grunewald and Levron, 2004). Images of Mogadishu, Sarajevo, Grozny and Kabul were broadcast in the media: cities in ruins, displaced people surviving in buildings ravaged by bombs, streets lined with debris and combat helicopters flying overhead, bringing to mind the martyred cities of London, Dresden and Nagasaki. After being destroyed, a village in the bush, made of earth and plant matter, will either be engulfed by vegetation or will quickly be rebuilt with local materials. In contrast, after a war or an earthquake, the scars on a city will remain visible for a long time. The aid system has only begun to understand that urban contexts are of a specific nature and require specific approaches. It is interesting to review both the old texts on urban warfare and the growing body of literature emerging from more recent situations (Hopkins, 2010) and their humanitarian consequences. Urban warfare is a subset of military doctrine, characterised by the use of snipers and heavy artillery (a display of force aimed at redressing the balance of fire in favour of conventional armies as urban warfare is very much in favor of mobile small guerilla groups who know the terrain). This results in an extremely dangerous situation for civilians (Vautravers, 2010). The capacity to display force is a critical element of urban strategy, not only to win battles, but also to limit the numbers of casualties among one's own military. Urban warfare can have major consequences for civilians: the fighting takes place in the middle of densely inhabited neighbourhoods rather than on a battlefield, and combat tactics combine heavy shelling and street-to-street or even apartment-to-apartment search and kill operations. When armed clashes occur in cities, people's daily lives are directly affected, forcing them to take refuge in cellars, and making them afraid to go out to get water or food. The resilience of city dwellers is often extraordinary, but their suffering can also be extreme as seen in Misrata (Libya) and Homs (Syria).

1. THE FEATURES THAT MAKE CITIES SO DIFFERENT

This chapter explores how the characteristics of urban settings and of crises in cities affect the operational responses of aid agencies and challenge many of the methods and tools at hand. History is not linear. However, it is possible to distinguish several principle phases of the relationship between "cities at war and wars in cities".

Box N°1. Cities at war and wars in cities: a historical perspective

WARS BETWEEN CITIES: "Go tell the Spartans, passerby, that here, by Spartan law, we die". From the Trojan War to the defender of the Thermopylae pass, the first centuries of the history of humanity in Europe is full of stories of battles between cities, the seats of power and wealth. Wars were waged between cities… at least in Europe and the Middle East. We have less information as to events on other continents during this period. However, the Angkorian cities of South-East Asia, the Inca and Mayan pyramids and the monuments on the banks of the Nile show signs that also point towards wars being fought between cities. Urban archaeology in Sub-Saharan Africa is still in its infancy and the traces of unknown cities that have been revealed by satellite imagery appear to show a new geography of the city in Africa. How the draining effect of slavery slowed down urbanisation dynamics linked to the main commercial flows across the continent would be a fascinating area of research at a time when Africa is beginning to be affected by urbanisation.

WARS FOR CITIES: The second paradigm of city-based wars is related to the fortified citadels that were built in the period from several centuries B.C. till the Middle Ages. Fortified towns often had the role of protecting the rural population who would take refuge there when enemy armies and pillaging gangs began to ravage the countryside. The accumulation of wealth in cities and the power that this represented became sufficient reason for attacking and pillaging them; to conquer a city was to seize power. The history of Europe is tragically full of such events: glory for the winners and humiliation, burnt cities and desolation for the losers.

WAR BY MEANS OF THE CITY: The third paradigm of the relationship between cities and conflicts, that of conducting wars in cities as a means of winning wars outright, also gradually established itself as a method of conducting hostilities. Caesar's victory over Vercingetorix, following the famous siege of Alesia, is an example of this. Central to the German offensive and Soviet resistance during the Second World War was the issue of who would control Stalingrad. The same equation was present in the bombing of London by the Nazis, the destruction of Dresden by the Allies and the dropping of the two atomic bombs on the martyred cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

WAR AGAINST CITIES: The Maoist ideology and its various offshoots led to the appearance of the fourth paradigm, that of war against cities. For certain ideologues, cities were the source of all that was wrong with human societies, the place of perverse trade exchanges and consumerist ideologies, entities which were responsible for sullying an original rural purity. As such, cities were places which needed to be destroyed and represented socio-cultural forces which needed to be wiped out. Just how many Chinese and Cambodian city dwellers were forced to move to the countryside only to lose their lives there, is not known. In its struggle against the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Joseph Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) regularly used the rhetoric of the rural African population against the mixed-race elite of the cities.

WAR IN CITIES: A whole series of conflicts in recent years has led us to the fifth paradigm, that of the city as a place where confrontation takes place. The battlefields of certain contemporary civil wars have quite simply, and almost inadvertently, been urban contexts. The main phases of the Congo-Brazzaville conflict took place in the city of Brazzaville itself, bringing death and

destruction to its neighborhoods. But another phenomenon, that of population displacement, increasingly brings war to the heart of the city. Armed conflict leads to major exoduses, which create very complex refugee and IDP situations in or around urban centres. Entire regions are changed in the long term as a result, creating new relations between cities and rural areas.

