

# The Humanitarianism and War Project



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This report, which covers the period since January 2005, is designed to keep readers up to date on the work of the Humanitarianism and War Project. The text of this and earlier Reports is available on our web site, [hwproject.tufts.edu](http://hwproject.tufts.edu)

### Study on Perceptions of Security Released

How do people emerging from conflicts around the world perceive the peace and security which is gradually replacing warfare? How do they view the presence in their midst of foreign soldiers and aid workers? Does it matter who brings assistance and in what form it comes? Do their views matter to the governments dispatching military and humanitarian personnel and materiel?

These questions are raised in the latest study by the Humanitarianism and War Project. The answers come from some 350 persons interviewed individually and in focus groups earlier this year in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. Interviewees included a broad cross section of people such as tribal elders and university students in Afghanistan, Kosovo Serbs and Kosovar Albanians of all ages from four cities in Kosovo, and war-wounded and civil society representatives in Sierra Leone.

The report contrasted the views of local people with those of international military and aid personnel serving in these three areas. It found marked differences between and among the views of each of the three groups, and also within each of the groups. That is, while all of

the military forces interviewed were concerned about security, the American contingent serving in Afghanistan took a much more restricted approach to engaging the local population than did other troops, who sought security in part through such engagement. On the aid side, some aid agencies sought security by “blending in,” others through maintaining their distance.

If attitudes varied considerably among those interviewed, they also evolved over time. The team concluded that as conflict recedes, local people move quickly beyond their need for protection from violence (physical security) to a wider range of needs, including employment, health care, and education (human security). Outside actors, the team found, were less able to adapt their own resources to respond with a wider array of services. Local people seemed to appreciate what they received rather than debating whether it came from military or civilian institutions.

The team was headed by Antonio Donini, who led the research in Afghanistan. Members were Ian Smillie, a Project consultant based in Ottawa; Anthony C. Welch, a former British military officer; Ted van Baarda, an instructor in ethics of the Netherlands Armed Forces who was involved in an earlier

Project case study of Kosovo; and Larry Minear, who directs the Center’s Humanitarianism and War Project. The report was commissioned by the UK NGO-Military Contact Group and funded by the UK Department for International Development as part of an effort to promote dialogue between major actors on security issues.

Reflecting on the report, Minear noted a troubling disconnect between popular perceptions of security and the driving animus of international aid programs. “This report sends a warning to donors: short-term investments in keeping the lid on through military presence and keeping the wolf from the door through stop-gap economic aid need to give way to a wider human security agenda if durable peace is to become a reality.”

The report has attracted considerable interest in pre-publication seminars in London in mid-April and in Copenhagen and New York in late May. Debriefings are also scheduled for Geneva in mid-June, Washington, D.C. in July, and Ottawa in the fall. In London, the British Ministry of Defence hosted the discussion, which proposed a number of specific follow-up steps for various actors that are printed in the report. In Copenhagen, Center Director Peter Walker presented the study as part of a workshop on

A New Security Environment for Humanitarian Workers: Challenges and Necessary Adjustments. In New York, the discussion took place at Policy Dialogue XVII and included discussion of the implication of divergent perceptions of security for assistance agencies operating in contested environments. (For a report, see [hwproject.tufts.edu](http://hwproject.tufts.edu))

The report in its entirety (96 pages), including maps and photos as well as quotations from interviews and the questionnaires used in the surveys, is available on the Center's web site ([famine.tufts.edu](http://famine.tufts.edu)).

### Recent activities

In addition to acting as team leader for the study on perceptions of security, Antonio Donini has been busy on other fronts as well. As part of the Famine Center's efforts to better understand how humanitarian action is perceived in other cultures, he participated in several meetings with Islamic NGOs convened by OCHA and the US State Department. In March 2005 he attended the International Studies Association annual meeting in Honolulu where he presented a paper on the challenges to the universality of humanitarianism. He has also authored a chapter on negotiating humanitarian space in Afghanistan under the Taliban as well as shorter articles for the *Humanitarian Affairs Review* and *RedR*. Availing themselves of his residency in Geneva, several organizations have called on him for presentations, including the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the Geneva Humanitarian Forum, and the University of Siena.

Project staff and consultants have been involved in a number of meetings and consultations. In February, Larry Minear participated in a student-initiated symposium on Darfur at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. He also attended a conference in April in Madrid, At the Crossroads in Humanitarian Action, sponsored by the Instituto de Estudios Sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria (IECAH). In late May, he participated in a conference in Oslo on a new Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations." Minear and Smillie have authored an update which has appeared in *Humanitarian Exchange* on the good humanitarian donorship (GHD) process, "Welcome to the Club."

### Upcoming events

Looking to the future, the Project has a number of activities on the drawing board. In mid-June, it will hold an informal consultation in Geneva to solicit input on the themes of upcoming research. At

present these include Universality and its discontents; Principles vs. politics: implications of the global war on terrorism for the future of humanitarianism; Coherence in practice: ground-truthing the effectiveness of integrated missions; and Under the gun: the challenge of operating in increasingly insecure environments. For more information on future research, please consult our website. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Some changes are also in the offing in the Policy Dialogue series. This twice-yearly gathering has evolved since its inception in 1997 to embrace a wider array of participants (it originally included only NGOs) and to diversify locations (it now alternates between New York in the spring and Washington in the fall). Instead of meeting for an entire day, however, sessions will now be limited to half-days and, rather than focusing on topics within the rubric of the Humanitarianism and War Project alone, will encompass the wider work of the International Famine Center. The



*Speakers at February symposium on Darfur at Notre Dame University: John Prendergast (International Crisis Group), Ambassador Francis Deng, and Larry Minear  
Photo: Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies*



*Policy Dialogue Meeting at the IRC. Participants shown are from the IFRC, Human Rights Watch, the Overseas Development Institute, the IRC, and the H & W Project*  
 Photo: Milagros Cruz/IRC

fall Policy Dialogue, scheduled for successive days in November in Washington and New York, will feature a discussion of the Sudan and Uganda, drawing on research by Center colleagues Helen Young and Dyan Mazurana.

