

Executive Summary

Introduction

On 24 March 1999, NATO forces launched air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) after the Belgrade government refused to accept the terms of the Rambouillet peace agreement on the governance of the province of Kosovo. The war between NATO and FRY, following years of political repression, violence and forced displacement in Kosovo, precipitated a major humanitarian emergency, involving the largest and fastest movement of people in Europe since World War II. The international response that was launched mobilised political, military and humanitarian assets on an unprecedented scale.

The Disasters Emergency Committee in the UK (DEC) launched its Kosovo appeal on 6 April 1999. This appeal, the largest in the DEC's history, raised over £50 million. Twelve DEC member agencies participated: the British Red Cross Society (BRCS), CAFOD, CARE International UK, Children's Aid Direct (CAD), Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Help the Aged/HelpAge International (HAI), Merlin, Oxfam GB, Save the Children (SC), Tearfund and World Vision UK.

The Evaluation

The DEC commissioned this independent evaluation of Phases I and II of expenditure of the appeal funds. It covers the period between 6 April 1999 and 31 January 2000, and expenditure of £37 million. The evaluation has three related but distinct purposes: accountability to fundraising partners and the British public; promoting learning among DEC agencies; and monitoring of agencies' compliance to DEC rules and guidelines.

The evaluation took place between January and June 2000 with the evaluation team visiting Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Varying amounts of DEC funds were spent in each country or province. Over 400 interviews were conducted with DEC and other humanitarian agencies, relevant government departments and war-affected populations and beneficiaries. A series of meetings and workshops with DEC agencies in the UK and in the region were held. A database containing over 2,500 documents was compiled and reviewed.

The large scope of the evaluation, the limited time the team was able to devote to Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia, and the fact that the refugee emergency (of March to June 1999) was long past, were factors limiting the depth of investigation. The evaluation recognises that the agencies' responses in a particular sector or place cannot be measured by DEC expenditure alone.

In comparison to other evaluations of the Kosovo emergency, this evaluation offers an INGO focus, multi-agency coverage, review of a longer time frame and broad geographical and sectoral scope.

The Context of the Kosovo Emergency

The Kosovo emergency occurred at the end of a decade of humanitarian crises in the Balkans, arising from the wars of secession in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the impact of post-Cold War political, economic and social transformations in eastern Europe.

In 1989, the Serbian Parliament revoked the SFRY Constitution of 1974, thus reducing Kosovo's autonomy and imposing control from Belgrade. This provoked a policy of non-violent resistance from Kosovo Albanians. They set up a parallel government in 1992 including education and health systems. When Kosovo's status was marginalised further in the Dayton peace negotiations in November 1995, peaceful resistance turned into armed struggle in 1996 with the appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

By 1998 the flow of asylum seekers from Kosovo into the rest of Europe and the perceived threat to regional security provoked an international response. In September 1998, agreement was secured to establish the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), whose purpose was to monitor and mitigate violations of human rights while a political process was renewed. NATO first threatened air strikes in October 1998 in support of US diplomatic efforts to secure Belgrade's compliance with UN Security Council resolution 1199.

In early 1999 a massacre of civilians in Racak, deteriorating security and a contraction of humanitarian access provoked renewed threats of NATO air strikes. Dialogue between FRY and the Kosovo Albanian leadership was resumed in February at Rambouillet. However, when Yugoslav delegates refused to sign the agreement, the talks collapsed. NATO carried out its threat and began air strikes against FRY. Yugoslavia's refusal to sign was partly due to the controversial Military Annex of the Rambouillet agreement which included conditions for the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo and the presence of a NATO-led peace implementation force with substantial autonomy of movement throughout FRY.

NATO's military campaign, known as Operation Allied Force, lasted for 78 days. It was suspended on 10 June 1999 when the Yugoslav army and paramilitary units began withdrawing from Kosovo, following Belgrade's acceptance of various 'principles' to resolve the crisis, including a '*substantial NATO participation*' in an international security force in Kosovo 'under UN auspices'. Once the air strikes stopped, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1244 authorising the establishment of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The NATO peace implementation force — Kosovo Force (KFOR) — entered Kosovo on 12 June. The legality of NATO's action against FRY has been subject to intense debate.

The Humanitarian Emergency

Although NATO air strikes were intended to end the violence in Kosovo, the immediate effect was the opposite. FRY security forces expelled Kosovo Albanians *en masse* from the province. The extent to which air strikes precipitated mass displacement or whether 'ethnic cleansing' was pre-planned is disputed. At the start of NATO's military campaign, UNHCR estimated there were up to 260,000 persons internally displaced (IDPs) inside Kosovo. Following the commencement of the air bombardment over 800,000 Kosovo Albanians sought refuge in neighbouring countries. This refugee crisis and the return of these refugees to Kosovo after June became the focus of the international humanitarian response, and of this evaluation. Since NATO entered Kosovo in June 1999, more than 200,000 people — mainly Serbs, Krajina Serbs and Roma — have left the province, most fleeing to Serbia and Montenegro. Meanwhile, several thousand Albanians from southern Serbia have sought refuge in Kosovo and Macedonia.