Box N°2. The multiple dimensions of urban contexts

"Demographic" dimensions: Cities are places where there is a high concentration of people looking for protection and work. Cities are central to migration flows, whether internal (rural to urban movement) or external (the majority of international migration passes through networks of cities).
"Historic" dimensions: The creation and maintenance of the City has been subject to contradictory tensions between stability and change. Archaeology, and notably the use of satellite imagery, has helped us to become aware of the accumulation of urbanity on individual sites, often over a long period, and the changes which may have affected them: displacement, fission, osmosis, etc. Maps of the history of cities are rich in lessons about the adaptability and the inertia of societies.
"Environmental" dimensions: heightened population density, pressure on resources, difficulties in terms of managing waste, etc. – cities are affected by a wide range of environmental factors and will be subject to major challenges in the future.
"Economic" dimensions: Cities lead to the acceleration of social differentiation, heightened specialisation in professional activities and an increased flow of products being extracted from the countryside. Urban-rural exchanges have been one of the most powerful motors of societal change.
"Social" dimensions: Poor migrants from rural communities and young people hoping for greater opportunities move to urban areas, only to find that in the shanty towns of the mega-cities or in the often insalubrious suburban tower-blocks they quickly lose touch with their village roots. The loss of social ties and the breakdown of family-based solidarity can be partly balanced by other social mechanisms such as the creation of neighbourhoods based on people's origins or the sending of remittances back to home villages.
"Societal" dimensions: At the same time, new urban cultures are created, mixing elements related to social ties from villages and new dynamics related to the new centres of power: neighbourhood administration, political parties, gangs, etc. Cities are often characterised by their mixture of ethnic groups and clans, something which is a source of fragility in certain civil war contexts.
Political dimensions: "Paris is well worth a Mass". This declaration by King Henri IV of France summarises the political issues related to controlling cities. National capitals, provincial capitals and regional metropolises are all the seats of political and administrative power, competition over which can lead to armed conflict.

1.1. The Demographic Weight

In a city, everything is "big". Population figures often run into six figures. The impact of disasters or wars can be huge, overwhelming local capacities. The scale of all urban variables (demography, density, etc.) combined with politics can make cities very explosive. The evacuation of part or all of a city as part of a preventative measure can have such important political, logistical and security implications that national and town authorities often hesitate before engaging in

such actions. Contamination scenarios in urban settings are frightening due to the risk of the rapid spread of epidemics. The quantity of assistance required to respond to urban needs are enormous while the logistical constraints are often very difficult. The cost of reconstruction is far beyond the capacity of most agencies and often over and above the national budget of the affected country.

1.2. Electricity, Telecoms and City Halls: The Urban system

The specific characteristics of cities provide both constraints and opportunities. Three of these are worth analyzing in view of their possible impact on aid strategies.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, city life is often largely dependent on electricity. The first power plants supplying electricity to towns were built in the 1920s. National companies have developped engine-powered electricity generation and have often explored options for hydro-power (Nembrini, 1998). While power production became a key strategy for States in many developed countries, in many developing countriesm, production capacity was overwhelmed by demand and power cuts started to be regularly implemented. There was a multiplication of generators to supply lighting and energy for houses, hotels and shops as well as energy for water pumping. In particular, water production is totally dependent on electricity for both the large-scale complex submersible-pump systems as well as smaller-scale domestic-level production.. During many wars in cities, plants would have stopped working without support from aid agencies. ICRC and MSF give special attention to hospitals to ensure that they keep a certain level of autonomy in that sector. In case of a total collapse of the electricity system they want them to remain operational. In many contexts, the private sector also invested in the energy sector and manages to keep electricity running in parts of the city despite inter-factional confrontations. Keeping the city lighting and domestic-level energy supply functioning is often seen as critical for the survival of the city. IDPs however, rarely benefit from these services as they are relatively costly.

The desire to access information rapidly is also one of the characteristics of city life. Telecommunications, radio, local press, and access to TV networks has been a critical issue in most cities. Cellular telephone networks have developed rapidly in the last 20 years and are a full part of daily life, including for economic exchanges linked to money transfer systems and for keeping in touch with relatives in the diaspora. More and more installations to sell airtime, recharge cellular phones or access the internet are becoming available in many cities.

This represents a key asset for the aid system as it allows local actors to report and communicate and set up crowd sourcing mechanisms to triangulate information. This relatively sophisticated telecommunications set-up represents a still largely untapped alert mechanism for communicating with disaster-affected populations (both communication "in" with information about aid programmes and communication "out" with information about needs and difficulties) and for the dissemination of health and hygiene messages.

Municipal authorities are key players but are by and large ignored by aid agencies. This is partly due to fear of politicization and the risk of corruption, but it is more essentially due to ignorance of their roles, if not reluctance to include these essential urban actors. Studies in Kabul, Huambo, Mogadishu and Port-au-Prince, among others, (Grunewald et al., 2011) have shown that urban planning is much easier in areas where the military and security situation is safe and where aid agencies have an interlocutor, than in war-torn or devastated cities, where the urban institutions are either absent or disenfranchised by the crisis.

1.3. Constraints in Cities at War: Access, Security, UXO and Booby Traps

When leaving your house or protective shelter involves a high level of risk (especially during active military operations), access to basic resources such as water, wood, and food is immediately limited. This can have very serious repercussions for people's health and wellbeing. During phases of active military engagement in Sarajevo, Grozny and Mogadishu, the population tried to reduce risks to a minimum. Whenever, or wherever risk reduction was not seen as possible, the population immediately reacted by moving to safer areas. This is the case for many internal displacements within besieged cities or from the city to peri-urban or rural neighborhoods. At the same time, each opportunity to fetch water, wood fuel or food between military operations and periods of heavy fighting is used to its fullest potential so that the population is able to stock enough supplies to last until the next peaceful period.