### **What they're reading and saying**

From time to time, we use our Status Reports to update readers on news about and reactions to our publications. A recent survey done for the Overseas Development Institute found that among the most frequently downloaded articles from *Disasters* in recent years were several authored at the Center. As for comments on recent books by Project staff and consultants, we reprint two here. The two books are beginning to be used in college and university curricula.

*"I am well into your new book, [a] storehouse of extremely valuable information that should be required reading for every Federal government and non-governmental official. It is a fine resource and I am grateful for your extensive knowledge of the field. Frustrat-*

*ing as it must be for you, we are all aware we are moving toward more sustainable institutional structures, but the pace is slow and often confused. Thank you for cutting through so much of the thickets of misinformation and just plain wrong 'facts' that are in the public domain and our lazy, non contextual media informants' work."*

--A senior Canadian government official, in a letter to Ian Smillie, commenting on *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World* (Kumarian 2004)

*"This book is the distilled wisdom of what is the world's most sustained and accomplished independent endeavour [the H&W Project] to get to grips with humanitarian relief. It is essentially an analytical history, organised thematically - but it is more than the sum of its parts: it is the state of the art, with all of its political, institutional, bureaucratic, financial and other obstructions; and all of its considerable political difficulties, conceptual problems*

*and moral dilemmas. As we enter what is likely to be a new phase of international humanitarian effort (Afghanistan; Iraq), this volume should be regarded as much as a forward-looking primer as an historical account. With humanitarian effort likely to face what will very likely be new configurations of familiar dynamics, some of what we need to learn can most easily be found in what should never have been ignored or forgotten. Old hands and beginners alike would do well to start here. ..."*

--From a review of Larry Minear's *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries* (Kumarian 2002) in the *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*.

### **News from the Famine Center**

Recent months have found the staff of the International Famine Center engaged in a strategic planning process, framing a vision for the next ten years and forging an agreement on a work program for the coming three years. The Center is seeking several major

grants from private donors to enable the expansion of its work. It is also engaged in negotiations with a number of governments and foundations and is pleased to announce an extension of an earlier grant from the government of Sweden.

Center director Peter Walker has been involved in a number of meetings and conferences in recent months. These include the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan and a Wilton Park consultation on disaster relief. Peter and other Center staff have also been working with Oxfam and World Vision to implement some of the findings of last year's *Ambiguity and Change* study. Peter addressed the biennial session of ALNAP in early June in the Hague on the subject of the challenges of evaluating the international responses to the tsunami and also gave the commencement address at this year's graduation ceremony for the School of Nutrition.

Six students were awarded the degree of Masters of Arts in Humanitarian Assistance (MAHA). Seven students are expected in next year's program, including Kenyan, Ethiopian, Swedish, French, and US nationals.

A team led by Helen Young from the Famine Center and colleagues from Afhad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan recently completed one of the most extensive and in-depth studies ever of livelihood strategies, conflict, and trade in Northern Darfur. Their

report has received widespread praise and is being used by aid agencies and donors as a key source of understanding of the complexities of this fragile state. Although carried out as a livelihoods study, the report's recommendations speak directly to the conflict resolution process. The executive summary and key recommendations are at [http://www.famine.tufts.edu/pdf/darfur\\_livelihoods\\_under\\_seige.pdf](http://www.famine.tufts.edu/pdf/darfur_livelihoods_under_seige.pdf). A full version of the report will soon be available on the Center's website.

Also available is *Coping with war, Coping with peace: Livelihood adaptation in Bosnia Herzegovina (1989-2004)* ([http://www.famine.tufts.edu/pdf/bosnia\\_livelihoods\\_study.pdf](http://www.famine.tufts.edu/pdf/bosnia_livelihoods_study.pdf)). Led by Elizabeth Stites, this study uses a livelihoods framework to examine and analyze household livelihood strategies across three time periods in six rural villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The periods examined are the ending of the Cold War, the height of the conflict, and late 2004. The study focuses on the ways in which households adapted their livelihood strategies to respond to drastic changes in access to assets, shifts in coping strategies, and the resulting livelihood outcomes as they experienced changes in their political, social, and economic environment. Three broad factors have shaped household livelihood systems in rural Bosnia over the past fifteen years: the transition away from a socialist economy, armed conflict

(1992-1995), and the postwar reorganization of society. Households responded by using both short term coping strategies (such as changes in consumption, household composition, and location) and long term adaptations, including extensive shifts in the nature of livelihood strategies.

Liam Mahony, a Visiting Scholar at the Famine Center is continuing a research project with the Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, looking at best practice in the use of international presence to protect civilians in conflict zones. In addition to a thorough documentary review, the research has involved over 120 in-depth interviews with participants and observers in major missions, ranging from the UN mission in El Salvador in 1991 up to the current international presences in Darfur, Sri Lanka, and Colombia. Field research has been completed in Colombia, with additional field research planned for either Darfur or Sri Lanka. Liam was asked by High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour to participate in a working group which has drafted, at Secretary-General Kofi Annan's request, an ambitious reform plan of the High Commissioner's Office. His research equipped him for helping the Office to project a much more expanded vision of its future presence in the field in conflict zones and more pro-active strategies of civilian protection.