Study Four:

CHANGES IN HUMANITARIAN FINANCING:

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two sets of questions guide this study: 1) How is the competitive aid environment evolving and what are the forces shaping this environment? In that context, in what ways does this impact on donors, aid organisations, the larger humanitarian community and beneficiaries? 2) Given this evolving environment, how could the United Nations (UN) be best configured to provide maximum benefit to beneficiaries, in terms of its role, its efficiency in the use of resources and its effectiveness as a provider of assistance, while remaining an attractive option for donors? These questions form the basis of the study's terms of reference (see: Annex I) and are reflected in the study's structure:

Chapter 1: <u>The Competitive Aid Environment: Implications and Consequences</u>

1. The humanitarian market place is characterised by a growing number of actors, competing for limited resources. Although the UN humanitarian system should have special status due to its global presence and legitimacy, it is nevertheless regarded by many key donors as 'just another humanitarian actor.'

2. The 'duality' of the UN system's normative and delivery service roles has called into question its objectivity and moral authority. The latter role forces the system to compete for donor resources in order to maintain its service delivery structure. The competition for resources constrains agency independence, accounts for mission and mandate creep, and allows for compromises over 'forgotten emergencies.'

3. To a very significant extent, such contending pressures are due to donor behaviour that all too often uses humanitarian assistance to pursue domestic and international interests that have little to do with humanitarian principles or objectives.

4. If the UN system does not reposition itself, it will continue to compete with other organisations, which may already have a comparative advantage in particular niche areas. The financial implications are unclear, although in the near term, the UN's global percentage of funding is unlikely to change significantly.

Chapter 2: <u>Perceptions of Performance: The UN's Value-Added</u>

5. The lack of a consistent definition of humanitarianism complicates the way the UN's humanitarian product is perceived.

6. Perceptions – whether based on fact or not – affect attitudes, relationships and funding decisions at a micro-level. The common view is that the UN has failed to make major actors in the international community understand its roles and responsibilities, and accordingly, its value-added. This can be attributed to the duality and expanding nature of humanitarianism noted above, but it also reflects the UN's inability to conceptualise itself as a system, with clearly allocated mandates, roles and responsibilities for its agencies and programmes.

7. Since General Assembly (GA) resolution 46/182 considerable efforts and achievements have been made to enhance the capacity of the UN system. Nevertheless, the UN, though rich in the diversity of its various agencies, suffers as a whole from a credibility problem. This is particularly evident in terms of how its assessments, appeals and reporting mechanisms are viewed. The credibility issue is exacerbated for many by the reputedly opaque mechanisms that the UN as a whole has in its approach to the issue of humanitarian accountability. Most parts of the system are perceived to be exaggerating needs and funding requirements.

8. Conclusions about the UN system's perceived performance can be clustered under four headings: i) the normative role of the UN, in which advocacy of humanitarian standards and principles is regarded as essential, but also as 'compromised'; ii) its leadership role, which suffers from a lack of definition and under-developed tools; iii) its coordination role, considered flawed by the aforementioned 'duality' and the ambiguities inherent in GA 46/182; and iv) its service delivery role, which in many instances is seen as less important than its protection role.

Chapter 3: Enhancing Performance

9. The complex and competitive aid environment that has emerged since GA resolution 46/182 should compel the UN system to address some of its inherent ambiguities, and to refocus on its comparative advantages. In so doing, the UN system should reposition itself more strategically in four fundamental ways, involving shifts from a) an internal to a greater external focus; b) an operational to a greater normative approach; c) a loose to a more narrow definition of humanitarianism; and d) a symptoms-based to a more causally-focused orientation.

10. These *strategic refocusing* issues not only reflect dissatisfaction with how the UN system is integrated into the current humanitarian environment, but also its inability to be more accountable to beneficiaries. Three models are proposed to enable the UN system to assess what its true value-added to the humanitarian community could and should be: a) ***the standard-bearer*** model, which emphasises the importance of the UN system's normative role above all else; b) ***the global reach*** model, which envisages the continuation of the UN system's present role, though with substantive improvements at field and headquarters levels; and c) ***the critical intervention*** model, which is a variant of the first model, except it allows for direct service delivery in rare instances.

Chapter 4: Structural and Procedural Implications of Strategic Refocusing

11. A closer and more defined relationship between the UN system and the humanitarian community is essential to ensure that the proposed repositioning has maximum impact on improving humanitarian response. The current channels between the wider humanitarian community and the UN system remain too diverse and disparate. Establishing common strategic objectives, systems for accountability, and clearer and more effective reporting lines between the field and headquarters would streamline humanitarian efforts.

12. If the UN system became more externally and normative-focused, it would act as a central service organisation for the wider humanitarian community. To fulfil this function, it would have to realign its internal decision-making and work processes towards external leadership and coordination. This would require harmonisation and synchronization of agency policies, capacities and decision-making systems. It would also require a clear distinction between management and leadership, and the elimination of unnecessary layers of coordination.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

13. The UN system has to choose between continuing to accept the duality of its present role and becoming the true *standard bearer* of the system. It cannot do both as presently construed. The *standard-bearer* role will become even more necessary if the present aid environment gets more complex and competitive.

14. The humanitarian community lacks a strategic vision, agreement on the parameters of humanitarian assistance and effective systems of accountability. This is due to the ambiguities surrounding the role and responsibilities of the UN system, and its leadership role.

15. The UN system needs to reposition itself in four ways. It needs i) to be more externally orientated; ii) to provide a clearer definition of 'humanitarianism'; iii) to increase its normative role substantially; and iv) to focus more on the causes of disasters and emergencies than on symptoms.

16. The UN system needs to move towards the *standard-bearer* model, ensuring community-wide accountability at the field level and universal respect for humanitarian norms, standards and principles. At the same time, highly unusual circumstances in complex emergencies might require a UN *critical intervention* capacity, which would require a range of special intervention instruments, including a special humanitarian intervention force.

17. The UN system also requires more effective leadership and management. The former should relate to its external responsibilities, and be reflected in more holistic approaches to advocacy and greater accountability. Both could be enhanced through a body of eminent persons who would report regularly on the strengths and weaknesses of humanitarian endeavours. Clearer reporting lines between headquarters and the field and more effective decision-making procedures are essential.

18. More effective reporting lines would link the proposed group of eminent persons (with the Emergency Relief Coordinator-led Inter Agency Standing Committee at headquarters) to UN Humanitarian Coordinator-led IASC country teams. Speedier decisions would result from IASC representatives forming part of the ERC's executive office, and also from agreement on action-oriented decision-areas that would not require IASC consensus.