A second critical issue is unexploded ordnances and booby traps. High intensity carpet bombing often leads to the significant presence of unexploded ammunitions. Urban guerilla warfare often consists of a mixture of ambushes, snipers, booby traps and mining of areas, either as a defense tactic or to make the opposing army's progress more difficult and dangerous.

The end result is a high risk situation for the population as well as rescue and humanitarian teams. Even prompt interventions have to be supported by

decontamination teams to ensure that emergency posts can be set up safely. The experience of Operation Licorn in Ivory Coast, but also the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Grozny or Mogadishu show how essential it is to have rapidly deployable decontamination squads who can clear mines, UXO and booby traps, allowing people to return to their neighborhoods.

Aid agencies need to be very agile, flexible and opportunistic to provide people with support in this type of situation. Current operational methods, which require lengthy planning and sophisticated accountability, do not work in these contexts.

These situations also affect the ability of aid actors to work and reach out to the affected populations. In many war-torn urban contexts, access remains the biggest obstacle. This was tragically underlined in Grozny during the first and second Chechen wars, and more recently in Misrata in Libya and in Syrian cities under siege. In Mogadishu, during the initial decade of the crisis (1991-2000), access was possible, but at a cost. During the 1991-1992 period, aid agencies accepted to work under the protection of armed militias from clans or wealthy political players and were unable to remove themselves from this system. It became both a modus operandi of humanitarian action in Somalia and a very lucrative business. The launch of the "War on Terror" (WoT) in the early 2000's drastically changed the situation. Western aid actors were seen as part of the WoT and therefore potential enemies. The multiplication of incidents in many areas (Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, etc.) resulted in aid agencies gradually reducing their physical presence there (Stoddartd A, Harmer A et al, 2009).

Despite this, essential items for survival continued to be distributed in cities by a limited number of actors who had the capacity and the credibility to do so. For a long time, ICRC and MSF have been among the few agencies who are still managing to maintain a presence in these difficult urban contexts, together with a handful of very dedicated "Dunantist" NGOs.

With the radicalization of the anti-western discourse in many asymtric conflicts , remote management, either through local NGOs or through national staff of international agencies, became the main operational method. Access has been further limited by conflicts linked to irredentism and fundamentalism. The conflicts between the Taliban and the NATO International Security Assistance Force and between the troops of al-Shabaab and the African Union Mission in Somalia are making Afghan and Somali cities more dangerous than ever. Until recently, aid actors visiting Mogadishu limited their movements to the airport and the AMISOM base, which is only accessible with heavy armed escorts. For the few agencies who remained involved in aid in Mogadishu, the only information they could get came from local staff who had to use the internet,

cell phones or had to go to Nairobi. Similarly, in Kabul and Kandahar, the aid community lives entrenched in a bunkerized environment. This means that needs assessment, targeting, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluations have to be carried out either by means of indirect control mechanisms (video, photos, triangulation with different sources) or have to be completely delegated to local actors.

1.4. Rapidly Changing Contexts

The dynamism of urban systems is such that they react very rapidly to improvements after a crisis. This was the case in post-al-Shabaab Mogadishu and in post-Gbagbo Abidjan where the following changes were observed:

- garbages were cleared rapidly, linked with the rapid identification of where to dispose it of;
- basic private services and economic activities were resumed,
- attemps were made to clean up war debris, with all the difficulties that this entails.

However, this sense of "returning to normality" can easily be destroyed by renewed conflict.

2.METHODOLOGICAL AND TECHNICAL ISSUES FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In order to identify and respond to the needs of affected people in urban settings, aid agencies face a wide range of methodological and technical issues in their different operational sectors.

2.1. Civil Protection and Urban Search and Rescue: Dealing with the Living and the Dead in the Middle of Rubble

For a long time, the main operational actors in urban disasters were fire brigades and civil protection teams, particularly the very specialized Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams. Increasingly well trained and equipped, USAR teams mix fire-fighting techniques (fire-fighting, extracting people, from rubbles, first aid), engineering skills (entering damaged buildings and

organizing searches in areas full of unstable debris), specialized detection techniques (dog units, infra-red and micro camera search devices) and interaction with deeply affected and worried people. USAR teams have saved many people and retrieved many bodies to facilitate mourning. In developed countries, specialized civil protection teams represent the first line of intervention in urban disasters. In many developing countries, these structures exist but are far less well trained and equipped. Several mechanisms now exist to provide them with support, assist in rescue operations and coordinate international responses. An example of these is the United Nations Disaster, Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC). UNDAC has a solid methodology (Guidelines developed by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group or INSARAG), a comprehensive information management system which uses the Virtual On-site Operational Coordination Center, (V-OSOCC) and the capacity to rapidly deploy stand-by staff from the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) and UNDAC member countries. In addition, it is often able to provide assessment and coordination mechanisms to support national disaster management agencies and internationally deployed teams (Larson, 2011).

Despite their qualifications UNDAC and INSARAG have not really been tested in war-affected urban contexts. Search and rescue activities are hard to carry out under fire. Searching for people during or just after shelling is made even more difficult by the possible presence of UXO and the risk of booby traps.

