

Executive Summary

Summary Description

The Region

The Great Lakes region is here defined as including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Rwanda. The emergencies covered by the present evaluation have originated in two related conflicts, in Burundi and Rwanda. These conflicts flared up in the late eighties and still continue to this day. The related crisis in eastern Congo which started in November 1996 has not received a comparable amount of Danish assistance, and is not covered in this report. Rwanda received 65% of Danish humanitarian funding, and the Great Lakes region (earmarked for the region without naming particular countries) some 20%.

The present evaluation was carried out on behalf of Danida in the wake of the report "International Response to Conflict and Genocide" of 1996 upon which it has built its own findings in a complementary manner. The international organisations, in particular, were covered for the period beginning in January 1996. Other studies on the region, also funded by Danida, have been used extensively.

The Emergency

The humanitarian situation in the four countries is defined by large military offensives and civilian displacement, rather than by adverse climatic or economic conditions. In 1988 mounting political tensions in Burundi culminated in the death of tens of thousands of people, leading since to an ever-increasing Hutu-Tutsi polarisation. The Rwanda Patriotic Front offensive of October 1990 from Uganda triggered massive internal displacement (some 900,000 persons) inside Rwanda. Some 700,000 refugees then fled from Burundi into Tanzania and Rwanda in 1993. The fighting after the death of President Habyarimana in April 1994 led to a Rwandese displacement of up to one third of the population, the departure of all the Burundi refugees, and an outflux of Rwandan refugees (possibly 500,000) into neighbouring Tanzania.

In July 1994 the sudden arrival of roughly one million refugees in Goma completely overwhelmed the aid agencies, which had been having difficulties in convincing donors to fund the relief operations in Rwanda. The cholera epidemic which gripped the camps projected onto television screens around the world the sights of a crisis of apocalyptic proportions. The fear of further refugee emergencies and of the destabilisation of neighbouring countries impelled many countries to give unprecedented assistance. This was the case for Danida, which in August 1994 tripled the total amount it had given in the region since 1992. By the end of August 1994 the RPF had assumed complete control of Rwanda, and aid flowed into a post-genocide society, involving at one point some 200 foreign NGOs.

From 1995 to the end of 1996 the region offered a complex mosaic of emergencies, involving continued civil war (Burundi), refugee camps in a stable country (Tanzania) and in an unstable one (Zaire), and intermittent guerrilla activity (Rwanda). In late September 1996 the violent death of a large number of expatriate aid workers occurred in the east of Rwanda and Burundi. Fighting broke out around the refugee camps in North and South Kivu, followed by the flight of the entire refugee population, the majority returning to Rwanda and Burundi (600,000), some 500,000 heading towards the west (of which 150,000 remain unaccounted for to this day). A further 500,000 were returned from Tanzania in a clear case of refoulement. The international aid effort received a new

burst of media coverage, although this time the agenda was oriented more towards the pursuit of stability than humanitarian principles.

While a new wave of funding was given to the reintegration in Rwanda (including a new peak of appropriations from Denmark), a confused assistance operation for the refugees and newly-displaced was taking place in Zaïre, as it became the Democratic Republic of Congo. As highlighted by the OCHA study of March 1998¹ the agencies were placed in a very isolated position amidst the war, as their donor base was split by conflicting strategic aims².

In contrast, in Burundi, the international position was much more firm in its opposition to the coup by Major General Buyoya. From 1996 to 1999 the imposition of trade sanctions placed the aid agencies at the centre of the minimum consensus shared by all parties (humanitarian aid was exempted from the sanctions and the UN was seen as the most neutral arbitrator in the disputes between the political groups). This allowed them to take on a more critical role in relation to the authorities, manifested, for example, by a principled opposition to the policy of regroupement and villagisation which the government used as a counter-insurgency measure. In Rwanda there has been a continued unwillingness to challenge the policies of the government as it re-established itself in a tense situation. Increasing ambivalence regarding some of the policies (for example, detention and villagisation) resulted in a reduction of bilateral assistance combined with an increase in multilateral assistance³

People Affected

In the definition of humanitarian needs, two emergency scenarios repeat themselves over the period reviewed : large camps of civilian displaced/refugee populations (often intermingled with military or paramilitary elements), and smaller besieged groups sheltered in public places or scattered in forests and inaccessible areas. It is the latter group which has posed the most formidable problems of access and protection. A third scenario is that of returnees and scattered displaced persons living in precarious conditions, a scenario particularly widespread in the region, and specifically often found in Burundi. In many cases the aid agencies have been carefully isolated from the population when camps are created and then dismantled, but called on to assist in the maintenance of the camps or the reintegration of the populations.