19. Training in the humanitarian field remains weak, though UN agencies have recognised technical expertise. Appropriate training programmes are required for senior and middle-level managers in the field and at headquarters, and should include a focus on humanitarian principles, institutional roles and responsibilities, planning and relevant management techniques.

20. If the UN Secretariat, as presently structured, cannot accommodate the administrative, human resource and financial improvements required to make the coordinating component of the UN system more responsive, then it is proposed that a mechanism similar to the 1984 Office for Emergency Operations in Africa – 'of the UN but not in the UN system' – be introduced.

21. The UN system has to improve its strategic planning capacity. An exercise for demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of the UN system in that regard could begin with an effort to determine the parameters of humanitarianism and, at the same time, refocus planning on human vulnerability reduction. At the field level, strategic planning processes should be a core function of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, and part of an effort to relate disasters and emergencies to their impacts on longer-term integrated strategic objectives.

22. The UN system-oriented Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process (CAP) should become more inclusive, and, hence, be expanded into a *Common* Appeals Process for the broader humanitarian response. CAPs should reflect the strategic orientation emerging from on-going strategic planning processes, noted above. They should also reflect the results of joint assessments, and be geared towards prioritised sectoral and inter-sectoral needs. A highly skilled and field-based system, under the Humanitarian Coordinator and supported by the IASC country team, would be responsible for ensuring that the services outlined in the CAP are provided and that CAP objectives are met.

Chapter 6: <u>Epilogue: Humanitarian Futures</u>

23. Even if these recommendations are implemented, disasters and emergencies remain at the periphery of international attention. This position is sustained by a belief that disasters and emergencies are not connected to the ways that 'we live our normal lives.' The reality is that disasters and emergencies often occur precisely because of the ways that societies are structured, and how they allocate their resources. They are indeed manifestations of 'normal life.' The UN should take the lead in bringing together the breadth and depth of its expertise to focus on vulnerability reduction, and make this a core concern.

24. To undertake this globally important initiative, the UN system will have to become more creative, flexible, responsive to the dynamics of change and complexity, and willing to advocate with a level of coherence and commitment over time. It will have to view planning as a priority, and in so doing, expand conventional planning time-frames. It will have to promote speculation as a mainstream activity within the organisation, and foster cross-systems approaches and inter-disciplinary methodologies. The UN is the only

organisation with the authority, the *global reach*, and the legitimacy to put this into practice.

INTRODUCTION

CHANGES IN HUMANITARIAN FINANCING:

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

This study, ultimately, is about the integrity of the United Nations. It is about the way the UN is perceived by its advocates and critics; by its partners, personnel, donors, and even by its beneficiaries. While accepting that the United Nations is rich in the diversity of its individual agencies, the study's level of analysis is the UN's humanitarian system as a whole: those facets that are and should be common to all. In the first instance, this study is concerned with 'the humanitarian product,' but its implications reach much further. Study Four challenges the United Nations to become the global *standard-bearer* of humanitarian principles and norms.

Two central issues guide the study. The first is 'the competitive aid environment' and its impact on donors, aid organisations, the larger humanitarian system, and disaster- and emergency-affected peoples. Based on this evolving aid environment, the second issue is how the United Nations could be best configured in terms of its role, its efficiency in the use of resources and its effectiveness as a provider of humanitarian assistance.[1]

To address these concerns, the study focuses on five inter-related working objectives:

1. The impact the competitive aid environment has on the humanitarian objectives and operations of the United Nations;

2. The perceived utility, or, 'value-added,' of the UN's humanitarian activities and operations, *i.e.*, its 'humanitarian product';

3. Areas where the UN's humanitarian product can provide increased value-added to the efforts of the international humanitarian community as a whole, and how it can enhance the well-being of disaster- and emergency-affected peoples;

4. Possible procedural and structural implications for the UN arising from recommendations for adjusting the humanitarian product; and

5. The adequacy of these recommendations for confronting humanitarian crises in the next decade.[2]

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[1] Study Four's terms of reference notes that 'the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed that…the United Nations should consider options as to how, within this changing context of humanitarian financing, it should position itself to best serve those in need of humanitarian assistance, both in terms of what goods and services it should be providing and how it should be structured to provide them.'

[2] In addition to this report, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee requested that the study's conclusions and recommendations 'translate into a joint UN agency implementation action plan under the aegis of the IASC.' The IASC recognised that the study's recommendations had to provide realistic options for the UN's humanitarian system, and that these recommendations may well have significant long-term implications for the UN's humanitarian role and responsibilities.

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The Study Team has benefited from three parallel studies, referenced in the Secretary-General's July 2003 report to the Economic and Security Council (ECOSOC). These studies addressed 1) the process by which humanitarian needs are assessed, 2) factors determining donor decision-making about humanitarian funding, and 3) global funding trends for humanitarian response.[3] At the same time, this study also benefited from an extensive range of earlier evaluations about the UN's humanitarian response capacities as well as an ever expanding literature on the subject.[4]

Research for this study also included an intensive interview programme that involved approximately 140 representatives of donor governments, governments of disaster and emergency prone countries, the Red Cross movement, non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, programmes and funds, as well as academics and analysts. That said, the most obvious weakness from the Study Team's perspective is the lack of direct contributions from those who are intended to benefit from the UN's humanitarian response, namely, people affected by disasters and emergencies. To some extent, the team hopes that extensive discussions with senior representatives from developing countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with close links to beneficiaries, and the exchange of information and findings between this study and the three parallel studies, have mitigated this clear weakness.

Reviews by an informal meeting of experts in June 2003 strengthened the study as did comments made in informal and formal meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in June and July.[5]

The study has six inter-related chapters, reflecting the overall project objectives noted earlier. Chapter 1 focuses on two essential issues: 1) the nature of the 'competitive aid environment,' and 2) the consequences for the United Nations system, with particular reference to humanitarian funding.

The relationship between the UN's humanitarian product and donor funding has myriad explanatory layers, many of which appear contradictory or episodic. Yet, no matter how uncertain that relationship might be, it is evident that donors and others believe that the UN's involvement in humanitarian assistance has clear *comparative advantages* that give the humanitarian community *value-added.* The extent to which the UN's real and potential comparative advantages result in consistent value-added, however, is also a complex issue, which Chapter 2 seeks to address.

The lack of a consistent definition of humanitarianism complicates the way the UN's humanitarian product is perceived, as discussed in Chapter 2. Yet, despite the expanding nature of humanitarianism, there are certain themes that emerge relatively consistently from most respondents and studies. They will surprise few. They more often than not reflect earlier evaluations, concerns expressed in forums such as ECOSOC and the Montreux donors venue, and the three parallel studies.

