

Introduction

John Mitchell

Institutional Capacity Building

Ian Christoplos

Lessons Learned: Darfur

Larry Minear

Meta-evaluation

Peter Wiles

**ALNAP REVIEW OF
HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN 2004**
Capacity Building

Editor Nina Behrman

Authors

Chapter 1 John Mitchell

Chapter 2 Ian Christoplos

Chapter 3 Larry Minear

Chapter 4 Peter Wiles

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For further copies of this publication, please contact:

ALNAP
c/o Overseas Development Institute
111 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JD
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300
Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399
Email: alnap@odi.org.uk
Website: www.alnap.org

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Preface

Last year ALNAP remembered the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide by focusing on how the lessons of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR) had been applied in recent emergencies. The Joint Evaluation made recommendations on both the timely mobilisation of humanitarian action and the ongoing struggle to address medium- and longer-term needs. It is appropriate therefore that this year's *Review of Humanitarian Action* takes stock of lessons learned and applied in these areas.

This year's evaluation synthesis (Chapter 3) focuses on Darfur. The findings make sober reading, and the fundamental message is that the international community failed to mobilise humanitarian action commensurate with humanitarian need. This failure was brought about by a combination of political and logistical difficulties, many of which were chillingly reminiscent of the famines in Ethiopia and Sudan in 1984–85 and the Rwanda genocide in 1994.

Despite the failure in Darfur, the synthesis more positively reveals that some lessons had been learned from the Rwandan experience, and acted upon. Within UN agencies and NGOs alike, there was a better understanding of international responsibility, human rights and civilian protection, and increased attention to issues of advocacy, impact and accountability. In addition, the use of real-time evaluations (RTEs) allowed greater potential for making programme changes on the ground. This year's evaluation synthesis brings out these points, and continues to provide the sector with a useful barometer for humanitarian performance.

Longer-term aspects of humanitarian action are considered in Chapter 2, on the theme of capacity building. Previous ALNAP Reviews of Humanitarian Action have highlighted how the system is usually not successful in delivering longer-term benefits to affected communities. Chapter 2 this year helps to explain why this is the case by revealing several inconsistencies in how the subject has been conceptualised in the past. Importantly, it provides some much-needed realism and constructive suggestions that should be helpful to all.

Chapter 4 is the report of this year's ALNAP annual meta-evaluation. It provides constructive reflection on good evaluation, with a comparative analysis of the quality of reports from previous years. These insights identify areas for improvement and ultimately play an important role in improving learning and performance in the sector.

Finally, I would like to thank all ALNAP members who provided evaluation reports for this edition, and those who gave their time on various review and advisory groups. A willingness to work together in this fashion demonstrates the continued desire of the humanitarian sector to work together and make humanitarian action more effective in the future.

Anita L. Menghetti

Chair of ALNAP (Humanitarian Advisor, USAID/PPC/DCO)