2.2. Identification, Quantification and Targeting

Humility is required when working in urban contexts such as Sarajevo, Huambo, Mogadishu or Kabul due to the number of variables that we know nothing or very little about and with a significant margin of error[2]. The estimated size of urban populations has at least a 10 to 20% margin of error: we do not know how many inhabitants were living in the city before the war or disaster, or how many have died, so how can we know how many are left? Knowledge about the scale of movements into, out of or within an affected city is never very precise. The best we can do is to extrapolate numbers based on limited observations and working hypotheses.

[2] The recent debate on the number of slum inhabitants in Nairobi (Kenya), where access to the field to generate data is much easier than in Mogadishu, shows how complex and sensitive these issues are.

Even the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FNSAU), one of the most sophisticated mechanisms for monitoring contexts, fails to properly acknowledge this limitation. The size of the population of Mogadishu is therefore not known. Estimates of malnutrition rates in the city are, at best, based on limited knowledge and patchy information. One of difficulties is to ensure proper disaggregation of the data by population strata. In cases marked by the existence of different waves of displacements to, from and within urban settings over an extended period, variations can be huge and need to be analyzed.

The last study on malnutrition rates among the Mogadishu IDP population does not discriminate between old (from the early phases of the Somali crisis in the 90s) and new IDPs (displaced by the war and drought of 2011 and 2012). The combination of the two populations in one single rate is a methodological error as the two categories are different, with different situations and needs. However, despite some methodological hiccups, FNSAU is the best assessment tool currently available in the absence of proper field access and it produces useful planning assumptions.

Various tools have been used to try to map and quantify populations. One of the most effective involves the use of remote sensing data, combined with "ground truthing"[3] (e.g. the use of precise satellite images to count the huts in Afgoye in Somalia).

Targeting is another extremely difficult exercise in urban contexts and a simple error can rapidly become a security issue.

"Self targeting" is one option, particularly for food and cash-for-work programmes. Only those who really need it come to such low-paid jobs. Several agencies are fully engaged in this strategy in Mogadishu. However, the approach which is currently used most widely to target populations is "area and site targeting". Very often actors choose an IDP site and then provide assistance to its entire population, rather than using time-consuming and sensitive socio-economic targeting.

[3] Validation in the field of observations made from satellite images.

2.3. Health

This section will explore the key challenges of health services in war-torn and devastated cities. Though health services represent a key element of the response, they are faced with many existing and future challenges.

2.3.1. Health Issues in an Open Conflict

Open conflicts in urban settings can lead to significant numbers of wounded people. Managing bullet and shell wounds requires certain skills and an appropriate surgical set up including surgeons, anesthetists and nurses, with a proper energy supply, blood reserves and the capacity to provide the required care and keep basic aseptic conditions. Historically, this is mainly done through the work of the ICRC and MSF in a limited number of hospitals which manage to remain accessible during the confrontation. In fact, the key element of the strategy here is often to ensure that any single opportunity to replenish stocks was used to ensure that a minimal capacity remains in place to cope with difficult times. Despite this, blood is often crucially missing. The main challenges in large-scale military operations in urban settings are the scale of needs (the wounded are often in their thousands), the time factor in terms of getting wounded people out of the rubble or in the streets, and the fact that these situations immediately induce complex triage and treatment needs (e.g. crush syndrom). The experiences in Bosnian, Palestinian and Libyan cities underlined some of these key challenges.

The capacity to save wounded people is directly linked to the time required to get them to the suitable health service. This often requires stabilization skills and evacuation capacities. Both are often crucially missing when cities become active battle fields or are devasted by a large-scale disaster. Saving lives is also linked to the availability of blood, which is often very limited when there is no functioning blood bank. This results in high mortality rates and people arriving at hospitals with infections so severe that amputation is the only option.

2.3.2. The Impacts of War on the Structure of National Health Systems

The public health systems are by and large structured around a truncated referral system from the village level health post to the national health standards. Larger towns, especially capital cities, are the normal central reference. They are usually well equipped with functioning operating rooms, obstetric wards, laboratories, and curative systems. In war contexts, particularly protracted wars, this equipment is often damaged or badly maintained and there are often limited supplies.

The higher level of the reference pyramid is therefore dramatically affected and unable to provide the services it is supposed to. The top of the public health pyramid in Mogadishu comprises the ICRC-supported Keysaney hospital for war traumas, and the SOS hospital for children and mothers. The latter hosts several services including Outpatient Department (OPD) (200 consultations/day), obstetric surgery, nutrition and Tuberculosis services. Well maintainted and supplied (with financial support from DG ECHO), it played a critical role as one of the few facilities that could manage a large increase in war-related surgeries. Impressive work was done in the early 2000s by a group of 4 Italian Nuns with a team of dedicated and competent Somali medical and paramedical staff. The total or partial destruction of these functioning services has often had significant repercussions to the overall heath sector nationwide. The main laboratories for diagnosis, the principal surgical units, and the top of the reference pyramid in obstetric care are missing and limiting the capacities of the care health system to respond to needs.