The countries that bore the brunt of the Kosovo crisis are among the poorest in Europe. The impact of the crisis and the capacity and readiness of these countries to assist varied, depending upon their political stance, their ethnic composition, the presence of refugees from other conflicts and the prevailing socio-economic situation.

Albania provided refuge for the largest number of refugees — over 470,000 — having recognised Kosovo as an independent entity in 1991 and supported the liberation struggle. Macedonia, which took in the second-largest number of Kosovo Albanian refugees, was a reluctant host. Concerned at the impact that the Kosovo Albanian refugees would have on the country's ethnic balance, and on trade and diplomatic relations with Serbia, the government initially closed its border with Kosovo, leaving 40,000 refugees stranded without shelter for a week. Eventually it was persuaded by NATO governments to open the borders. Some 80,000 refugees were transferred to 28 other countries via the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme, and a smaller number by the Regional Transfer Programme, supported by NATO governments. This 'burden sharing' was controversial, potentially undermining the principle of first asylum, but was important in persuading Macedonia to open its border with Kosovo.

During the bombing some 100,000 people sought refuge in Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia, fleeing from Kosovo and from the bombing in other parts of FRY. Over one million people remained in Kosovo during the war. Of these it is estimated that half were displaced.

Impact of the War

Kosovo was FRY's poorest province, with a GDP per capita of less than US\$400 in 1995 and unemployment of over 35 per cent. The province was heavily indebted. In addition to mass displacement, the war between NATO and FRY compounded the physical and economic damage that Kosovo had already suffered in the violence since 1989. An estimated 120,000 houses were damaged, 50,000 beyond repair, and over 90 per cent of schools and health facilities were damaged or destroyed.

The suffering of Kosovo Albanian refugees and displaced was the most visible consequence of the war, but the crisis has had broader regional impacts. Albania hosted a refugee population that was equivalent to 14 per cent of its own population, threatening to upset the progress that had been made in stabilising its economy since the 1997 civil disturbances. In Macedonia, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Romania, disruptions in trade and transport, foreign investment and tourism have all had an impact on balance of payments and structural reforms. Macedonia claims the crisis has cost them US\$1.5 billion in lost trade and commerce.

FRY was already in a state of deep economic shock since the break-up of SFRY. The war inflicted further economic damage and humanitarian stress: inflation is over 100 per cent, official unemployment is at 40 per cent, and there are an estimated 500,000 'social cases'. Bomb damage to infrastructure and industry caused pollution, unemployment and disrupted trade. Sanctions have inflicted a severe energy crisis affecting 75 per cent of households. Tensions between Montenegro and Serbia have increased since the war, encouraged by the West through the lifting of sanctions on Montenegro, and the imposition of a trade blockade on Montenegro by Serbia in March 2000.

The International Humanitarian Response

The refugee crisis in the wake of NATO air strikes precipitated a huge international humanitarian response. Particular features of this international response include:

- A general lack of readiness, but rapid scaling up by agencies to provide shelter, food and health services.
- The unprecedented scale of the international response in terms of the financial resources available, and the number of agencies involved — as of 1 December 1999, two hundred and eighty-five NGOs were registered in Pristina (Guest, 2000)
- The critical role played by local NGOs and other organisations, assisting refugees accommodated in private housing and collective centres in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia.
- Weak coordination of the international response, particularly during the refugee phase of the crisis.
- The involvement of a number of commercial companies in camp construction, de-mining and security services, sometimes competing with voluntary humanitarian organisations.
- A strongly bilateral approach, fuelled by NATO governments, which saw the humanitarian and strategic military concerns as interconnected.
- The involvement of NATO forces in the humanitarian response while also being a party to the conflict, creating a dilemma for NGOs that collaborated with them.
- The politicisation of the humanitarian response in what was described by NATO leaders as a war of 'values' and in which humanitarian aid became a tool serving agendas and strategies that were not purely humanitarian.

A year after the refugee crisis, greatest progress has been made in meeting emergency needs inside Kosovo but reconstruction requirements remain immense. The Serb, Roma and other people who fled Kosovo have little prospect of returning home and constitute a long-term problem. The political 'end-state' is also uncertain: no time-limit has been set for UNMIK, and UN Resolution 1244 does not define the legal status of the UN Administered Province of Kosovo. Kosovo's future will depend upon establishment of a credible governance structure that meets the aspirations of Kosovo's population and promotes sustainable recovery.