The Great Lakes region forces protection issues into the centre of attention. This is due to the nature of the violence, massive, relatively indiscriminate, erasing the boundaries between combatant and non-combatant. These fine lines have however formed the traditional foundation of humanitarian

¹ Lautze et al.

² "...from the summer of 1996 to the fall of 1997, there were critical moments when consent for humanitarian action was blocked by military actors. The willingness and ability of international actors to bring pressure to bear on these local actors was weak. As a result, the framework of consent for humanitarian access and co-ordination generally collapsed, leaving humanitarians unable to effect positive change during major developments in the region. Indeed, the UN became a valuable resource to be exploited by non-humanitarians for ends most brutal" (page 19, paragraph 52)

³ These dynamics in official aid have been captured in the OECD Development Assistance Committee report for the workshop on the limits and scope for the use of development co-operation incentives and disincentives for influencing conflict situations of May 1999, "Document No 2 Case Study: Rwanda", particularly Figure 3. It is also reflected in the OCHA Financial Tracking Database for humanitarian aid in annex.

aid. The result is particularly challenging. Humanitarian aid is aimed at populations, which are themselves the centre of the conflict. In spite of the low priority rating given to humanitarian assistance in foreign policy, this type of aid has played in the region a major role. As mentioned in the 1996 report, most of the deaths resulted from acts of violence against which humanitarian assistance could only oppose a mitigating effect. And yet humanitarian actors became part of the warfare, through their presence or absence, and through their ability to move resources.

The important local status of assistance, the speed and scope of displacement create a picture not qualitatively different from that of other emergencies covered by the Danish Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance, but arguably one with a significant difference of degree. As a consequence some of the peculiar characteristics of humanitarian operations in the nineties have been exacerbated here.

Interventions

Danida

The region has received a total of 490 million DKR of Danida humanitarian assistance over the period under study. It has been estimated, as a point of comparison, that the Ministry spends 993 million DKR annually on humanitarian aid, which gives the Great Lakes region an average of 7% of the total per annum (the proportion should be multiplied by three from 1995 to 1998 and reduced for the other years). According to the OCHA Financial Tracking database, Denmark is the 14th largest donor of humanitarian aid over the period in the region (if one includes 40 million DKR of Transitional Assistance). Generally Danida has not been a high profile donor in the region, although its generous earmarking and reporting requirements have been appreciated among the individual agencies.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' unit for humanitarian assistance, S3, spends its resources in the Great Lakes through networks of agencies of which the applying agencies (in opposition to the implementing agencies) are only the first link, including for the UN structures. The networks are monitored in part by the Embassies located in Dar es Salaam (covering the refugee camps in the country and the peace negotiations often hosted by Tanzania) and in Kampala (covering Rwanda and Burundi). Two geographical units cover the region in Copenhagen, but the development assistance they handle has remained focused on challenges foreign to the Great Lakes crisis as described here. Forty million DKR was given in Transitional Aid to Rwanda in 1996-98.

International Organisations and NGOs

The projects undertaken with Danida S3 funding over the period 1992-1998 have been for two thirds undertaken by international organisations, and one third by Danish NGOs (including the Danish Red Cross). The total amount given was 490 million DKK (roughly US\$70 million at 7 DKK per \$), as reported by the Humanitarian Assistance Unit S3. This figure excludes some transitional assistance appropriations, contributions in the bilateral development field in eastern Tanzania, assessed annual contributions (Red Cross Delegates, European Community financing, UN regular budget), contributions in the realm of human rights and conflict resolution (for example International Alert which has been funded from the Multi-diverse Fund).

Appropriations have before 1994 been limited to operations based on Church NGO proposals, and mostly took place inside Rwanda and Burundi. After the death of President Habyarimana and the subsequent events there has been a dramatic increase of funding. Most of this was however limited

to the two countries mentioned, with the addition of Tanzania, and a little in Uganda (using the Local Grant Authority, but not linked to events in Rwanda). Some of the agencies appealed on a regional basis (UNHCR, DHA, ICRC, DanChurchAid) and in those cases the funding has also been used in Congo-Zaire. The funding peaked in early 1998 and has been dropping ever since. There is still a significant volume of funding for UNHCR operations in 1998.