[3] See Table 1 for more details of the three studies.
[4] See Appendix III for a list of sources consulted.
[5] The study was the subject of a "peer group" review on 6 June 2003 in London, and subsequently was discussed at an informal meeting of the IASC Working Group in Stockholm on 15 June 2003. The IASC Working Group discussed the study formally on 9 July and held a workshop on the study's recommendations and conclusions on 15 September 2003. See: Annex II.

Whatever the consistency of views about the strengths and weaknesses of the UN's humanitarian product, it is worth noting how few in the 'humanitarian community' are aware of the substantial efforts and changes that have been made by UN agencies to improve their organisational and system-wide response capacities. Considerable energy has been expended over the years to promote common services, to initiate 'joint assessments,' to improve the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals Process (CAP), to harmonise response strategies and to strengthen the all-important in-country role of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. While these changes are important 'micro-reforms,' they do not address the macro, systemic level issues that give rise to large-scale human suffering.

Therefore, given these changes, and the energy and commitment of so many, what new proposals might this study suggest to enhance the UN's humanitarian product, in light of the complex competitive aid environment? Chapter 3 proposes three different models that emerge from *repositioning strategies* that the UN could consider in light of these complexities.

Substantive product change inevitably requires modification in system structures and procedures. Here, too, this would also be the case, based on the options proposed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 thus explores the adjustments that would facilitate the options proposed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 summarises the study's conclusions and recommendations about the implications of changes in humanitarian financing for the UN's humanitarian system now, and for the foreseeable future. As Chapter 6, the epilogue to this study, suggests, however, there is no guarantee that the UN or the broader international community will be capable of dealing with the types of humanitarian crises that could occur in the coming decade, even with all the changes that might be considered to enhance the effectiveness of the UN's humanitarian product. Hence, this study concludes with a challenge far greater than that posed by the current competitive aid environment: to what extent is the United Nations willing to shift its perspective from humanitarian response, towards mobilising the international community to focus on the causes of human vulnerability?

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings from the Humanitarian Financing Studies:

Global Humanitarian Assistance Flows 2003, Development Initiatives, May 2003: Existing data collated by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Financial Tracking System of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) does not provide a complete insight into total humanitarian aid. More detailed analysis of available evidence suggests that humanitarian assistance is being significantly underestimated, and that in practice, real spending on humanitarian interventions is twice as high as the official figures suggest. Key trends found to be particularly relevant to this study are as follows:

- However it is measured, humanitarian aid has been growing in volume and as a share of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Funds made available for Humanitarian Assistance (HA)[1] have more than doubled from 2 billion in 1990 to $5.5 billion by 2000. From 1999-2001, total HA averaged at $5.5 billion a year and represented about ten percent of ODA.
- When all humanitarian aid spending was added up, including funding from non-OECD donors, general public contributions to NGO's and the cost of post-conflict peace activities, the resources for humanitarian aid work amounted to approximately $10 billion in 2001.
- While it is not possible to measure the UN's market share accurately, estimates based on reported expenditure and contributions indicate the following expenditure: $4.2 billion on refugees in donor countries and $4 billion on post-conflict peace activities over the past three years. In addition, non-DAC donors have contributed $250 – 500 million, voluntary general public donations via NGOs amounted to $700- $1.5 billion, and an additional $400 million, not captured in DAC statistics but reported by UN and international organisations, had been received and spent.

Measuring humanitarian need: A critical review of needs assessment practice and its influence on resource allocation, Overseas Development Institute, May 2003

The study found broad agreement within the humanitarian community around four related 'core' elements of particular concern: the protection of life, health, subsistence and physical security. Against these four criteria, the study found the following in the assessment and analysis of needs:

- The needs based approach, prevalent within the sector, encouraged a supply-driven analysis of requirements. In general, assessments were treated as a front-end process and closely tied to the process of resource allocation. A risk-based analysis that considered coping mechanisms and protection issues provided a stronger basis for assessment.
- The tendency to apply relative standards in chronically high-risk situations led to a disproportionate pattern of aid distribution and neglect of such situations. A more consistent application of standards and routine mortality and acute malnutrition levels was recommended to ensure a proportional response.
- Decision-making within the sector was taking place in the absence of crucial information. The lack of demand for formal assessments reflected an agency and donor ambivalence towards measuring the impact of humanitarian action. As a result, there were few examples of recorded data collected by recognised methods. In other words, much of the assessment process was ad-hoc and hard to compare and aggregate.
- The definition of a humanitarian crisis was found to be largely a matter of subjective interpretation. The absence of evidence-based assessments led to a tendency for agencies and donors to 'construct' crisis in a mutually beneficial way, with problems being 'constructed' and 'solved' in ways that bore little relation to actual needs.
- Humanitarian responses may be driven as much by extraneous factors as by evidence of need, in particular, by the political interests of donors and the marketing interests of agencies. This creates a lack of trust throughout the system and introduces biases in the way in which needs are assessed and responded to.

[1] According to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

The Quality of Money: Donor Behaviour in Humanitarian Financing, Humanitarianism and War Project, Tufts University April 2003

- Domestic and international policies, rather than humanitarian principles, are the primary determinants of donor decisions on humanitarian financing. The study found that humanitarianism was a secondary concern to competing and sometimes inconsistent domestic and foreign international policy priorities, influenced in turn by the media, key individuals and institutions.
- The donor humanitarian policy framework is inconsistent and contradictory. Donors have no explicit policy to guide their choice of assistance channel and the process of resource allocation is rarely based on institutional merit. There are few links between humanitarian and reconstruction activities, despite the widely recognised need. It is unclear whether efforts linking humanitarian action with conflict resolution and prevention efforts produce more effective assistance than if humanitarian action were kept apart.
- The whole of the humanitarian endeavour is less than the sum of its parts. The overall effectiveness of humanitarian aid is compromised by donor earmarking, short funding cycles, unrequited pledges and late funding, and by tying contributions to conditions and political interests. There are fundamental and structural disconnects within the overall humanitarian system.
- A climate of mistrust and lack of transparency pervades the humanitarian enterprise. A high level of distrust and antipathy was found to be prevalent among donors and implementing agencies. This has resulted in a high level of micro-management, tight earmarking and a disproportionate donor focus on results and codes of conduct.

