



## TUFTS UNIVERSITY

### Letter of Introduction

This will serve as a letter of introduction to new research on the Political Economy of the Humanitarian Enterprise that is being carried out by the Humanitarianism and War Project. Building on our earlier work, this new initiative examines the broad context in which humanitarian action takes place and the relationships between available resources and the realities that influence their allocation and use. Based on our findings and reflecting the real world of humanitarian programming, we hope to be able to make a number of specific recommendations regarding how donors may strengthen the positive features of their behavior and delimit the more negative aspects.

The political economy of humanitarian action reflects relations involving bilateral and multilateral agencies, northern NGOs, and their southern counterparts. Pressures brought to bear on humanitarian actors come from donor and host governments, wider international and domestic political processes, international military forces, public opinion (including that of diaspora communities) and the media. The study will explore the impact of political economy factors on humanitarian agency specialization, competition, and market share; service delivery and advocacy; and lessons- learning and reform. The research also incorporates a specific review of donor behavior that comprises one of three elements in a multidonor study of global financing of humanitarian assistance.

The principal researcher is Ian Smillie, Ottawa-based Canadian consultant and author of a number of studies in the humanitarian and development field. His recent works have included *Relief and Development: The Struggle for Synergy* (1998) and *Patronage or Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises* (2001), which he edited. He is assisted by Larry Minear, director of the Humanitarianism and War Project and author of a number of its publications, most recently *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries* (2002). The researchers will conduct in-country case studies of Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and East Timor, and desk studies of Haiti, Somalia, Azerbaijan, and the southern Africa famine.

The Humanitarianism and War Project is an independent policy research initiative based earlier at Brown University and, since 2000, at the Feinstein International Famine Center in Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. To date, it has received financial support from some fifty practitioner organizations and foundations. The new research is underwritten by grants from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the governments of Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Switzerland, and Care Canada, Oxfam-US, Trocaire, World Vision Canada, and Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

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We would very much appreciate any assistance that you and your colleagues might provide to the researchers. In addition to participating in interviews on these issues, we would welcome your suggestions of in-house studies or other documents that shed light on these issues. Interviewees will not be quoted by name without their consent.

We look forward to your reactions to the finished products, both the report on donor behavior which is scheduled for completion in April 2003 and the full-length book the following year. The complete terms of reference and timetable for the research are available on our web site ([hwproject.tufts.edu](http://hwproject.tufts.edu)) under New Developments.

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