The DEC Kosovo Appeal Preparedness and initial response

In the period before NATO bombing began, some observers and some DEC agencies had predicted a crisis and the general possibility of refugee outflows from Kosovo. But there were few predictions of the speed and scale of the refugee exodus that would be triggered by NATO bombing. Indeed, comparable refugee flows had only occurred twice in the past 10 years, during 1991 in the Kurdish-Iraq war and during 1994 out of Rwanda.

Although some analysts have pointed out that the terms of the Rambouillet Accords were bound to be unacceptable to the Yugoslav government, there was a sense that predicting and preparing for an emergency was tantamount to admitting that the talks would fail. International agencies faced other political constraints to preparedness and contingency planning, such as the Macedonian government's refusal to establish refugee camps and their restriction on agency registration, concerned that the presence of INGOs would attract refugees and that the agencies were only there to help Albanians.

Thus, the international community, including DEC agencies, was not well prepared and the scale and speed of the refugee exodus into Albania and Macedonia took them by surprise. By contrast, some governments in the region directly affected by the crisis had warned of refugee outflows, and some local humanitarian agencies were prepared. These agencies played crucial roles in receiving refugees before the international aid effort geared up.

There are three broad aspects to preparedness relevant to DEC agencies — access to, and use of, political analysis; presence in the region; and organisational capacity — that enable agencies to respond quickly to crises wherever they happen. In terms of the first, some agencies had carried out assessments and scenario planning in 1998 and early 1999. But warnings were rarely translated into specific preparedness actions. Indeed, some agencies faced financial constraints in doing so, because of limited donor funds for such activity, a particular problem for smaller agencies.

Other factors that determined the DEC agencies' speed of response include:

- Good relationships with effective local partners.
- Organisational commitment to emergencies: for example, investment in a permanent emergency response team.
- Well-designed and stockpiled kits that facilitate rapid response to a sudden refugee crisis: for example health and water kits, or emergency management kits.
- Central emergency contingency stocks: regional stocks in the Balkans mattered less because of the relatively easy supply routes from elsewhere in Europe, and some regional stocks had been looted.
- Well-defined and recognised expertise in a particular niche sector, supported by appropriate skills and materials within the agency.
- Ability to find and employ skilled and experienced staff at short notice: this was a major constraint for many agencies, and a variety of recruitment approaches was used, ranging from extensive use of specialist registers to advertising on the internet and in trade journals.

Appropriateness

Within the overall humanitarian response to the Kosovo crisis, little emphasis was put on assessments. While this might have been acceptable in the first few days of the emergency, it is contrary to good practice and to the Sphere Standards. Needs were sometimes assumed rather than real. The reasons for lack of attention to assessments included the pressure to spend money within a short time frame, the easy availability of funding and the lack of pressure from donors to undertake assessments. These factors discouraged assessments, targeting and monitoring compared with situations of more limited resources. In Serbia, assessment of the IDP population was hampered by the sensitive position of humanitarian agencies whose activities could have been interpreted as spying or intelligence gathering. The performance of the DEC agencies in relation to assessment varied. Sometimes it was overlooked, although there are also examples of good practice and assessments which proved to the agency concerned that needs were already adequately met and further assistance was not necessary. DEC agencies usually delivered appropriate assistance when they focused on sectors where they had expertise, or coordinated closely with other actors and filled gaps.

Beneficiaries interviewed by the evaluation team reflected a diversity of experience and situation. But beneficiary consultation does not seem to have been prioritised nor the diversities taken into account in programme design. For example, although standard kits were appropriate for a rapid response at the earliest stage of the refugee emergency, little attention was given subsequently to whether needs varied between refugee groups.

a) Food: malnutrition was not a major problem and there was generally an over-supply of food aid in Albania and Macedonia. The percentage of DEC funds spent on the provision of food appropriately fell from about 17 per cent of expenditure in Phase I to less than 3 per cent in Phase II.

b) Non-food items: many refugees fled with few possessions and many returnees to Kosovo faced the approaching winter with little in the way of material possessions, warm clothing or shelter. In these circumstances, the decision by all the DEC agencies to use some of their DEC funding for non-food items was generally appropriate.

c) Health: given the low risk of starvation or epidemics, the DEC agencies were correct to give health interventions a low priority.

d) Water and sanitation: in the emergency refugee phase in the camps in Albania and Macedonia, DEC funds were used in the water sector and the work was of a high standard and contained many examples of good practice. The main weakness was that water was not always part of an integrated public health approach. Where sanitation and public health education were the responsibility of other agencies in the camps, poor coordination weakened an integrated approach.

e) Shelter: given the scale of damage inside Kosovo and the onset of winter after the Albanian refugees returned, shelter was an appropriate intervention for the DEC agencies. Seven agencies used DEC funds for shelter programmes, not only in Kosovo, but also in Bosnia and Montenegro.