2.3.3. Health Issues in Congested Environments: Protracted Urban IDP Crises

The sanitary conditions in cities affected by war or natural disasters are a major threat, especially when there are a large number of IDP camps of all shapes and sizes and high population density. People face numerous health risks with potentially high impact due to overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation and the ineffective protection against extreme climatic events provided by most shelters. TB is likely to be prevalent, due to the use of tarpaulins for temporary shelters, particularly when these are erected in overcrowded locations. Diarrhea is also a frequent problem, sometimes reaching cholera levels. This, of course, is directly linked to the appalling sanitary conditions in which many IDPs and urban populations live in destroyed cities. There is a high risk of cholera epidemics, malaria is also a recurrent problem, with a lot of seasonal and geographic variations, and measles is one of the most deadly child killers in cities. The prevalence of immediate post-natal deaths among both children and mothers is directly related to the lack of capacity to take care of complicated childbirth. In the past, the public health programmes of aid agencies often mainly targeted IDPs in camps. This still happens, as is the case for the programmes being run by the Turkish and Emirati Red Crescent Societies (Grunewald, 2011) in the new IDP camps in Mogadishu. However, when health assistance is being provided to IDPs, there is often a need to extend it to the surrounding population. Indeed, increasing the number of health facilities in camps while the surrounding urban population does not have access

to any is both unfair and a source of security problems. Can the distribution of health services be made more structured with the development of an "urban health map"?

2.4. Food Aid and Resource Transfers

Hunger has often been used as a weapon in wars waged against cities. Besieged cities have been forced to surrender due to food blockades. Food shortages and speculation on local markets can lead to a rapid rise in food prices.

- In war contexts, people try to stock food whenever there is a break in hostilities.
- In drought-affected contexts, the shortage of food itself induces price increases which is often further increased by speculation;
- Both situations (see above) can induce weight loss among the adult population and can lead to a serious deterioration in the nutritional status of children, specially the Under 5 category.

In the last 20 years, several Food Aid strategies have been used in urban contexts, each of them having their pros and cons.

Classical food aid distribution (dry rations): This type of food aid remains the most frequently used. However, in many contexts, it has proven to be extremely difficult, both in terms of targeting the right people and implementing an efficient logistical system from the point of loading to distribution sites. The "losses" along the roads (tax at checkpoints), the high price to pay to the "gate keepers" who control the logistical hubs (especially the ports and airstrippes) make the whole process risky. In adition, to identify the proper beneficiaries, to ensure that they receive their entitlement and to monitor the final impact of the these programmes are often difficult endeavour. Even a shortened chain with an airlift does not fully limit all the risks. Most of the time, it is very difficult to obtain a balanced ration (with cereals, beans and oil) and beneficiaries of dry rations often get only maize, rice or Corn-Sorghum Blend (CSB). In specific contexts, such as Former Yugoslavia, food parcels have been designed to meet the specific cooking and eating habits of urban populations, including canned food and food which is easy to prepare in urban apartments, etc.

The distribution of cooked meals (wet rations): This approach was central to the ICRC's operational approach in the early 90s in Somalia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. This type of food aid is much more difficult to steal than dry

rations. Who would dare to steal a 200 liter drum full of boiling porridge? Who would raid an urban cantine for the elderly ?

Subsidized bakeries: As the key factor is often the difference between what people *can* pay and what they *have to* pay due to food shortages and speculation, there have been regular attempts to interfere with the value of basic food items, such as bread, through subsidies (by making flour free or reducing its cost, or by providing financial support for its production). The production and distribution of bread in subsidized bakeries in Kabul was a key factor in helping the city's inhabitants to survive during the siege of the city between 1992 and 1995.

Food vouchers and cash transfers help to enhance local purchasing power and encourage local traders to bring in more food at affordable prices. In Somalia, for example, these have been successful in giving families access to food and other essential items on the local market. Families are targeted, listed and receive vouchers that they can exchange with items chosen in a list with specific traders. Then these traders come to the agencies and get paid. This process transfers the risk from the agencies to the traders, who are better equipped and connected to deal with it. It also limits the logistic complexities. However, there are some difficulties further upstream (needs assessments and targeting) and further downstream (monitoring and impact evaluation).

Urban and peri-urban agriculture programmes: managing food security in urban contexts through urban and peri-urban agriculture is a process that can be traced back to the urban workers' gardens of the industrial revolution and, in times of war, to the Walker Plan in Switzerland during World War II, when all available green spaces were used to produce food. ICRC made it an integral part of its response in the cities of former Yugoslavia, in besieged Kabul in the early 1990s and even in African contexts such as in the peri-urban *barrios* of Huambo (Angola). Seeds distributed by the ICRC in Sarajevo, for instance, were even grown on the top of buildings and on balconies during the years of the siege. More recently, NGOs developed ingenious programmes in the slums of Nairobi after the post-electoral violence and in the fast-growing periphery of Juba in South Sudan.

Working with market forces: market forces are very dynamic in monetized urban economies, from small-scale vegetable retailers to large grain traders, Small-scale trade was up and running again only a few days after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince. Harnessing this energy is essential. Demand can be supported via cash and voucher programmes. Supply can be supported by securing entry points and facilitating the flow of goods. But this is only one aspect of the issue and is not without side effects. In Somalia, for instance, the military fleet

protecting the sea traffic that supplies Mogadishu is seen as an act of war by opposition forces. The other aspect is convincing the business community and traders that money is available and demand is high, so that they can do business. A few agencies are exploring the use of market mechanisms to improve the availability of goods in parallel to facilitating access through cash injection.

2.5. Water and Sanitation: The Urban time bomb

High-density urban systems with limited sanitation are "high risk areas" in terms of public health. Surveillance and highly reactive epidemic control mechanisms should be in place, but this is very difficult in most cities affected by disasters or war. Therefore, the priority should be to establish a safe water supply and limit sanitation risks.

