

Chapter 1.

Methods Employed by the Study

1. Design of the study and composition of team

The unprecedented scale and scope of this study meant that there was no readily available model from the field of emergency aid evaluation as to how it should be carried out. The principal approach and methods used were developed during the initial phase, a process that drew on experience gained during previous emergency aid evaluations and through a process of discussions with members of the Management Group, personnel in the Evaluation Department of the UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and personnel in key agencies involved in the response.

Essentially the method adopted by Study III may be seen as a hybrid -attempting to incorporate but extend the usual evaluative criteria with a mechanism for elucidating the principal policy questions for the international community from the experience of the response to the Rwanda emergency. Thus, standard evaluative criteria were extended and tailored to the specific requirements of a humanitarian aid evaluation.¹ The evaluative criteria used by Study III were:

- Appropriateness
- Cost-effectiveness
- Coverage
- Coherence
- Connectedness
- Impact

As well as including the "new" criteria of coverage, coherence and connectedness, the method of assessment attempts to take formal account of the security mandates and resource constraints under which agencies were obliged to operate by using the concept of "humanitarian space".

The Terms of Reference for Study III posed three possible scenarios, namely:

- i) mass killings, mass movement and social collapse;
- ii) stabilization of mass displacement situations, authority vacuum, military offensive and new mass movements; and
- iii) consolidation, attempts at re-establishment of authority.

On consideration, this categorization was felt to be too restrictive. So as to take account of the unusual dynamism and complexity of the events and the humanitarian programmes during 1994, the overall response was instead sub-divided into 11 episodes²:

1. Rwanda: from RPF invasion in 1990 to April 1994
2. Burundi: from October 1993 to late 1994
3. Uganda-Based Operations: April to August 1994
4. Burundi-Based Operations: April to September 1994
5. Protection and Relief Operations in Kigali: April to July 1994
6. Operations within the Humanitarian Protection Zone: end-June to mid-August 1994
7. Refugee Influx into Ngara and Karagwe Districts, Tanzania: end-April 1994 onwards
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8. Refugee Influx into Goma area, Zaire: July 1994 onwards
9. Refugee Influx into Bukavu/Uvira area, Zaire: July 1994 onwards
10. Relief Operations inside Rwanda: mid-July 1994 onwards
11. Regional Aspects of the response³

Of these 11, the first two are described, using available documentary sources, but were not evaluated. It was recognized that both these two cases are of direct relevance to Study III: setting the context for subsequent relief operations and even perhaps having some influence upon events inside Rwanda. However, it was felt that for these two to be included within the evaluation proper would result in the capacity of the Study III Team being overextended - a view shared by the Management Group⁴. The evaluation proper therefore covered the response in episodes 3-11. The decision not to evaluate operations inside Burundi or the assistance provided to Burundian refugees from October 1993 onwards reduced the ability of the Team to examine, as fully as possible, what is often referred to as "the regional dimension". For operations inside Rwanda after July 1994, difficulties were experienced in distinguishing between relief and rehabilitation activities and therefore between the respective responsibilities of Study III and Study IV. A feature of the operations inside Rwanda during the August-September period of 1994 was a rapid shift to rehabilitation activities, except for the continuous provision of relief assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), most of whom after August were concentrated in the south-west of the country. For the most part, therefore, Study III coverage of agency activities inside Rwanda after July is concentrated on IDP relief activities in the south-west. During the course of the fieldwork, pressure of time and the volume of material and issues to be examined in relation to refugee relief operations in Goma, Bukavu and Ngara, resulted in a concentration upon these more important cases. Consequently, the operations in response to the smaller refugee movements into Karagwe in Tanzania and Uvira in Zaire were not considered.

Preliminary discussions with selected agencies revealed a remarkably high turnover of field staff. Personnel who had played a key role during the April-December period were no longer based in the region, many having transferred to emergency programmes elsewhere, taken recuperative leave, or dropped out of relief work altogether. It was clear that any fieldwork would need to be extensively complemented by interviews with key personnel involved in the response who had since left the region.