f) Mine action: the danger of mines and unexploded ordnance tended to be over-estimated, although fear of mines certainly slowed down the humanitarian response in the early days of the return. It was therefore appropriate that two DEC agencies funded mine action programmes.

g) Schools and education: a high proportion of schools were badly damaged during the war. It was therefore appropriate that five DEC agencies supported school rehabilitation, although rehabilitation is an area which, strictly speaking, does not fall within DEC spending guidelines.

h) Community services: DEC-funded community services supported disabled and women's groups from Kosovo before, during and after the war, although again, strictly speaking, the long-term nature of some of this work in Kosovo may mean it falls outside DEC guidelines for use of emergency appeal funds.

i) Psychosocial projects: this area of work is dogged by definition and conceptual problems. Although the label was used by the DEC agencies, much of the activity referred to community service projects. The cultural appropriateness of psychosocial work seemed to be insufficiently addressed in practice.

j) Information services: Kosovo Albanian refugees often expressed the importance of getting information in situations where families had been separated and when relatives living outside the region were desperate for news. Information services particularly focused on refugees in the camps, for example the provision of mobile phones for tracing.

k) Agriculture: DEC agencies gave limited support for agriculture programmes in Kosovo after the refugee return. At the time of the evaluation it was too early to judge the impact of these programmes. Some innovative interventions were introduced by DEC agencies: for example, the introduction of a voucher scheme in Montenegro instead of kits, in order to give beneficiaries a little more choice and dignity; and the use of mobile and satellite telephones for tracing purposes.

Coverage

During the NATO bombing, affected population groups that were not well covered by the international humanitarian response included:

the population left inside Kosovo;

refugees/IDPs in Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro as the focus was on Albania and Macedonia;

refugees in host families as opposed to those in camps; and

host families, particularly in Albania.

After the return of the Kosovo Albanians to Kosovo, affected population groups that were not well covered included:

minority groups (mainly Serbs and Roma) inside Kosovo;

Roma (IDPs, refugees and residents) throughout the region; and

'poor/social cases' in resident populations who had less access to assistance than IDPs/refugees.

Over 60 per cent of the Kosovo Albanian refugees who fled to Albania and Macedonia were housed in private accommodation — a trend that should have been anticipated based on past experience in the region. Generally, refugees in host families were less well served by the international community, partly because the high visibility of refugee camps was a magnet to NATO forces, donors, NGOs and the media. Consequently, refugees in camps received a disproportionate level of assistance. As refugees in Macedonia did not obtain refugee status but were *Humanitarian Assisted Persons*, access to free health services for refugees in private accommodation was often problematic. To a large extent, DEC agencies resisted the aid bias towards refugees in camps with a number supporting assistance to refugees in host families.

Although the majority of DEC expenditure (nearly 80 per cent) in Phase I went to Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo, a number of agencies were careful to respond to the needs of refugees/IDPs, albeit at lower levels, in Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia. As humanitarian needs grew in Serbia, with increased numbers of IDPs, some DEC agencies increased their programmes. In DEC Phase II, just over 70 per cent of the money went to Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia (all but 7 per cent of it to Kosovo) and the balance to Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia. An important strength of DEC money was its availability for use throughout the region.

Some DEC agencies have attempted to provide assistance to ethnic minorities within Kosovo, although usually proportionately less than inputs provided to Albanians. In terms of reaching the Serb population in Kosovo, the DEC agencies appear to have a mixed record, although there are clearly difficulties of security and access.

Roma IDPs are a particularly vulnerable group throughout the region, partly because of their poverty and the discrimination they suffer. Some DEC agencies have been aware of their special needs and have prioritised assistance to them.

The refugee/IDP population, particularly in Albania, was sometimes perceived as being 'better-off' than the local population. There was great pressure on local organisations to provide assistance to their 'own' poor. There were differing judgements, and therefore practice, among DEC agencies about whether DEC funds could be used to support local 'social cases'. However, the Sphere guidelines do call on agencies to take account of and, where appropriate, assist local host populations.

There was little disaggregated information or analysis about the situation of women in general and female-headed households in particular. Issues about registration of women for relief materials or issues of female property rights in Kosovo were generally overlooked by DEC agencies, with one exception, or not addressed. This runs counter to established humanitarian guidelines, such as the Code of Conduct and Sphere Standards.

Targeting appears to have been determined by resources available, rather than empirical need and made more complex by the large number of agencies operating with different criteria. Within Kosovo, targeting is particularly difficult, partly because aid is often seen as a reward for suffering during the war and a right due from the international community, rather than a response to needs. Also,

remittances play a large part in the Kosovo economy but are very hard to monitor when assessing humanitarian need.