The same trend has been observed for all reported donor contributions (see OCHA Financial Tracking Unit summaries in annex). Of the total 31 billion DKR (US\$ 4,428,502,768) given to the Great Lakes, 4.2% was given in 1993, leaping to 27% in 1994, and gradually decreasing to reach 9.9% in 1998. Against this backdrop Danish funding has remained relatively stable with some 75 million DKR given in 1998, although its grants are expected to drop considerably in 1999. The same overall proportion appears to have been given to the UN agencies by the general donor population as by Denmark (on average about 66%).

Programmes by Agencies

The low engagement, or conflicting aims, of major non-African actors has to be set against the very high levels of funding they have given to humanitarian agencies (4.42 billion US\$ or 31 billion DKK, according to the OCHA database, between March 1993 and June 1999 for all OECD donors). This leads to a paradox : the agencies have expanded their mandates into more political forms of intervention, while at the same time they have been obliged to negotiate implementation with the local authorities - all with little international guidance. The humanitarian operations in the Great Lakes have been, even more than normally, dependent on the dynamics of local parties.

The pattern of aid performance in the refugee and displaced camps is quite consistent over the years and across the different populations⁴ (the exception being the April-May 1994 influx into Tanzania, for which international preparedness was high) : the initial period is characterised by mortality rates of more than 2/10,000/day, which is extremely high, followed by a drop to manageable rates with low malnutrition (mortality is due to malaria, dysentery and respiratory tract infections).

Worryingly, the plateau is usually followed by a sudden flight as the camps are threatened by military operations, and the populations return to their place of origin, or flee further away from the conflict, or are killed (the exception to date being the Burundi refugee camps in Tanzania, some of which have been established since 1992).

⁴ Following the terms of reference of the evaluation, this generalisation only applies to Banyarwanda and Burundi populations, while, as noted by UNHCR in its comments to the draft, Angolan and Congolese groups follow a different pattern.

Analysis

Relevance

The Unit responsible for humanitarian aid in the Ministry (S3) responds to crisis on an agency-by-agency basis. Each applying NGO and UN agency passes its funding on to a partner present in the field, which is also benefiting from other grants. Apart from Red Barnet and IOM, there has been no direct implementation by the agency applying in Denmark. Information and direction in Copenhagen is hence tied to agency policy, placing Danida at the source of complex management chains, each with a degree of resistance to policy direction.

The assistance provided by Denmark has responded well to the needs at the level of the individual projects. In hindsight it is clear that more emphasis could have been given to the protection role which is latent in each agency's role, and to the linkages which could exist between material assistance and protection. Agencies with a protection role would not, and sometimes could not, exercise that role to the full, for lack of international will, while the indirect protection role of the delivery of aid and the presence of international personnel was not always used to advantage.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

The selection of agencies has been compatible with the capacity needed in the field, and financing levels corresponded to assessed needs. The support to UNHCR has been, until 1998, very positive. Funding in general is flexible (apart from certain calendar of expenditure rules which in some cases led to hasty spending decisions among the implementing agencies) and responsive to the aid community.

The results achieved have globally matched the results intended, and no exceptional levels of mortality and morbidity were recorded, except in some exceptional circumstances in refugee and displaced settlements (mostly because of the difficult context, more rarely because of a lack of preparedness or the absence of agencies due to insecurity). There has been a growing trend, over the period studied, of concerted efforts by the agencies (most notably the Danish NGOs) to professionalise the work carried out, to a very high standard.

Some small inefficiencies have been caused by the complex routing of the disbursements from Danida. This caused an absence of synergy between projects. A more coherent emphasis on some aspects of the crises, or on some sectors, could have been achieved, leading to more targeted funding. The reporting coming from some of the agencies is weak, often late, and in some few cases misleading. The system adopted risks fragmenting the responsibility for the actions undertaken throughout too many institutions and operational layers. Even though agencies in Denmark may subscribe to principles such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct, the length of the management chain is such that the final execution escapes control from Copenhagen.

On the other hand there has been, at agency level, a constant effort to control costs, and to use local expertise. Over the years the financial monitoring has been increasingly related to the programme outputs, as has the capacity in S3 to monitor results. There is an increasing reference made to programme indicators, although these are still more related to delivery results than impact.

The different units of the Ministry have often operated in parallel in the Great Lakes (with the exception of Tanzania where the Embassy has played an active role), with reduced mutual information sharing, which could potentially have strengthened the monitoring considerably. There

has been a lack of coordination between the transitional aid programmes (handled by the geographical units) and the humanitarian aid programmes.