CHAPTER 1

THE COMPETITIVE AID ENVIRONMENT: IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

The Competitive Aid Environment

Today's humanitarian aid environment is competitive and complex. Since the end of the Cold War, a rise in humanitarian aid funding has contributed to an estimated ten-fold increase in the number of NGOs that regard themselves as disaster and emergency relief actors. Moreover, most UN agencies claim some form of disaster and emergency relief competence. The plethora of relief actors now also includes military contingents, which regard humanitarian assistance as components of their 'hearts-and-minds' strategies, as well as private sector organisations.

Six Key Trends

To serve as a frame of reference, trends in the aid environment are explored here using the market place as an analogy. Within this 'market context,' six trends have shaped the present aid environment since the end of the Cold War, notably:

1. *An increase in demand for international humanitarian assistance*. The impact of natural disasters has dramatically increased over the last 30 years, with numbers of people affected rising from 700 million in the 1970s to nearly 2 billion in the 1990s.[1] While the increase in numbers may in fact be a reflection of better reporting and real-time media coverage, it also reveals greater vulnerability due to growing global population, migration into crowded urban and disaster-prone areas, environmental degradation, and the erosion of traditional coping mechanisms as communities fragment.[2] While it is assumed that the number of people affected by conflict-related crises has also increased, no compelling patterns emerge from ongoing conflict research.[3]

   Initiatives to make the humanitarian response more effective and coherent have not been able to keep pace with the rapid change and complex dynamics of disasters and emergencies. Moreover, demand for humanitarian assistance can be a question of perception. Donors and humanitarian agencies can interpret the demand for aid in different ways, and the absence of a collective approach has led to significant discrepancies in opinion.[4] Although trends indicate a rise in the

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[1] However, deaths from natural disasters actually fell from 2 million in the 1970's to just under 800,000 by the 1990's, which has in part been attributed by the the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to better disaster preparedness (IFRC, *World Disaster Report 2002*, Chapter 8).

[2] IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2002*, Chapter 8.

[3] For example, data gathered by the Heidelberg Institute of International Conflict Research suggests that while there has been a rising trend of ongoing territorial and border conflicts since 1945, this trend has in fact decreased since the mid-1980's. It should be noted that this type of analysis gives little insight into the numbers of people affected by conflict-related crises.

[4] For example, in Sudan in 1998, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association reported 2.37 million disaster-affected people, but the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture

number of people affected, it should equally be noted that the demand for assistance is estimated and assumed rather than explicitly understood or agreed upon.[5]

2. *An increase in the supply of official humanitarian aid*. The last decade has seen a doubling of humanitarian assistance funds, from $2.1 billion in 1990 to $5.9 billion by 2000. Despite real declines in total Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the 1990s, spending on humanitarian aid has grown and now comprises 8 per cent of total ODA (excluding funds spent by donors on refugees living in donor countries). The rise in humanitarian funding has caused some key bilateral donors to become more directly involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, partly to promote accountability. As noted above, this has been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the number of aid agencies operating in a humanitarian capacity.

   While current financial mechanisms provide an insight into official funding patterns, peculiarities and discrepancies in reporting prevent an accurate assessment of aid flows. A number of financial flows are not tracked at all.[6] If they could be compiled, a more precise global view of humanitarian financing would emerge, placing formal aid flows in a broader assistance context.

3. *An expanded definition of humanitarianism.* The range of issues now falling under the humanitarian rubric has grown significantly over the past few years. Gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS, the protection of livelihoods, and human rights have all been incorporated into the humanitarian fold. In part, the more inclusive nature of humanitarianism is due to the growing number of factors that are seen to explain the onset of disasters and emergencies. In part, it is because in many countries, the only funding available is for emergencies. In any event, the ambiguity surrounding the nature of humanitarianism has a marked effect and complicates the setting of humanitarian priorities, entry and exit strategies, and reaching consensus on needs assessment practices. In particular, incentives within the existing system encourage the inclusion of transitional and development orientated activities in humanitarian appeals.

   The lack of a common definition of what humanitarian assistance is and what it should achieve further exacerbates the unpredictable working environment for UN agencies. For the purpose of this study, humanitarianism as defined in General Assembly (GA) resolution 46/182 and by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) will be used, namely, 'the objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters…' In addition, this study adheres to the principle that

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Organisation (FAO) estimated just under 1 million, with the former being nearer the truth. World Disaster Report, 2001.

[5] Darcy, J. *Measuring humanitarian need: A critical review of needs assessment practice and its influence on resource allocation*. Preliminary findings paper, Overseas Development Institute, Humanitarian Policy Group, February 2003.

[6] Unofficial aid flows that are thought to be significant yet poorly understood include contributions from non-DAC countries, voluntary donations by the general public or through private voluntary organisations, financial support from Diaspora groups, other informal fund transfer systems such as 'Hawala' transactions, and religious contributions, notably Islamic 'Zakat.'

the primary goal of humanitarian action is to protect human life and to reduce human suffering.[7]

4. *The politicisation of humanitarian assistance* . In recent years, donor behaviour and aid financing has been overtly dictated by political agendas - domestic as well as international. As a result, humanitarian organisations find themselves working in an environment where humanitarianism is complicated by divergent donor objectives, and for reasons of funding, aid organisations all too often accommodate the objectives of a small group of donor governments.[8]

5. *Unpredictable financing*. Donor practices skew the way agencies are funded, creating operational tensions that can undermine humanitarian objectives and the effective delivery of assistance. In complex emergencies where the vast majority of funding comes from emergency budget lines, competition can also arise from the need for donors to fund other activities at the expense of humanitarian aid, notably reconstruction, peacekeeping and governance activities. In some instances, the blurring of humanitarian and development aid, under the rubric of transitional activities, can limit funding made available for more traditional humanitarian action.

6. *The need to maintain institutional capacity versus the irregular and inconsistent patterns of crises.* Over the past fifteen years, many humanitarian organisations have increased their professional capacities and, accordingly, their size and institutional permanence. While the human impact of disasters and emergencies is growing, the unpredictability of emergencies means that many humanitarian organisations lack an adequate funding base to sustain their staff and structures. Hence, competition for resources is also generated by the need to maintain this expanded organisational capacity.

The United Nations in the Competitive Aid Environment[9]

GA resolution 46/182 tasked the UN system to provide leadership and coordinate international efforts to support disaster and emergency affected countries.