Protection

From the beginning, the crisis in Kosovo has been articulated as a '*crisis of protection*' rather than as a conventional emergency that can be relieved by the provision of relief aid alone. Thus, human rights promotion and monitoring were central to how the international community sought to manage the conflict before NATO's military action which, in turn, was justified as a 'humanitarian war'. However, this selective response to human rights abuses in Kosovo, compared with the virtual silence by the same governments over abuses in Chechnya, lends weight to those who argue that NATO military action in Kosovo was as much to do with European and US concerns to contain the threat of regional instability.

The forced expulsion of over 800,000 civilians from Kosovo during the NATO military campaign was the biggest and most visible protection issue. DEC agencies contributed to refugee protection in many ways, including: supporting UNHCR's protection role through staff secondment; advocating on asylum and registration issues, particularly in Macedonia; enhancing security of refugees in camps; and targeting assistance to refugees outside camps.

The biggest gap in the international protection framework during the war was in Kosovo itself. All international humanitarian aid agencies and human rights observers withdrew from Kosovo, so even a minimal protection strategy of witnessing was not feasible. There was a collective failure of protection until ICRC re-negotiated humanitarian access on 24 May. A few DEC agencies took some limited action, for example one called for urgent humanitarian access in April, another for a cease-fire and negotiation. A possible response would have been to inform the Alliance governments, in particular the British, of the potential humanitarian consequences of NATO's military campaign. Importantly, however, several DEC agencies continued humanitarian work in Serbia and Montenegro, directly or through partners, throughout the NATO military campaign.

Since the return of Kosovo Albanian refugees, the most critical protection issues have revolved around the protection of non-Albanians in Kosovo from physical violence, intimidation and discrimination.

DEC agencies have been less active on these issues than they were about refugee protection despite the context of weak state institutions that are unable to fulfil their role in terms of welfare, justice and policing. This is partly because of the presence of other institutions that are mandated and better able to provide protection than NGOs. However, it is disappointing that protection issues appear in few agency assessments and that actions are not evaluated internally in terms of impact on protection. Instead, the primary focus has tended to be on relief, physical rehabilitation and the restoration of social services. Collaboration with human rights organisations has also been weak.

Effectiveness and impact

Most agencies have focused on monitoring output indicators relating to material distribution. Health and shelter programmes, for example, were monitored for the number of items distributed and roofs built. As is common in humanitarian programmes, these indicators are regarded as proxies for impact monitoring, despite the inadequacies. The monitoring of output indicators has been variable among DEC agencies. In Serbia, external restrictions inevitably decreased the amount of monitoring possible. Few evaluations undertaken by DEC member agencies or their related networks have looked at the impact of their programmes, instead focusing on organisational and management issues. This is surprising, given that the Kosovo refugee crisis was the biggest mass movement of people in Europe since World War II. At the very least, opportunities for learning have been missed. However some end of contract reports and internal evaluations were of high quality and made important contributions to assessing the effectiveness of programmes.

The effectiveness of the DEC agencies' work has been very varied. There are examples of good practice in the refugee camps, for example in the water sector, but the evaluation questions the quality and effectiveness of some rehabilitation work inside Kosovo. Some agencies seemed to concentrate on their 'bit', paying insufficient attention to that fact that the impact of their interventions could be reduced by the non-performance of others, for example in infrastructure projects. Although this is an inevitable risk in situations where numerous agencies are jostling for work and coordination is weak, it

is important that agencies take a broader and more integrated view of their work. This was particularly important during the refugee phase of the emergency. In Albania and Kosovo, the divide between camp management (including sanitation and environmental health) and the water, health promotion and medical agencies, detracted from integrated public health interventions.

In the context of large amounts of money from the DEC appeal and from other donors, several agencies commented that the pressure to spend funds within a limited time frame meant that some factors that would have contributed to greater effectiveness were overlooked.

Given the weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation noted above, it is difficult for the evaluation to make any detailed statements about impact. It is also difficult to differentiate the impact of DEC funded activities from others by the same or other agencies.

DFID has claimed that *'the overall impact of humanitarian assistance is reflected in the simple facts that no refugees died from lack of food, warmth, or acquired illness'*. In the evaluation team's opinion, the humanitarian response was probably not the most important reason behind this positive outcome on refugee morbidity and mortality. Although international assistance undoubtedly improved the conditions of affected populations, several other factors served to mitigate a major catastrophe, including: the good pre-crisis health and nutritional status of the refugee population; the short duration of the emergency and quick return of the refugees; the fact that two-thirds of refugees stayed outside the camps and were supported by the local population; and the assets retained by refugees (savings and remittances) which enabled them to pay for food and accommodation.

Efficiency/cost-effectiveness

Expenditure data from DEC agencies suffer from inconsistent labelling, insufficient breakdown, a lack of sectoral information and varying levels of detail. Thus, it has proved very difficult to make comparisons across agencies.