The Team assembled to undertake Study III represented a broad range of skills and

perspectives, as well as a mix of nationalities. It was structured around a London-based Core Team of three researchers and administrative support staff and 15 so-called technical specialists with an unusually broad range of skills, including anthropologists and economists, a military specialist, a journalist and fuelwood specialist, as well as the medical, nutritional, logistical and water and sanitation skills usually found within an emergency aid evaluation team. The time input of the Team members also varied considerably, ranging from the emergency health management specialist at 50 days to two members in an editorial/advisory role with 6 days input each. The total personnel input, including administrative support staff, was equivalent to just over four person-years.

2. Methods employed

Fieldwork in the Great Lakes Region was undertaken in two blocks. A 20-day reconnaissance mission to the sub-region was undertaken during April and May by five members of the Team (Team leader, Team economist, coordination specialist, anthropologist, military/medical specialist). The purpose of this first visit was to: interview those personnel involved in the emergency phase; collect documentation not readily available in Europe and North America; and initiate arrangements for subsequent visits by Team members. As well as Rwanda, the five-member mission visited Kenya, Uganda, Zaire and Tanzania. They were joined for one week in Kigali by a sixth member examining security and protection issues. Visits were made to Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali, Goma, Bukavu, Ngara and Dar-es-Salaam. Selected refugee camps were visited in Goma, Bukavu and Ngara. The planned visit to Bujumbura was cancelled, largely for security reasons. The Team's arrival in Kigali (End p.19)

coincided with events at the Kibeho IDP camp that made it difficult to meet with key agency and government personnel and resulted in revisions to the travel schedule. During the second block of fieldwork, seven members of the Team visited the Great Lakes region during the June-July period (Team leader, transport economist, both anthropologists, water and sanitation specialist, health management specialist). Their travel schedules were tailored to their own needs and, for the most part, they travelled separately.

Apart from the two anthropologists, all other members of the Team used secondary data. For the most part this involved data collected by the agencies involved in the response, but data drawn from surveys and studies undertaken by other researchers was also used. During March and April, the anthropologists drew up a questionnaire of all the questions that could usefully be asked of beneficiaries, local officials and agency personnel during their fieldwork. Because of the tendency for interviews with beneficiaries in the refugee camps and in Rwanda to draw a wider audience and involve more than the selected interviewee, and the associated problems of confidentiality and thus accuracy of responses, the questionnaire was used more as a checklist of points to be covered in the discussion rather than as a formal survey. For the most part, interviews with beneficiaries were conducted without agency personnel or government officials present, but this was not possible in all cases.

Fieldwork in the region was complemented by extensive visits by different members

of the Team to collect documentation and undertake interviews with key personnel involved in the response in France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, the UK, the USA and Canada. In some cases, the same individual was interviewed by different members of the Team on different occasions, with the content of the discussion reflecting the different interests of the Team member undertaking the interview. Team members were encouraged to write up their interview notes in order to share the information. In June, a pack of 130 pages of interview notes was disseminated amongst Team members. During the course of the visits to head offices and offices in the region, documents were copied and in all the documentation collection that was assembled numbered over 2,000 items, which were catalogued on a specially-modified database programme.

Numbers of Individuals Interviewed during the Study (January to September 1995)

In the Great Lakes region

235

In donor countries

245

No. of beneficiaries (individuals and groups)

140

As well as the interviews and assembling of documentation, special investigations were undertaken. One that absorbed a substantial proportion of the time of the Team economist was the compilation of a database of resource allocations during 1994. This involved modifying and complementing the DHA Financial Tracking System (FTS) dataset for 1994⁵ through⁶

- i) corresponding with the principal official donors on their allocations and expenditures;
- ii) attempting to reconcile any substantial discrepancies between the information provided to the Team by donor organizations, UN agencies and NGOs and that contained within the DHA FTS;
- iii) adding information on onward allocations by the main intermediary agencies, such as UNHCR and Caritas;
- iv) wherever possible, linking resources to the geographical area of final use;
- v) attempting to capture as much of the private flows as possible through correspondence with the larger NGOs and organizations involved in administering public appeals for funding and also through the questionnaire sent to most of the NGOs that operated, or appear to have operated, inside Rwanda during 1994.