This reflected the demand for a coherent humanitarian response to deal with under-performance in the humanitarian aid sector. In market terms, this under-performance could be equated with an inability to match supply with demand of relief aid in an equitable and effective manner. In this way, the UN system was called upon to serve as a public goods provider to the humanitarian community for goods that were not otherwise made available. These public goods included coordination and leadership, but also other services that benefited the humanitarian community as a whole, and for

[7] Darcy, *op cit.*

[8] About ten major donors who provide over 90 per cent of total humanitarian assistance largely determine the humanitarian agenda. The United States is the largest single donor, although the European Union has become a major contributor in the past ten years. In 2001, the US supplied 36 per cent of total aid, or as much as the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands combined. However, when the assistance provided by ECHO, the European Development Fund and EU member states are combined, the EU's total humanitarian assistance contribution surpasses that of the US in any given year (*Global Humanitarian Flows 2003*, Development Initiatives).

[9] For the purposes of this study, 'UN system' refers to the programmes, agencies, funds and offices of the United Nations humanitarian system.

which few incentives existed for individual institutions or actors to undertake.[10] The ability of the UN system to address this market failure through the provision of such public goods has been influenced - and often constrained - by the following six factors:

1. *The consequence of political ascendancy*. Donors' political drivers have had particular repercussions for the United Nations. They have led to considerable concentration of resources on a few high-profile crises,[11] at the expense of many other lesser known and forgotten emergencies. This highlights the UN's inability to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources according to need, as opposed to political expediency. The UN system is perceived to be an 'unwitting accomplice,' since its funding appeals are not viewed as based on need, but rather on 'what the market will bear,' or even more cynically, what donors are prepared to finance.[12]

2. *A fragile funding environment.* Current financing patterns do not provide UN agencies with a stable and predictable funding base. Donors prefer to earmark funds for UN agencies in order to retain control over how these funds are spent, rather than leave this to the discretion of the agencies. Furthermore, the operational effectiveness of humanitarian financing has been compromised by disjointed donor policies, with little synergy or collective coherence in strategies.[13] Despite various donor initiatives to lend greater predictability to UN agency efforts, agencies wrestle with the belief that they are 'only as good as their last emergency.'[14] Not only does this place enormous pressure on the ways that human and logistics assets are used, but it also threatens the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action.[15]

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[10] The Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) has been cited as an example of a public good provided by the UN system that has universal benefit to the assistance community.

[11] For example, the top five recipients in 1996-1999 received over $2.7 billion in aid, or twice the amount of the next five countries. Similarly, contributions to the two largest consolidated appeals exceeded the total given to all the other appeals combined in five out of eight years (*Global Humanitarian Flows 2003* and Porter, *External Review of the CAP* April 2002)

[12] This is borne out in a comparison of appeal funds requested for the Balkans and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2000. Some US $400 per person was requested for the former crisis, noteworthy for its relatively low mortality. Meanwhile, for the DRC, where 350,000 people were killed and a further 2.1 million died from war-provoked malnutrition and disease, barely US $7 per person was requested. The UN's current Iraq appeal for US $2.3 billion also appears to reinforce the perception that the appeal system is supply-driven (*Global Humanitarian Flows 2003*; 'DR Congo, Mortality Study,' New York: International Rescue Committee, 2001; Interview with donor official, April 2003).

[13] Ian Smillie and Larry Minear suggest that, 'donor behaviour currently represents a patchwork of policies and activities by individual governments which, taken together, do not provide a coherent or effective system for financing the international humanitarian enterprise.' *The Quality of Money: Donor Behavior in Humanitarian Financing*, Humanitarian and War Project, Tufts University – April 2003.

[14] Various initiatives have been taken by donors to lend a degree of stability to UN agencies, for example, by providing funds earlier in financial years to improve agency cashflow, in a few instances, eliminating budgetary distinctions between relief and transitional funding, developing Strategic Partnership Agreements and establishing overall per centage arrangements in order to make funding more predictable. In addition, the Swedish government has hosted a Good Donorship Conference in June 2003, while donors meet annually with the UN system in Montreux, Switzerland, to address humanitarian funding difficulties relating to the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process.

[15] Three UN agencies complained that the 2003 Iraq crisis forced them to transfer their 'best people' out of operations in Africa in order to respond to the 'occupying force's' perception of humanitarian needs in Iraq. In two instances, interviewees felt that they had no choice but to comply.

3. *Alternative assistance channels.* Major donors now channel the bulk of their funding directly to NGOs instead of through the UN system (for example, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office, ECHO, dedicates 65 per cent of funds to NGOs, 25 per cent to the UN, and 10 per cent to the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC).[16] They use their national NGOs for reasons of visibility and accountability. The same applies for military forces and private sub-contractors in complex emergencies.[17] Typically brought in at the instigation of donors and NGOs, the military now engage in assistance activities once the domain of UN agencies and NGOs.[18] Despite perceptions to the contrary, overall funding channelled through the UN humanitarian system has in fact increased in the last decade. The bulk of this increase, however, has been in earmarked funds to specific programmes and crises.[19]

4. *Sub-contracting pitfalls*. UN agencies have limited leverage in resource allocation. The earmarking of assistance by donors gives them control over how funds are spent. Agencies with a high proportion of earmarked services have arguably become 'humanitarian service providers,' i.e., sub-contractors to the donor community. They thus have little influence to challenge donor decisions on the inequalities in resource allocation, and on decisions based more on politics than humanitarian need.

5. *Donor-driven mandate creep*. The erosion of core resources and the absence of formal funding for public goods, coupled with earmarked funds predicated on an operational presence, pushes UN agencies to secure donor funds through the continuation of field programmes. The temptation has been to respond to donor objectives with an 'I-can-do-that-too' approach, in order to secure funding. This has often led agencies to over-extend themselves and contributes to situations whereby they claim to have core competencies in various donor-determined areas. Inevitably, this leads to turf battles and results in 'negative forms of overlap and duplication.'[20] The competition for donor contracts has sometimes led agencies to compromise humanitarian objectives and principles, as was reportedly the case in Goma in 1995 and more recently in Afghanistan.[21]

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[16] By the end of the 1990s, many donors were reported to be channelling a quarter of their humanitarian aid through the NGO sector (Development Initiatives, May 2003). It should also be noted that ECHO's funding of the UN is an increase in an attempt to stabilise funding to the UN.

[17] Such as the International Resource Group, a private company based in Maryland, US, which has been increasingly used for delivery activities (US Government official).

[18] Recent examples include the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) involvement in humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, similar US military involvement in Afghanistan, and, more recently, the United Kingdom's 'hearts and minds' assistance to Basrah in southern Iraq.