Almost no agencies have made any attempt to calculate cost-effectiveness indicators. Only one agency explicitly calculated expenditure per beneficiary. Nor have agencies made internal comparisons, whether in the same country, across other countries in the Balkans or across other countries world-wide. But this is not unusual and there are methodological difficulties, for example to compare the unit cost of roofs for very different types and size of house. However, making comparisons could have helped agencies to identify problems early on and may have helped in monitoring bias and impartiality. The abundance of money available to the agencies may have undermined any incentive to look at cost effectiveness issues.

Nevertheless, most agencies appear to have reasonably well-established procurement systems and there is no evidence of conspicuous over-expenditure.

As a number of DEC agencies increasingly work through international networks, accountability needs to be protected as money may be passed onto sister agencies. It is also important that a more complicated funding hierarchy does not increase overhead and management costs.

Connectedness

Local populations: The impact of the emergency on local populations in the region was mixed. In Albania some people may have benefited through charging rents and some infrastructure, such as hospitals, were upgraded. But a common sentiment expressed by host families was a sense of abandonment by the international community once the refugees departed. Most agencies left Albania and Macedonia precipitately as soon as the refugees started to return to Kosovo, although the majority of DEC agencies did not follow this trend and have continued to work in both these countries, albeit on a much reduced scale, with DEC funds and other resources.

Since the end of the war, several DEC agencies have continued to assist local organisations and populations in Serbia who are hosting large numbers of displaced people, in a situation of severe economic decline, high unemployment and the infrastructural and environmental damage caused by NATO bombing.

The population in Serbia was hosting IDPs and refugees in a difficult context of economic decline with rising levels of unemployment and poverty. The local population has also had to deal with damaged infrastructure as a result of NATO bombing with some long-term environmental, health and social consequences.

Local capacity building: NGOs in the Balkans have grown up only in the last 10 years and therefore the need for institutional support is still substantial. Most of the DEC agencies have to some degree worked with local partners. The advantages of this approach included local partners knowing the communities and being able to draw upon a large force of local volunteers, thus potentially ensuring wider coverage. Local partners were sometimes able to respond faster than international agencies in the initial stages of the emergency, and continued to provide most of the support for refugees in host families. By working with local partners, DEC agencies thus supported the building of local disaster response capacity.

There were also some difficulties of working with local partners not unique to the Balkans. For example, some partners had little or no experience of emergency work and most were unaware of Code of Conduct principles, Sphere or other technical guidelines. Local organisations with a political or religious basis could jeopardise the impartiality of humanitarian assistance.

Collaboration was most successful where a partner had existing emergency capacity, or where an INGO had a previous capacity-building relationship with its local partner. It was also important for the INGO to provide close support to, and monitoring of, a local partner's work. Several DEC agencies have successfully used the emergency experience to strengthen the continuity of their programmes through the development of their networks of local partners.

Relief to rehabilitation transition: DEC Phase II funds have been spent within a political framework that defines the context as being one of 'rehabilitation' rather than 'emergency'. The start of the reconstruction phase in Kosovo was signalled at an international level by the July 1999 donors' conference. Given donor support for salaries, pensions and other social welfare benefits, opportunities to support a relief-development transition are better in Kosovo than in most countries in crisis. But there are some major obstacles: the lack of clear political framework for the province; the existence of two political systems (for example, Belgrade continues to pay welfare benefits in Serb enclaves); the underlying political complexity which means that all interventions risk being appropriated by different parties within the majority community; lack of coherence among multi-lateral structures and between donors.

As the flood of donor funding begins to dry up in 2000, this may threaten the connectedness of humanitarian interventions. Despite this, DEC agencies are often an exception to this trend of poorly connected emergency operations, and have maintained a presence in Albania and Macedonia, and/ or continued to work with local partners and local government.

Coherence

Coordination difficulties and weaknesses during the refugee crisis period have been well documented elsewhere, particularly in the UNHCR evaluation. Factors that undermined coordination included: huge input and competition between bilateral donors, combined with their unwillingness to submit to UNHCR coordination; the weakness of key UN agencies; the large number of agencies involved in the response; the large number of camps in Albania; and intense media scrutiny and pressure for profile. Despite this context, most DEC agencies showed a commitment to coordination and were generally supportive of UNHCR's coordinating role. The DEC's Operations Sub-Committee (OSC) put great emphasis on coordination in its feedback to agencies on their 48-hour and four-week plans of action.

DEC agencies also avoided some of the excesses of rampant bilateralism, for example the pressure from donors who wanted 'their' national NGOs to work in 'their' camps, particularly in Albania. But DEC agencies asserted that a DEC field-based coordination mechanism would not have added value in this emergency.

There is an increasing trend for DEC agencies to work through international networks for implementation. This can be positive for coordination if it rationalises the operations of INGOs in the field. But it also means that agencies need to spend increasing amounts of time on internal rather than external coordination. And in the pressure of a major high profile international emergency, network partners tend to break ranks and go bilateral as some did in the Kosovo emergency.