The resultant database enabled analysis that would not have been possible using the DHA FTS alone and gave the Team a greater level of confidence in the quality of the data and an understand-

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ing of those areas where coverage and accuracy were poor. Principally, these areas concerned private donations through NGOs⁷, the costs of the various military contingents⁸ and support activities and the costs to the neighbouring countries⁹. The combined scale of under-counted private flows and the costs of the military contingents and support operations can only be guessed at, but could well be in the region of \$400-500 million.

As a separate exercise, an attempt was made to contact all of the NGOs that appeared to have been involved in the response inside Rwanda itself and obtain information on their activities. Using the various lists prepared between July 1994 and April 1995 by UNREO and the Ministry of Rehabilitation, and one prepared by the US military in August 1994, it appeared that over 200 organizations¹⁰ had programmes in Rwanda during this period. Contact details for the head offices of these organizations could only be obtained for 177 of these organizations. A short questionnaire was faxed to this group. Responses were received from 61 by 15 September 1995.

Two research papers were commissioned. One, undertaken in support of the work of the media specialist, examined in detail the content of British TV news coverage over a six-day period in July 1994, which included the influx into Goma and the installation of the new government in Kigali. The other commissioned from the French epidemiological research group Epicentre involved the analysis of its datasets to establish the incidence and characteristics of dysentery epidemics in Rwanda and the refugee camps.

Following the second period of fieldwork and the completion of their reports by members of the Team, a workshop was held in the UK in August 1995 at which a draft outline of the main report was reviewed and discussions held to agree on the principal findings and recommendations of the Team. The final report was written by the Team leader with the support of the members of the Core Team and comments on those sections corresponding to their area of input by the technical specialists. Whilst the report relies heavily upon the material and opinions of all members of the Team, not all members necessarily agree with each conclusion and recommendation.

3. Difficulties encountered

Despite the very substantial personnel and financial resources deployed during the study, these were still limited in relation to the scale and complexity of the response. Time did not prove sufficient to pursue certain lines of enquiry and it was not possible to interview all the key personnel that Team members would have liked.¹¹

Quantitative information on process and outcome indicators was markedly more available for the refugee operations than it was for operations inside Rwanda during the critical relief period. Whilst detailed information was readily available on, for instance, mortality rates or the volume of water distributed in Goma, Bukavu and Ngara, such information was rarely available for IDP camps inside Rwanda, particularly for those that existed for a few weeks only in the May to August 1994 period in the north and east but also many of those in the south-west. Factors contributing to this situation include: the disruption caused by the war and the genocide; the extremely difficult and often dangerous working conditions of the

humanitarian agencies working inside Rwanda between April and July 1994; and the lack of clear agency responsibility for the coordination of humanitarian activities inside the country, which was in contrast to the clear role of UNHCR in relation to refugees. The fact that all IDP camps had been closed by the start of the fieldwork period further increased the "inside-outside" contrast in the availability of information. Site visits, often a valuable source of information, were no longer a valid option. Interviews with former IDPs who had been returned to their home communes did not prove possible for a combination of reasons, including the difficulty of arranging such interviews with officials and the probability that the former IDPs would feel reluctant to talk openly about their experiences, given their new situation. Some interviews were carried out with former IDPs who had subsequently taken refuge in Tanzania and Zaire, but these did not fully compensate for the difficulties experienced in Rwanda.

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Of the evaluative criteria employed, cost-effectiveness was the most problematic, due to difficulties in obtaining cost information on particular activities. Until now, cost-effectiveness has not been a principal concern of many humanitarian agencies, and agency accounting practices rarely allow for calculations to be made on, for example, the average cost of producing and delivering treated water. The substantial involvement of military contingents and the considerable uncertainties involved in estimating the costs and charging basis of their contribution further increased these difficulties. As a result, the assessment of cost-effectiveness issues is largely confined to the logistics sector, where information on overland and airlift transport costs was more readily available.