[19] The market share of total humanitarian aid provided by donors to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme has ranged from 30 per cent in 1991, to 51 per cent in 1996 to 37 per cent in 2000. In addition, multilateral contributions to the UN humanitarian system have remained relatively constant at 25 to 30 per cent of total Humanitarian Assistance in the 1990's, with the exception of a sharp dip in 1999, which had prompted concern of a shift away from the UN system (DAC source).

[20] Bezanson, Keith and Sagasti, Francisco, 'Perceptions and Perspectives on Overlap and Duplication in the United Nations Development System Specialised Agencies,' submitted to the UK Department for International Development, Assisted by Ursula Casabonne, Jill Clements, Richard Jolly, Fernando Prada and Hans Singer, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, June 2002.

[21] The competitive nature of Goma's aid environment in 1994-5 led to an unwillingness among many relief agencies to 'encourage self-critical analysis or to publicly protest aid diversions' by the Hutu extremists controlling the camps. In particular, 'UNHCR was not keen to do anything that might

6. *Coordination conflicts.* The plethora of organisations involved in humanitarian action invariably presents challenges for coordination mechanisms, with the competitive dynamic interfering with collective approaches. Moreover, some new actors are willing to participate in coordination activities, others only do so at times, while still others are not willing to participate at all.[22]

Humanitarian financing trends and their consequences for the United Nations

Speculation about the consequences of humanitarian financing on the United Nations in such a rapidly changing and unpredictable system is a hazardous undertaking. Nevertheless, this study posits that if the UN does not undertake substantial reforms, present trends are likely to evolve in the following six ways:

1. *Greater competition in a more complex aid environment.* Major donors have little vested interest in being more consistent and predictable in their funding, although recent attempts such as the Good Donorship process are trying to address these problems. Political and institutional benefits accrue from having the flexibility to choose from an array of actors, including the military, the private sector, NGOs and the UN. For a variety of reasons – including substantive investments in corporate social responsibility initiatives as well as the emergence of 'turn-key relief and development packages' – the private sector will also play a much larger role in the humanitarian world. The actions of the US military and the corporate sector in Afghanistan and Iraq are indications of such change. Competition, in other words, will become more intense.

2. *Greater compromises to accommodate contending interests*. The UN's present involvement in all aspects of humanitarian response – from promoting standards and preparing appeals, to coordination and implementation – will keep it mired in a relentless competition for resources. The UN system will continue to seek new funding sources in the private sector, from non-traditional donor governments, and from partnerships with other actors, such as the military. The results of these efforts, to date, have been mixed, but on the whole the UN has demonstrated a hitherto untested entrepreneurial capacity. The issue inevitably will be the compromises that the UN system will be forced to make in terms of its leadership role as it becomes yet another humanitarian actor.

3. *Expansion of humanitarianism to feed the humanitarian machine*. The expanding nature of humanitarianism is likely to continue as humanitarian agencies struggle for their own survival. Hence, the present trend to define issues not traditionally considered humanitarian under the humanitarian rubric is likely to continue. At

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jeopardise its contracts, or undermine broader international support for the Goma aid effort… UNHCR thus quietly lobbied the Security Council, but dared not raise its voice too loudly' (Cooley and Ron, 'The NGO Scramble,' *International Security*, 27:1, Summer 2002, pp 5-39.) In Western Afghanistan in 1996, a similarly competitive environment evolved which undermined the aid community's ability to develop a common response to the Taliban's ban on female education. 'As each UN agency tried to cut its own deal with the Taliban, the UN compromised its principles, while Taliban restrictions on women only escalated.' (Cooley and Ron; and Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press, 2001, p113.

[22] It must be pointed out here that some organisations are reluctant to coordinate for reasons that are based on their core principles.

the same time, 'mission-creep' will remain a trend as humanitarian organisations look for new ways to maintain their institutional structures and staff. There is no indication as yet that humanitarian and development assistance will increase to the levels required to meet the needs of the afflicted in an equitable way, or to meet internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals.

4. *Alternative sources of humanitarian leadership*. Speculation in the mid-1990s about humanitarian trends led to the conclusion that there was no reason to assume that the United Nations should have a monopoly on international leadership in times of humanitarian crises.[23] Even though the UN was tasked by the General Assembly with a leadership role, the competitive aid environment - in which leadership functions are subject to market forces and 'up for grabs' - might challenge this role even further.[24]

5. *Growing disconnect between donor funding and the UN's humanitarian product.* Donors provide assistance to UN humanitarian agencies for a variety of reasons, but there is little evidence that there is a direct correlation between the UN's overall humanitarian performance (if it were possible to rate it as such), and global funding levels. Ironically, perhaps, there seems to be an increase in funding from some donor governments in order to have various parts of the UN system do what such donors feel the system *should* be doing, as opposed to what it is actually doing, or what UN agencies believe they should be doing. On a situation-by-situation level, it is evident that UN agencies can increase donor support through the quality of specific in-country programmes and effective marketing. There, also, is the individual UN agency belief that as far as donors are concerned 'you're only as good as your last performance,' which could explain why some agencies feel the need to perform effectively where donors perceive the need. If present trends continue, donors may relax the rigid controls of earmarking, provide more multi-year funding and partnership agreements, and may fix overall percentages for future humanitarian funding for the UN system to ensure a modicum of institutional stability. Agreements are lacking, however, as to how to achieve these changes amongst the major bilaterals.[25]

6. *Continued under-supply of leadership and coordination services*. Despite concerted efforts by the UN system over the last decade, coordination and leadership remain relatively disjointed because the UN's public goods are not sufficiently protected from the effects of the competitive aid environment. Until the humanitarian community can devise a means of securing funding for adequate coordination and leadership, the aid sector will under-perform.

[23] Kent, R. *Bridging the gap*, report to IASC, July 1999.

[24] It could be argued that the most coherent challenge to the assumption that the UN system had a leadership role during humanitarian crises took place in Somalia in 1994 with the creation of the EC-led Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB).

[25] These are issues that the Good Donorship process is trying to resolve.

CHAPTER 2

PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE: THE UN'S VALUE-ADDED

Over the past decade, a number of significant reforms have enhanced the coherence and effectiveness of parts of the United Nations humanitarian system. At the same time, the UN system as a whole suffers from a credibility problem due to what has been perceived as inadequate or inconsistent responses, and poor performance in some notable instances.[1] Whether the UN is confronting a novel type of disaster, a recurrent crisis, or simply dealing with the complications caused by the introduction of new humanitarian actors, the UN system as a whole neither manages nor mitigates disasters and emergencies to an acceptable standard. The estimated two to five million deaths resulting from Congo's civil war is perhaps the most blatant example of neglect and under-performance.