In Kosovo, there has been good coordination of humanitarian mine action work. In contrast, DEC agencies felt that coordination of shelter and school rehabilitation work was problematic. In both Albania and Kosovo, humanitarian information centres appear to have played important roles and facilitated coordination within the NGO sector and with UN and other agencies. Lessons could be learnt from these examples and DEC agencies should consider support for such ventures in the future. Given the scale and the profile of the Kosovo crisis, those DEC agencies with an advocacy remit appear to have carried out limited public advocacy work during the Kosovo crisis. This ranged from calls for UNHCR's lead role to be respected and supported, to calls for a cease-fire and urgent humanitarian access during the NATO bombing campaign. It seems that agencies were limited in their scope for advocacy, partly because of the potential risk to staff on the ground — especially in Serbia — if controversial public statements were made. Also, some agencies found it difficult to agree internally on positions on which to base advocacy work.

There are two humanitarian issues on which agencies might have been able to do more advocacy work: access to and protection for the population inside Kosovo during the NATO bombing; and the use of cluster bombs by NATO airforces. Lack of advocacy on the latter is particularly surprising as a number of DEC agencies have been active in the anti-landmine campaign, and British forces continued to use cluster bombs after the US had stopped following concerns about the danger to civilians. Indeed, unexploded cluster bombs now represent almost as much of a danger in Kosovo as landmines laid by the Serb security forces.

As the NATO bombing campaign was widely described and justified as a 'humanitarian war', it is surprising that the NGO sector has apparently done little to analyse or challenge this concept.

Although the DEC presented both written and oral evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee hearing on Kosovo in May 1999, there was very little discussion or common ground on advocacy work among DEC agencies. Some have argued that it would have been impossible for any agreement to have been reached by the DEC grouping.

Performance standards

a) Code of Conduct, Sphere Standards and People in Aid: Over the past decade the humanitarian community has introduced innovations to govern the provision of aid in complex emergencies, in efforts to improve both quality and accountability. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response of the Sphere Project, are two such innovations.

The evaluation team found that awareness and application of the Code of Conduct principles and of Sphere Standards was poor within most DEC agencies, their international networks and local partners. Although all DEC agencies are signatories to the Code of Conduct and most have participated in the Sphere Project, there was no monitoring of adherence to the Code in the planning and implementation of their programmes. There was no requirement from the DEC to report against the Code.

Kosovo was the first emergency in which Sphere minimum standards in water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and health could be 'field tested'. Some DEC agency staff questioned the relevance of Sphere Standards in a European setting. Somewhat contentiously, some aid agencies argued that maximum rather than minimum standards needed to be set, given the level of assistance provided in sectors such as shelter. However, the evaluation team felt that most of the Sphere Standards were applicable, particularly those relating to assessment, monitoring and information systems.

The humanitarian intervention in Albania and Macedonia met most of the Sphere health indicators, but the evaluation team found that sanitation standards were often poor and standards of food and non-food items varied greatly from agency to agency and even within the same agency. Weak coordination meant that overall monitoring of standards was poor, although one DEC agency applied and monitored Sphere Standards in the provision of water to refugee camps, and another fielded a 'Standards Consultant' in Albania to draw up guidelines for operationalising standards in food provision and camp management.

Although five of the 12 DEC agencies are signed up to the pilot People in Aid 'Code of Best Practice' in the Management and Support of Aid People, some senior staff in DEC agencies were unsure whether their agency was a signatory or not. It is not possible to say how well agencies conformed to the code.

b) Humanitarian Principles: The Code of Conduct emphasises the fundamental principle of impartiality. But this was challenged by the nature of the international intervention in Kosovo and by the disproportionate scale of the international response compared with resources allocated to emergencies elsewhere in the world. While donor governments gave US\$207 per person through the 1999 UN appeal for Kosovo, those in Sierra Leone received US\$16, and those in the Democratic Republic of Congo little over US\$8. This indicates that at a global level the humanitarian system is not impartial, but selective and influenced by political factors as much as by humanitarian need. Most DEC agencies identified this as an 'uncomfortable' issue and noted how the Kosovo emergency had sometimes diverted their staff and resources from other emergencies elsewhere in the world.

Similarly, the withdrawal of humanitarian agencies from Kosovo and the massive support given to Kosovo Albanians as refugees and returnees, gave the impression of a selective and biased response by the international community within the region. In line with this trend, the largest proportion of DEC assistance in Phase I went to support refugees in Albania and Macedonia and in Phase II to relief and rehabilitation in Kosovo. However, several DEC agencies did increase their assistance outside Kosovo, particularly to Serbia, after the end of NATO bombing.