2.5.1. Water in Cities: Pipes, Public Water Points and Water Trade

Three elements characterise of water systems in urban contexts: High population density results in high demand, which often surpasses the capacity of local traditional wells. The organization and economy of cities mean that cost recovery is feasible and water is something that people are willing to pay for. The production and distribution of water requires energy (electricity, thermic engine pumps) and can be run either publicly or privately or with a mixture of both public and private. Public water services, water boards, private companies and small business are the key actors in this sector.

A simple, but extremely costly option, which is often chosen to supply quality water to urban populations, is water trucking. In Port-au-Prince, as in many other urban contexts, water trucks continuously supplied water to bladders and all kinds of other reservoirs. Water treatment is closely scrutinized and, in most instances, it is of good quality. In many war or disaster affected cities, local surface or drilled wells are part of the solution. These are critical, for example, in Kabul, Mogadishu and Kisangani.

The most effective option is to ensure that the city water system functions properly.However, rather than the simple technology required to drill surface wells, or even deep wells, this often entails technically complex solutions for distribution systems with long distance pipes, pressurization, elevated tanks, etc. Typical NGO staff who work in Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) do not have the necessary qualifications for this and it is therefore necessary to explore other rosters for civil and electrical engineers and water network specialists.

The key stumbling blocks with regard to the functioning of water systems are often to be found in the energy supply (power cuts often mean no water), in the availability of spare parts to keep the engines functioning and in the availability of chemicals to properly manage water quality. These issues are not only present in crisis-torn cities as they affect all cities. But in times of war or disaster, aid agencies should treat them as a priority. Since its early work in Sarajevo and Mogadishu in the early 90s, the ICRC has developed extensive experience, which has been further tested more recently in Bagdad (Nembrini, 2004) and Lybia. For example, the first things the water company requested after the war in Abidjan were the chemicals and spare parts they needed to resume the water supply in the city. As it is a city that is prone to cholera epidemics, the ICRC supplied a large quantity of chemicals to make sure that potable water was rapidly available.

2.5.2. Sewage, Latrines and Paper Bags: Managing Urban Black Waters

When they exist, the sewage systems in many cities often date back to the colonial period. These have often been upgraded, but rarely to the point that they can match the needs of the growing urban population. Therefore, in many cities, a large part of the urban sanitation system is based on individual septic tanks in house compounds, which are cleaned out by specialized people (e.g. the *Bayakou* in Port-au-Prince) or by private companies equipped with gully sucker trucks. Poverty, lack of maintenance, wars and natural disasters often leave these tanks in a seriously deteriorated state, leading to pollution of underground water.

When displaced people move to cities and set up camps, surface latrines are established, which have to be emptied regularly and are a health hazard. However, in many IDP settlements, there are no latrines at all. For IDPs who settle in former government buildings or in private compounds or along roads, sanitation remains the number one problem. In Port-au-Prince, the difficulties of digging classical pit latrines and the sheer amount of people led to thousands of plastic chemical latrines being imported, which were extremely expensive to maintain. In certain parts of Mogadishu, it is very difficult to dig latrines because of the sand and the fact that the water table is very high and would rapidly be in contact with the contents of the latrine. Cholera occurs frequently during certain seasons (mainly the hot season). Action contre la Faim (ACF) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) ran regular chlorination campaigns in Mogadishu wells but their impact was probably limited.

New initiatives have been developed to deal with this challenge: dry latrines or collective latrines connected to a biogas digester in Port-au-Prince and in the

jails of Kigali, and organized systems for the use and collection of "peepoo"[4] bags in the slums of Nairobi. But a lot of Research and Development is still required in this sector to innovate and develop approaches which are appropriate for affected urban populations.

2.6. Shelter, Habitat and Urbanism

One of the characteristics of urban contexts is the density of buildings and their spatial organization along roads. Wars and earthquakes leave piles of rubble or empty streets bordered by bullet marked walls. Recreating a protective environment in these situations is challenging.

2.6.1. Tarpaulins and T-Shelters

After a siege, carpet bombing, a counter-insurgency operation or a disaster in an urban context, the population often very rapidly tries to see what can be recycled from the debris of their destroyed houses to establish shelters of some kind. In classic aid responses tarpaulins are distributed, and more recently, tents. These are essential to protect inhabitants from the sun, the rain and the dust, and if provided in sufficient quantity they can be used to create a space which provides both protection and a bit of privacy (walls and a roof). However, living conditions in these tents or tarpaulins is extremely difficult: lack of ventilation creates very hot conditions, they are often not fully water tight, and they increase the spread of respiratory diseases. In addition, shelters of this kind are extremely fragile in relation to strong winds and hurricanes. It is therefore important to quickly get people out of these makeshift shelters.

2.6.2. From a Box to Sleep In to a Place to Live

Debates about whether to favour T-shelters (transitional shelters which are supposed to last a few months), or the construction of permanent houses are among the hottest in the humanitarian sector. Very often, the T shelter strategy is based on kits, often plywood boxes which often last much longer than expected. As the transition tends to last a long time in the shelter sector, some agencies are trying to move straight from emergency plastic sheeting to the seeds of what can become a permanent house.