The UN's integrity has also been challenged at the micro-level, in particular with reference to its assessments, appeals and reporting mechanisms, and how it approaches the issue of humanitarian accountability.[2] Major donors and important partners also believe that most parts of the UN exaggerate needs and funding requirements. This mistrust may be linked to donor funding policies described in the previous chapter, but it is also fuelled by the inherent conflict of interest as noted in Chapter 1: the UN system acts as a standard setter and an assessor of needs on the one hand, and an implementer and auditor of its own activities on the other. One actor partaking in these four key activities compromises the UN's credibility with donors and other partners in the humanitarian sector.

Before proposing options to resolve these fundamental issues, the strengths and weaknesses of the UN's *humanitarian product* - as perceived by those who fund the UN, those who work in partnership with it, those who work for it, and those who analyse and evaluate it - needs to be put in context. Perceptions – irrespective of their validity – affect attitudes, behaviour, relationships and funding decisions. Funding, in turn, shapes performance and can be a deciding factor in saving lives. Chapter 2 thus provides an overview of these perceptions - both strengths and weaknesses - through a synthesis of the following: a) evaluations of humanitarian action and actors; b) interviews with humanitarian actors conducted by the study team, and c) reports and documents provided to the study team.[3] It does so in four parts: the first section examines the normative role of the United Nations; the second its leadership role; the third its coordination role; and the fourth its service delivery.

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[1] It is worth noting that perceptions about the product are often informed by a narrow interpretation of a single event. In other words, despite the enormous differences between agencies, programmes and products, the UN as a whole is often viewed as a success or failure if a single programme succeeds or fails.

[2] The UN is not alone in this regard, since similar blame was laid on NGOs and local governments. Ian Smillie and Larry Minear also note that 'one of the most striking and disquieting themes to emerge from the hundreds of interviews conducted for this study is that mistrust and opacity pervade humanitarian financing and donor behavior. Some donors express a surprising degree of doubt as to the capacities and even the *bona fides* of front-line UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs.' Op cit., *The Quality of Money: Donor Behavior in Humanitarian Financing*, April 2003

[3] While many of the evaluations, documents and interviews only touch on specific topics or individual agencies, the issues raised have wider relevance for the system as a whole.

1. **The UN's normative role** . The UN has a central - and in some instances unique - role in maintaining humanitarian principles and promoting relevant standards and norms.[4] It does so in two ways:

    a. Upholding Norms, Principles and Standards. This includes issues ranging from general protection,[5] to protecting civilians in armed conflict, to addressing root causes of disasters and emergencies. Progress in promoting the principles of protection of civilians in armed conflict, and protocols dealing with the military-humanitarian interface[6] can be contrasted with problems in other areas. Beyond the fundamental issue of equity, the UN has also proved incapable of realising consistent strategies for dealing with internally displaced persons (even taking into account recent initiatives, e.g., OCHA's Internal Displacement Unit), for protection of refugees, and for promoting gender standards, among other examples. Taken as a whole, the UN is not upholding norms, principles and standards to the degree expected by donors, other humanitarian actors, and even beneficiaries.

    b. Advocacy. The UN's comparative advantage – its universal constituency and *global reach* – should facilitate its role as global advocate. Successes include mainstreaming of concerns such as those related to landmines and HIV/AIDS, while advocacy failures include the so-called 'forgotten emergencies,' and disaster prevention and preparedness. Advocacy is an element that should pervade the entire system, stemming from the top and integrated into all programmes and agencies as a core function. Yet advocacy is sacrificed all too often because of institutional compromises, and stymied by a system that is inherently reactive and gives little attention to 'experiential learning' or strategic planning. The majority opinion is that the UN has to be more courageous and needs to take a holistic view in its approach to advocacy.

2. **The UN's leadership role.** There is a general perception that the UN should - and is often expected to - provide leadership in humanitarian crises, even though it does not have an 'exclusive mandate' to lead.[7] Even so, many humanitarian actors, both inside and outside the system, do not believe that the UN has provided sufficient and consistent leadership either during crises, or between them. Despite complaints that many of those put in positions of authority are inadequately trained and are therefore unsuitable candidates for their particular

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[4] See GA Resolution 46/182, para.12, for more details.

[5] Human rights concerns also come into play here, with potential improvements to the system to be provided by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), which is establishing a field-based programme. Some donors even wondered if it was possible to contract out protection, but worried about legitimacy issues. Related concerns involved using the military to provide protection when that same force may have earlier been belligerent, as in Afghanistan and Iraq with US and UK troops. The cases of West Africa (sexual exploitation of refugees) and Kosovo were considered recent examples of failure.

[6] OCHA, 'Guidelines On The Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets To Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies,' March 2003.

[7] As will be discussed in Chapter 3, GA Resolution 46/182, para. 12 notes that 'the United Nations has a central and unique role to play in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support the affected countries.' For their part, donors also blame themselves for not pushing the UN to have a stronger and uniform leadership capacity.

assignments, the UN humanitarian system does not provide leadership and management training for its senior personnel.[8] More fundamentally, however, there is considerable ambiguity about what humanitarian leadership entails, in particular for the United Nations. Five areas of concern directly relate to leadership:

a. Strategic Planning and Analysis. One of the most persistent concerns raised by those outside the UN system is that UN assessments, appeals and reports rarely, if ever, reflect results-based objectives. Nor are there any universally agreed standards to rate performance. The absence of such objectives indicates not only inadequate planning in the UN system, and a concomitant lack of capacity, but also problems with leadership. While it may be difficult for the UN to obtain commitments to adopt results-based planning by the diverse body of actors in the humanitarian system, as of yet little effort has been made to do so. Key donors also attributed this lack of effort to a leadership more adept at and focused on consensus-building than on strategic leadership. They further argued that strategic planning and analysis require a leadership willing to take risk, and engage in 'Blue Sky' thinking.

b. Early Warning. For an organisation that is regarded as inherently reactive and risk-averse, effective early warning systems appear impracticable. Yet without a bolder commitment to such systems, the UN cannot hope, at the very least, to mitigate disasters and improve the lives of affected populations. The leadership expected of a bolder UN system would be one in which agencies were willing to anticipate, plan and analyse the full range of causes that could lead to disasters and emergencies. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, 'Early warning' in that respect would require the UN system to assess the implications of socio-economic conditions, social structures and the allocative processes of states to determine the potential onset of human vulnerability. Linked to advocacy and strategic planning, early warning requires leadership on behalf of the broader humanitarian system that is rarely, if ever, exercised[9].

c. Dealing with new actors. While coordinating mechanisms normally incorporate international NGOs and other organisations, a recent phenomenon complicating the humanitarian environment is the expanded role assumed by international militaries[10] and the corporate sector. The introduction of new actors, many of which are not inclined to cooperate closely or follow UN guidelines, has been regarded as a threat to UN leadership by many traditional humanitarian actors, but it could also be considered a positive challenge for UN leadership to ensure that these new actors also adhere to principles, norms and standards.