The last decade has seen increasing military involvement in humanitarian activities. Kosovo was the extreme. For NATO and donor governments humanitarian and political objectives were blurred, not least in the assertion by NATO governments that they were waging a '*humanitarian war*'. In the words of the British Secretary of State for International Development: '*our humanitarian and military objectives are completely intertwined*'. This was most apparent in the bilateralisation of aid provision, and in NATO's support for and participation in humanitarian activities. For example, refugee camps were funded by donors, constructed by military contingents and managed by NGOs of the same nationality. The institutionalisation of military and humanitarian collaboration was apparent in the employment of military liaison officers by some agencies, and the secondment of humanitarian advisers to the military. Military participation in humanitarian activities in terms of logistical support is now common and, of itself, is not a bad thing. The key issue for humanitarian agencies in deciding if and how to work with the military in the Kosovo crisis, was that NATO was a party to the war, and that their military action increased the incidence of humanitarian need.

In contrast to NATO leaders, the UN Secretary-General noted the importance of respecting the distinction between humanitarian and military activities, stating '*if these lines are blurred, there is a grave risk of irreparable damage to the principle of impartiality and humanitarian assistance*'. The DEC attempted to define an appropriate division of labour between the military and aid agencies in its written submission to the House of Commons International Development Committee. That distinction was harder to maintain in practice. Most DEC agencies collaborated with NATO forces in implementing their programmes, taking advantage of their logistics or security to deliver assistance.

Some implemented projects jointly with the military. Although several DEC agency staff expressed unease about too close an association, pragmatism ruled, probably to a greater extent than in many other emergencies where maintaining neutrality may be essential for sustaining humanitarian access and securing donor funding. Only two DEC agencies had established policies to guide staff on working with the military in Kosovo.

That neutrality was compromised was apparent to DEC agency staff in Serbia who felt threatened seeing their organisations on CNN in the Albanian or Macedonian camps, when civilians in Serbia were also suffering.

The DEC

This appeal demonstrates the success of the DEC as a fund-raising mechanism, raising record amounts for the Kosovo Crisis. One of the most positive features of DEC Appeal funds is the flexibility of their application. Thus, funding gaps could be filled, and DEC money could be spent in Serbia where it was difficult to raise donor funds. In this sense DEC money was politically 'neutral'. DEC funds also enabled some agencies to get up and running while raising money from donors.

Weaknesses that appeared during this very large appeal included the lack of forecasting of appeal income and therefore uncertainty about how much money would be available to the agencies. Some agencies found that this, together with a complicated phasing system, made planning difficult. The

evaluation team also noted the limited capacity of the DEC secretariat, for example, to monitor agency reporting or to share information.

The DEC is a collective mechanism for raising public funds to meet ‘acute human suffering’, and DEC agencies are expected to spend appeal funds within six-months of their receipt, or return money to the pool for redistribution. In the case of the Kosovo appeal, however, substantial amounts of DEC expenditure have been committed to rehabilitation activities. With such large sums of funds available, agencies found the six-month rule restrictive, constraining community participation and preventing slower implementation through local partners where capacity was an issue.

The decision of the Executive Committee of the DEC to a phasing of expenditure was welcomed by the agencies as an *ad hoc* way of dealing with the scale of the appeal income, but was complicated because phases overlapped. In practice, however, it has meant expenditure has stretched over a period of 18 months. As generous donor funding in the early stages is now drying up, it would be unfortunate if the DEC rules encourage a similar short-termism as needs continue. Currently the DEC approach does little to broaden understanding of crises within the media and general public, and does little to counteract a view that these are one-off events in which the problems will be solved quickly by money.

The DEC planning and reporting system comprises a 48-hour plan of action, a four-week plan of action and then financial and narrative reports to be completed one month after the end of the six-month period. The evaluation team found a number of difficulties with this structure. For example, the four-week plan of action is intended to provide the baseline information for the evaluation. But agencies often made substantial changes to their DEC expenditure plans later, in response to changing circumstances in the field and/or to changing fundraising needs. This may sometimes be unavoidable, for example, in the case of the sudden and unexpectedly rapid return of refugees to Kosovo. But there is currently no standardisation of procedure about informing the DEC secretariat of changes of plan.

Final reports submitted by agencies were of varying quality and did not always follow the DEC format, making it difficult to aggregate how DEC funds had been spent both geographically and sectorally. The experience of this evaluation indicates that all the three functions — audit, control and lesson learning — do not sit well together. For example, the scale and range of the DEC-funded programmes in a major appeal can be huge. It is not possible to carry out effective evaluations of those programmes, unless the agency itself has its own well-established monitoring and evaluation system in place. In this evaluation, the work of the team was facilitated when the agency had carried out its own evaluation.

But this was not the case for all DEC agencies and monitoring and evaluation systems were often weak. The DEC evaluation cannot achieve sufficient detail to be a substitute for individual agency evaluations, and an external evaluation can be a weak vehicle for promoting institutional learning and for monitoring compliance within the DEC system.

For a full list of recommendations refer to Chapter 13