[4] The «peepoo bag» system was developed by NGOs in areas where there was no sewage system. Bags are used to collect excreta at the family level and are then collected and sent to a common bag disposal system.

But too often, social and cultural issues are not taken into account: the need for a veranda, the orientation of the T-shelter vis-à-vis the wind and rain, the position of the latrines or the kitchens, etc, are often overlooked.

2.6.3. Land Tenure and Land Use Rights

Overlapping modern and old, written and traditional tenure rights held by communities, the State or individuals mean that the legal situation is extremely complex in certain cities. While land and occupancy rights are often more or less well regulated in city centers, this is much less the case in peri-urban areas, where there is often conflict between private speculators and the state, unless they come to some agreement, which then opens the door to all kinds of corruption.

As seen in Sri Lanka after the Tsunami (Grünewald, 2005, TEC, 2006) and in Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake (Levine et al., 2012, this is a stumbling block for aid responses and disaster prevention policies, and is a thorn in the side of reconstruction strategies: Who owns the land ? How can reconstruction grants be given to people with insecure land tenure ? What can be done to ensure that displaced people are not forcefully evicted from their camps?

3. THE EMERGING CHALLENGE: DISPLACEMENT TRIGGERED URBANIZATION

Displacement triggered urbanization is a regularly occurring demographic phenomenon after crises (Jansen, 2011). For example, quiet villages on the Thai side of the Khmer-Thai border absorbed aid actors and illegal refugees and became bussling towns, like Aranyaprathet.

In Darfur, the urbanization which came as a result of the concentration of IDPs around Nyala, El Fashir, El Genina and Morley was predicted as early as 2004 (Grünewald 2004) and represents one of the most complex challenges that the Darfur and North Sudanese authorities will have to deal with (Buchanan-Smith et al, 2009).

The same phenomenon is already happening in Jordan with Iraki refugees and is likely to happen at the border with Libya if the crisis does not come to an end rapidly.

However, despite the reality of the urbanization, some critical characteristics of a “city” are missing, both in Dadaab and in the Chad (Gallego, 2009) and Darfur IDP camps:

- city governance and real city institutions;
- public services;
- a city-based economy;
- a history and sense of identity.

In terms of governance and services, there are many different types of governance issues simultaneously at stake in camps (local, political, technical or administrative). Camps are managed by internationally mandated agencies, not by local and municipal authorities. For instance, in Dadaab, (Somali refugee camps in Kenya), the camps are run by UNHCR. A Kenyan district officer is in charge of refugees as the representative of the central government, but not of territory and land issues.

In most similar situations, there are all kinds of refugee institutions which act as the interface between the UNHCR system and the refugees, but these have no real power. Most social and technical services are delivered by aid agencies often funded by UNHCR. The refugees have free access to Health, Water, Sanitation, Education, etc. programmes which are implemented by a wide range of International NGOs. The INGOs report to UNHCR and their donors and therefore have very little incentive to engage strategically with the refugees.

The economic situation in these "quasi cities" is very complex and extremely fragile. In Dadaab (Horst, 2008), in Lebanon and in most similar situations involving large and protracted concentrations of refugees, the authorities of the host country limit refugees' employment options. Food and non-food items are distributed to the refugees for free, but they are prevented from working by Kenyan, Thai or Lebanese law (Grunewald and de Geoffroy, 2008).

While the refugees are dependent on the international assistance made available to them by the aid agencies, a very active illegal but tolerated "private sector" always develops, covering many of the needs not covered by aid, including in cultural and social sectors. This informal economy often includes the selling of electronics and "air time" (connection units for mobile telephones) in addition to products of all kinds, vegetables, milk and meat and the running of video parlors and coffee shops. It is fuelled by money from remittances, incentives from NGOs, and trade with the surrounding communities (Horst, op cit).

Over the years, the Somali refugees in Dadaab managed to keep and develop very strong relations with the Diaspora (many of them having transited through Dadaab camps before reaching their country of asylum). But a second

economic aspect of long-term, large-scale camps is the creation of economic relations with the host community. For example, in Dadaab, a complex economic system was established between the refugee population and nearby communities (Grunewald, 1987). The selling of food aid to the local population explains why prices around Dadaab are far below prices in other parts of the Arid Land zone.

Though many agencies are now very experienced in meeting people's main physical needs in camps (managing latrines, water distribution points, health posts and medical wards), this has not prepared them to face long-term urban challenges linked to protracted displacement close or within urban settings.

How should a humanitarian response address vulnerabilities in a context where there is illegal but ongoing urbanization? The social and individual damage caused when there are no jobs and few prospects for the future is a significant challenge which, so far, has only been addressed marginally.

How can the grid system implemented by UNHCR be replaced by a spatial organization which is more adapted to community life? The new camps in Dadaab which were established in the context of the 2011 drought, Camp Corail in the north of Port-au-Prince and the relocation camps set up in the Philippines after typhoons Ketsana and Ondoi are all based on the "Roman military camp grid". This system probably makes logistics easier for aid agencies, but it creates a rather inhuman setting for the inhabitants.

Another issue is the absence of exit strategies. While entry points for the deployment of assistance to refugee camps are relatively obvious and well defined (war, inter-community confrontation, natural disasters), "exit strategies" are more problematic. Long-lasting displacements, such as in Pakistan, Chad and Darfur, have resulted in previously rural populations adopting urban ways of life. This will have long-term consequences that have to be properly addressed.