A frustrating aspect of the study was that, in order to establish a full and reliable perspective on a particular event or process, it was invariably necessary to obtain information, often involving different and sometimes contradictory perspectives, from personnel spread between several different agencies, some of whom had since moved to other countries. This difficulty reflected the large number of agencies involved in the response and the high turnover of their staff, though the sometimes contradictory nature of their perspectives might also be attributed to agency rivalry and competition. The Team were frequently struck by the readiness with which personnel from one agency, donor agencies included, criticised the activities of other agencies whilst being unwilling to turn a critical eye to the activities of their own agency.

Most agencies responded readily to enquiries by the Team and some devoted considerable staff time to preparing information in response to enquiries by the Team. Nevertheless, it should be said that some agencies were less helpful and were reluctant to provide complete access to internal documentation.

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Endnotes

1. These additional criteria are borrowed from Minear, Larry, 1994, *The International Relief System: A Critical Review*. Paper presented to the Parallel National Intelligence Estimate on Global Humanitarian Emergencies, Meridian International Centre, Washington DC September 22 (mimeo).

2. Initially, these were referred to as case studies, but as a result of the enormous variation in the availability of information for different case studies and time pressures, which prevented Team members spending much time in particular locations, the term "case study" was replaced by "episode" in the latter stages of the study.
3. This case study was added to facilitate evaluation of the regional aspects of the response such as coordination and regional logistics operations involving Kampala/Entebbe, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi.
4. The difficulty of evaluating relief efforts inside Burundi has subsequently increased with the deterioration of the security situation there. Principally due to the insecurity, the April-May reconnaissance mission did not visit Bujumbura, as had originally been planned.
5. The DHA Financial Tracking System records emergency aid resource allocations by bilateral donors, multilateral agencies and some of the largest NGOs to those operations where the UN has launched a consolidated appeal. Though the DHA requests donors and agencies to provide information on allocations by geographical area and sector, this information is often not available. Though information on the final implementing agency is also requested, this is often not apparent to donors providing block grants to intermediary agencies, such as UNHCR, which allocate substantial funds to other agencies. Due to lack of personnel resources, the DHA Financial Tracking Unit is not able to fill many of the gaps in the information provided.
6. These activities were extremely time-consuming, accounting for at least 50 days of the Team economist's input.
7. Funding appeals to private donors were mounted in many countries by NGOs or NGO consortia, particularly during the period immediately following the Goma influx. However, the combination of a lack of formal mechanisms for collating private flows and the minimal reporting by NGOs on the use of such funds makes information on private flows patchy and incomplete. Of the two largest NGO consortia capable of capturing official and private flows through NGOs (VOICE for the EU countries and InterAction for the USA), the former ran out of funds to continue a financial tracking/coordination system established in mid-1994 and the latter did not attempt to monitor such flows.
8. Considerable variation exists in the way that governments estimate and deal with the costs of military contingents and military support activities in humanitarian aid operations. In part, this reflects the range of roles in which the various military contingents operated (see Chapter 3), but it also reflects differences in attribution practices. For instance, in estimating the costs of an operation, some governments appear to have used gross costs as their basis, whilst others appear to have used additional costs. Some covered all the costs from within their defence budgets, but did not report the costs to DHA; some covered the additional costs from within their defence budgets, but reported an estimated cost to DHA, in order that it be counted as part of their national contribution to the overall relief effort; others appear to have

charged a portion of the costs to their aid budgets.

9. The DHA database does not record financial or in-kind contributions by countries hosting Rwandese refugees. As discussed in Chapter 7, these flows may be very substantial, though they are extremely difficult to quantify and, at an aggregate level, may be offset by beneficial flows resulting from the activities of the relief agencies in those countries.

10. Some of the organizations were listed only by their acronyms and it is possible that some were not NGOs.

11. For instance, limited time meant that the water and sanitation specialist on the Team was unable to cover the efforts by ICRC, UNICEF and other agencies to maintain and restore water supplies in urban areas.

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