Impact

The impact of the actions undertaken is often not monitored directly by S3 (clearly because of lack of personnel capacity) in contrast with practices in other Departments of Danida, particularly for Transitional Aid in Rwanda. There is evidence of a weak correlation between the comparative effectiveness of the operations, and the impact they have. An evaluation of the activities which was supported by Danida⁵ points out that “while different mechanisms for strategic coordination performed with varying degrees of effectiveness throughout the region, they never amounted to a coherent system for strategic coordination.” This judgment could be applied to other aspects of the operations. The complex structures of assistance, and the comparative isolation of the actors, have not permitted this problem to be addressed.

In Denmark the policy of active multilateralism has notably improved monitoring and reporting over the period of evaluation. However by focusing on institutional effectiveness and efficiency, the policy does not address the problems of impact. Furthermore, the Ministry is dependent on the agencies for information and analysis, and these frequently seek to strengthen their position. If problems do emerge in the way the international aid system manages the assistance, or in the impact of this assistance, the Ministry (and to a lesser degree the Danish applying agencies) does not have a mechanism to verify and counter these problems.

The study cautions against the automatic assumption that humanitarian assistance contributes to security and peace. This assumption prevails in many foreign policy circles, where the problematic aspects of humanitarian assistance are considered to be essentially technical, and the responsibility of the agencies. Limited staff resources in Copenhagen and the Embassies are often pushed to focus on development aid programmes, which are seen as having greater strategic relevance, and requiring more monitoring. Yet there is considerable evidence not only of the use by the parties in the Great Lakes conflicts of the resources of humanitarian aid, but that aid may have aggravated tensions, even to this day. The errors pointed out in previous studies on the relationship between development aid and violence before 1994⁶ risk being replicated today.

This weakness is related to the difficulty of penetrating the problems which lie beyond the immediate project objectives. There have been many failures of contingency planning for political reasons, and an inability to preserve an independent operational judgment in situations of acute conflict. There is a clear need for the agencies to build their analysis on a more complete information base than is currently done, and to protect the confidentiality of this analysis. The efforts for the professionalisation of the aid (and the indicators developed) originate in the socio-economic and medical field. In the Great Lakes region insecurity, rather than the two former fields, has been the foremost determinant of the course of events.

⁵ “Strategic Humanitarian Co-ordination in the Great Lakes Region, 1996-1997. An Independent Study for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee”, Lautze, Jones, Duffield, OCHA March 1998.

⁶ For example Peter Uvin “Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda”, Kumarian Press 1998, which originated in a research project funded by Danida.

Protection (in the legal sense) and security have exerted the strongest influence over the fears, movements and needs of people. However, the agencies are not equipped to analyse this dimension, and have neglected (often for lack of support) those aspects of their work which could have achieved protective results, including the reassurance of populations, or the assessment of the voluntary nature of movements. The Ministry has been too removed to have an input.

Analytical Sub-sets

Coordination

Danish assistance, as it reaches the field, becomes essentially multilateral. This has considerably reduced the scope for coordination in Denmark, letting it take place in New York, Geneva or the region. Coordination in the region has been stronger for refugee populations than for the internally-displaced populations, as noted in the 1996 joint evaluation, due to the strong operational presence of UNHCR (when there is no lead agency for the internally displaced populations). As revealed by a recent evaluation funded by Danida⁷, even if functioning institutional coordination mechanisms have clearly been put in place over the years in the region, the impact they have on the regime as a whole is disappointing.

Connectedness

There has been a consistent effort by the agencies to build up local capacities, although the difficulty of doing this in a situation of conflict has been at times unsurmountable (due to the polarisation of the society, and the general macroeconomic instability). This has improved the connectedness of the assistance by improving preparedness, in particular in Tanzania. On the other hand the provision of material assistance has not always been used to strengthen the protection role which an international and impartial presence can play.

Connectedness has taken an unusual turn in another sector. The agencies have been confronted with expanded requirements on the ground. The inability of states to ensure the protection of the civilian populations has forced the humanitarian operations to take on new responsibilities, such as funding state security structures (for example prison services). They have often pursued policies conducive to stability, as opposed to purely palliative emergency responses and to the letter of refugee law. While this could be seen as a high degree of connectedness (stability as a spin off of humanitarian aid), it has had a negative consequence on performance in the humanitarian sector.

The lack of agency capacity to carry out these changing roles has often turned the assistance on the ground into an instrument of power. There have been frequent cases of manipulation for military and propaganda purposes. This has had detrimental effects on technical standards of aid and a coherent division of labour. It has detracted from the

generally-agreed codes of humanitarian practice, particularly the NGO/Red Cross Code of Conduct and the principle of independence.