4. POST CRISIS PHASES IN URBAN SETTINGS

Linking relief, rehabilitation and development is a critical challenge in crisis-affected urban settings. Indeed, after the destruction comes the time to rebuild and humanitarian actors are faced with the terribly slow engagement of development institutions. The stakes are high, because the resources and policies used to rebuild cities after disasters or wars are extremely costly, often complex and always uncertain. But the absence of engagement or its slow pace places humanitarian actors in a difficult situation and they often have to stay longer and engage in activities outside of their mandate and know how. In Kabul, unauthorized reconstruction with no master plan is gaining ground due to political indecision, corrupt managers and competition between donors. The debate, especially within international financial institutions, is based on a technocratic vision that does not take people, social diversity and the existence of the informal sector into account. By the time everyone wakes up, there may be nothing left but a disfigured, unmanageable city.

The first step in a city devastated by an armed confrontation is to ensure proper decontamination. Battle area clearance is not a job for amateurs and requires qualified teams to be carried out properly. Unprofessional decontamination processes just put the fate of the returning population and service deliverers in danger.

At the end of a crisis period, a number of phenomena are often clearly visible but do not attract attention from either the national authorities or international aid agencies. The most important of these concerns demographic issues. Aid itself creates complex pull and push factors, attracting more people to urban areas. Rural exodus, which may have been stemmed by conflict is often reactivated during the post crisis era, while refugees return home as part of end of war agreements. In Afghanistan, for example, the rural exodus was slowed down by the Soviet invasion in 1979, but refugees in Pakistan and Iran are returning to Kabul rather than their rual homes, having spent too many years in urbanized camps. The population of Kabul has exploded, rising from barely 2 million in the mid 90s to perhaps 4 million in 2006 (Boyer, 2007). The outskirts of the city has become covered with buildings of all shapes and sizes, with absolutely no overall planning scheme. There are winners in a crisis: war or disaster entrepreneurs, those who manage to rent a house to aid workers or those who manage to divert part of the aid. These people often become “big urban players”.

Reconstruction budgets are huge, political issues complex and appetites whetted. Most of the time, reconstruction processes are happening without much planning. Some cities such as Beirut and Managua have rebuilt themselves with very little international aid, with practically no town-planning blueprint and on a private basis supported by the Diasporas. This absence of proper urban planning can have catastrophic consequences: disfigured landscapes (depriving the cities of the opportunity to develop a tourist industry), disorganized services and no account taken of building standards. The reconstruction of Kabul is currently one of the insteresting stories of post-Taliban Afghanistan. As of early 2002, with its heavy concentration of international aid, Kabul acted as a magnet for many agencies arriving in Afghanistan. Then, at the beginning of 2003, when it was realized that aid was staying in Kabul and not contributing towards rebuilding the rest of the country, there was a massive flow of funds to the countryside. So many questions had to be raised: where to find water, how to manage sewerage, rubbish collection, establishment of health and education services, collection of taxes and so on. Yet, in the mid 2012, the Ministry of Urban affairs gave a new impetus to the process, with it Kabul 2030 Action plan. The reconstruction of Grozny, which began in some areas before the conflict was over and has progressed at an incredible pace in recent years, is obviously being pushed ahead for political reasons. There are undoubtedly important technical and town-planning issues to consider: whole districts will need to be bulldozed because incessant bombing has weakened the infrastructure and foundations of buildings. Rebuilding things as they were would mean rebuilding the ugly barracks of socialist Grozny, but how can you consult people about what they want when they do not recognize the existing government?

In many contexts, the few major donors taking an interest in the subject of urban resoncstruction (UN HABITAT, World Bank) have found themselves blocked by internal disputes within the municipal authorities and by the constantly changing situation, with new problems arising practically every day. Another classic phenomenon is the clash between traditionalists and modernizers. Some want to make destroyed cities into Manhattan, with skyscrapers, huge shopping centres and motorway interchanges, while others seek to preserve the image of a city on a human scale.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

There is growing urbanization in the world and people in cities are increasingly faced with the destructive effects of conflicts. The skills needed in the aid sector to cope with these situations are still in a state of development. Civil societies, NGOs, UN agencies and institutions from the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent must engage actively in the debate with international donors about these issues. The following key points need to be addressed:

- Insecurity and danger are major characteristics of urban contexts affected by conflicts. Hostilities often leave behind contaminated areas which require intensive and costly battle area clearance (BAC) and an absence of law and order. It therefore becomes "mission critical" to manage the security of the population, the administration and aid actors.
- As crises in cities call for complex socio-technical solutions, what should be done to ensure that there is proper dialogue with municipal institutions and the city population?
- Urban contexts involve technical and organizational challenges in relation to classical humanitarian practices. How should the aid sector develop its "urban lens" and diversify the content of its toolbox to ensure that the solutions it provides to affected urban populations are technically sound, socially appropriate and do not have too many negative side effects?
- Humanitarian aid in urban settings may mean that humanitarian organizations will have to recruit staff from the urban sector and establish alliances with urban sector organisations: what should the aid sector do to engage more strategically with the urban sector, and with cities who might have ideas, competences and even resources to allocate to their sister cities affected by crises?
- Rebuilding cities razed by earthquakes or destroyed by bombs poses a fundamental question about how much better and safer the new city should be. How prepared should the services in charge of disaster management be? How prepared should the population be in case another conflict or disaster occurs?

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