



The Alan Shawn Feinstein International Famine Center

HUMANITARIAN FUTURES CONTEXT MAPPING What will humanitarian response look like by 2010?

Humanitarian action and the diversity of actors and actions associated with the humanitarian label grew exponentially in the roughly fifteen years since the winding down of the Cold War. That growth brought tremendous opportunities, but also tremendous pressures on the humanitarian system and its inherent linkage of values to action. These strains have become even more apparent and in need of urgent attention, against the backdrop of the rapidly evolving international geopolitical landscape as played out in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many members of the international humanitarian community have expressed concern over these developments and have sought to find ways to address them, either as individual agencies or consortia.

This present proposal, in response to a request for assistance from the NGO consortium that World Vision is in the process of helping to constitute, will be driven by five objectives.

1. Research the projected future humanitarian context for 2010.
2. Review and examine the current state of humanitarian NGO practice and business structures.
3. Project the current state of humanitarian NGOs into the predicted humanitarian environment of 2010 in order to develop recommendations regarding appropriate institutional structures and processes structures, NGO programming, preparedness, staffing, and resourcing. (To be projected to 2020 at a later date)
4. Carrying forward the research in an action-research participatory fashion with the intent of building understanding and commitment to change from the major stakeholders as the research progresses and is finally presented and reviewed.
5. Positioning the research and the process creating it as a possible initial building block in a wider and more long lasting humanitarian reform and humanitarian sector-wide process.

Methodology

This research will be led by the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University. It will involve faculty and graduate students at the Center and will sub-contract specific pieces of the research to other academic institutions where necessary. A community of policy and operational experts from the commissioning NGOs will be formed to act as a dialogue group and sounding board throughout the research. Dialogue and the building of support for the research and the process it represents may take place at many levels: funding commitment, participation in email discussions, attending focus group meetings, carrying out sub-sets of the research drawing on individual NGO experience. All of these methods will be promoted.

Task 1: Initial mapping of the humanitarian future and the state of NGOs.

The FIFC will organize a two-day focus group meeting in Boston at the outset of the research to present our first thoughts on what the main humanitarian environmental determinants are likely to be by 2010. The focus group will test, refine and/or enlarge upon this first model as appropriate.

We will also present our first thoughts on the evolving NGOs structures and practices, seeking to highlight those we feel are most likely to have impact on the future of NGOs. The focus group will test, refine and/or enlarge upon this first model as deemed appropriate.

To this meeting will be invited practitioners and academics who have a demonstrated expertise and interest in the subject matter.

The output from the focus group will form the base-map upon which the subsequent research under objectives one and two will be carried out.

Task 2: Mapping the key determinants of the future environment for humanitarian action.

At present we envisage looking at trends in the following areas:

- Political environment, including
 - the global war on terror,
 - the ebb and flow of multilateral to bilateral support,
 - the politicization of humanitarian aid,
 - Calls for coherence and integration into a given political framework in all crisis-directed assistance.
- Hazard environment, including,
 - the increasing gap between rich and poor (intra and inter country),
 - growth in HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases,

- climate change,
- environmental degradation
- Enabling environment, including
 - the evolution of internet technology,
 - changing attitudes and legislation on global trade,
 - increasing restrictions on the transfer of funds,
 - international and national employment regulation.

Task 3: Mapping the current state and trends in NGO structures and practice including:

- the growth and evolution of trans-national NGOs,
- the national legislation delimiting NGO freedom of action and accountabilities,
- pressures and responses with respect to accountability (to recipients communities, donors, public and staff),
- changing expectations regarding needs-assessment and quantifiable progress monitoring,
- changing nature of the security environment,
- the drive to professionalize humanitarian work,
- the “western” face of humanitarianism,
- changing nature of income sources,
- the growth in for-profit and military involvement,
- the evolution of NGO networks and associations,
- the growth in southern international NGOs particularly those with an Islamic philosophy,
- the growth in local NGOs in response to crises and crises funding,

Task 4: Building of future scenarios.

The research team at the FIFC will take the results from task 2 & 3 and use these as the basis for making a first projection of options for evolution for NGOs and their actions by the year 2010. Various possible scenarios will be developed and the pros and cons of each scenario spelled out.

This analysis will be tested both in a reconvened focus group (see task 1) and via a more dispersed selected academic and practitioner community using email and a website.

Task 5: Writing of final report and presentation.

An interim report and presentation will be made available in early May, with the final product, to be submitted by end July 2004, to the sponsoring agencies.

Task 6: Writing of an academic publishable paper based upon the research

As an academic institution, The FIFC retains the intellectual rights to the material it researchers and would endeavor to publish the findings of the research in a peer-reviewed journal, giving due acknowledgement to the sponsoring consortium.

Task 7: Disseminating and use of the final report in the international humanitarian community to promote discussion around the need for and modalities of more system wide change.