Coherence

The motives for Danish funding to the Great Lakes have been based on a complex interplay : between credible proposals from agencies the government wishes to support, perceived public

⁷ "Strategic Humanitarian Co-ordination in the Great Lakes Region, 1996-1997", OCHA

opinion, and some general political parameters (country priority, Danish participation in peace negotiations). There is on the other hand no regional policy specific to the Great Lakes, other than supporting agency plans for a durable solution, under the lead of UNHCR. The combination of agency-based policies and the loose complex of Ministry objectives leads in the field to a pluralistic operational approach. The different projects carried out often show no external signs of being funded from the same source, and reproduce the diversity of the aid system at it stands.

Policy Issues

Decisions in Danida have been overall relevant and the subsequent delivery of aid effective. Impact and coherence have been, however, less adequate. This does not amount to a need for radical restructuring in the way Danida operates, nor for the creation of new institutions. It would appear unrealistic to seek to draw up a regional strategy when Denmark ranks only fourteenth among humanitarian aid donors, and when none of the Great Lakes countries are priority programme countries. The humanitarian aid budget has proved responsive and flexible, and it is within this flexibility that opportunities for improvements must be found.

Danish humanitarian assistance has been weakened by its dependence (for management control) on the aid agencies. Confronted with a complex and relatively fragmented humanitarian system, and with agencies placed under considerable political pressures, the Ministry is not in a position to address operational challenges. The single most important problem has been an inability to carry out preparedness and protection functions to the full, and to analyse the ways in which humanitarian aid can be used to further the exercise of power.

Recommendations

An **analytical effort** should be made on a project-by-project as well as a country basis, to synthesise the information into a new format easily used and stored by Ministry personnel. It would appear quite appropriate for Denmark to render more visible its presence and define its profile by a concern for improving quality controls. Danida and the Danish NGOs should make greater use of Danish personnel seconded as part of the projects, to inform on emergencies, and to control the quality of performance. A communication system should be established within the Ministry whereby all relevant units are invited to give an opinion on projects both at the pre-approval and evaluation stages.

The requirement for **independent humanitarian analysis** must be safeguarded. Danida should require agencies to develop and analyse programmes either in complete autonomy (a truly “hands-off approach” achieved to the highest degree in the Red Cross movement), or alternatively foster a capacity in the system to monitor and assess while ensuring a minimum level of confidentiality. The UN is governed by the need to cooperate with donors and member states, and is experiencing difficulties in its contingency-planning work. It would be difficult to add to the light structures of the Ministry, although there could be gains in efficiency by increasing lateral information. The most viable alternative would be to pool capacities with the Red Cross, like-minded governments, or with the European Commission (such as ECHO).

There must be a renewed emphasis given to reporting if the Ministry is to seek to apply more precise policy controls. For this it is not necessary to increase the quantity of reporting (the limited number of personnel and the size of the current archives would argue strongly against this), but

rather to **develop certain priorities in information** – to examine the nature of the indicators required. It may even be useful to review the content of project proposals and retrospective reporting. This should in the Great Lakes include a political analysis of the relation between aid and violence. It should include some rudimentary reporting against stated objectives, of the same nature as that developed in 1999 by the ICRC.

It would appear preferable to reduce the agency funding rationale and replace it with a sustained focus on particular aspects of a crisis which have been under-addressed. **Agencies would then be chosen on the basis of a strategic priority concern** and of quality. Other criteria could then be added, but on a secondary footing (nationality, reporting, institutional aims, etc...). This would strengthen the ability of agencies to plan for results as opposed to the present relatively erratic funding interaction.

Protection has not been treated as significantly as it should in the region for a variety of different reasons. It is important to challenge the precedents established in the region (such as tolerance of militarised camps, denial of asylum to refugees, endorsing the policies of the Ministry of Interior in a civil war). Protection and material assistance should be much more strongly related. There should also be much greater use of information of an anthropological nature, whereby the perceptions of the beneficiaries could be understood without putting anybody at risk.

Danida should make decisions for funding conditional on adherence to the **Red Cross Code of Conduct** and similar charters of principle (such as the ECHO-UN Ground Rules in eastern Congo) down to the field level. The programme indicators of performance which have been seen by the evaluation (for example, those developed by the SPHERE project in Geneva) would be too detailed for such conditionality, as the very notions of operational independence and impact monitoring are really the weakest points in the great Lakes. The Ministry could support the work of the agencies through political risk analysis.