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[8] The UN Staff College in Turin offers no courses for humanitarian management and leadership.

[9] One nevertheless needs to recognise that there are clear obstacles to this sort of leadership. Some member states, for example, worry about the UN developing an 'intelligence' capacity, a concern that has frequently been expressed by members of the Group of 77 (G77). Others fear that such planning may be an indication of involvement in parts of the world, with issues of sovereignty an inevitable cause for concern.

[10] Including UN peacekeeping, NATO and other regional militaries, and 'coalition' style operations.

d. Accountability. Perceived lack of accountability is an issue, as noted earlier, that undermines the credibility of the UN system. Interviewees for this study indicated accountability was a problem, not just in relation to financial matters, but also as a weakness stemming from an inability to view humanitarian issues beyond institutional perspectives. Within the UN system there is thus a perceived failure of leadership to make accountability a primary focus on various levels, that is, to beneficiaries, to donors, to other parts of the UN, and to partner agencies.[11]

e. Reporting. Due to the lack of common programming cycles, different budgetary demands of donors, and the numerous trust funds available (each with its own reporting requirements), there are no universally agreed standards to provide for accountability and consistency in reporting. Despite this absence, the UN system is normally blamed for not meeting standards, whether in regard to financial transparency (e.g., some donors' claim that the UN cannot be audited[12]) or with regard to timeliness. Again, this is an issue of leadership; ensuring the reputation of the United Nations system does not falter over perceptions of technical failings, and resolving the dilemmas related to reporting.[13]

3. **The UN's coordination role.** In tasking the United Nations to assume a leadership and coordination role, GA resolution 46/182 did not specify how the various instruments should be used, nor did it grant the UN the authority necessary to be lead coordinator for the community as a whole. This has led to differing interpretations of coordination objectives, e.g., field or headquarters, UN system or wider humanitarian community, or within the context of 'mixed' peacekeeping operations[14]. There are also specific concerns about the ways the instruments of coordination have been used. On the whole, the UN's coordination record is considered unsatisfactory. Four issues need to be considered in this discussion of coordination:

a. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA is regarded by many as a litmus test of UN coordination for humanitarian action. Attention is therefore often focussed on its achievements and failures. Some claim that OCHA - as a Secretariat organisation with a certain field-presence - gives rise to confusion, and it

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[11] An additional dimension of accountability mentioned on more than one occasion concerned the perceived 'lack of effective self-correcting mechanisms,' or, in other words, agencies' seeming unwillingness to deal effectively with serious breaches of conduct.

[12] Helms-Biden legislation intended to reform auditing requirements and access to financial matters by the US government.

[13] The EU-UN Framework Agreement is considered an important achievement and potentially could resolve many of these issues. It might serve as a model for other donor-UN system arrangements.

[14] Coordination for many also refers to the Secretary-General's coordinating mechanisms that include Special Envoys, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Representatives of the Secretary-General and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators. Certain innovations have promoted more effective inter-agency coordination, particularly between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, peacekeepers and humanitarian organisations. See: Sierra Leone portion of Dahrendorf, Nicola (project director), The Conflict, Security and Development Group, *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change*, King's College London, March 2003; and also the Secretary-General's Agenda for further Change, 2002.

ought to identify its core competencies more clearly. OCHA's view, however, is that funding is the key: without core funding, it cannot establish itself as the main coordinating body for the UN humanitarian system, and instead is often forced to concentrate on issues pushed by donors. Nevertheless, the crucial point remains that OCHA does not have an exclusive mandate to coordinate for the wider humanitarian system.

b. The CAP as a litmus test. Special mention also needs to be made of the CAP, not merely because it is regarded as a key coordination instrument, but also because the problems with the CAP are symptomatic of the overall difficulties with coordination. There is little consistency and uniformity with the CAP. . Different countries produce different types of CAP, and smaller donors regard the CAP in more strategic ways than larger donors.

Even allowing for these inconsistencies, the CAP falls short of being an effective coordination tool for four reasons. First, it all too often lacks a substantive strategic plan or context. Second, it rarely reflects the results of 'joint assessments' because, as a mechanism, such assessment processes are underdeveloped. Third, it does not reflect prioritised needs. Finally, it does not provide a holistic, inter-sectoral agenda with results-based planning, but rather puts emphasis on the needs of agencies.

To many, the CAP process and final product represent the competitive nature of the system, rather than the demise of inter-agency competition. In other words, the 'bidding nature' of the appeals process may be a symptom of the fragile funding environment in which UN agencies are operating. Appeals are seen by many donors to be 'shopping lists distorted by institutional interests,' revised upwards, and are not considered to be an accurate reflection of humanitarian need. UN officials have acknowledged that humanitarian coordinators were often forced to include irrelevant projects in the appeal rather than risk an inter-agency clash. Finally, the CAP is not normally used as an advocacy tool as intended, which further impairs humanitarian leadership.[15]

c. Joint assessments and needs-based assessments. While improvements have been noted, with ECHO and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), conducting joint assessments with UN teams, for example, assessment processes are generally seen as under-developed, lacking in rigour and consistency, not based on impartially assessed needs, and not results-based. Assessments are rarely the product of inter-sectoral analyses, and more often than not reflect individual agencies' expertise and institutional priorities. This raises concerns about the objectivity of the assessment, and is an inevitable source of mistrust between donors and UN agencies.

[15] See Porter, Toby, 'An External Review of the Consolidated Appeals Process,' UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), April 2002, for more information. Donor representatives have also maintained that the output of assessments embodied in the CAP is not instrumental in their funding decisions, and many considered their bilateral discussions with agencies to be as important, if not more, than the CAP.

d. Information and data collection, and knowledge management. A value-added of the UN system is assumed to be its role as an informal repository of country knowledge. It is believed that this store of wisdom feeds into a process that is reflected in humanitarian and development planning. This picture, however, does not correspond to reality, although improvements are in evidence at the Secretariat and separately, in OCHA, as well as in regional offices (e.g., West Africa) for developing this capacity. Moreover, the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the Humanitarian Information Network (HIN) as well as the Humanitarian Information Centres (HIC) are also seen as providing serious value-added to the entire humanitarian network of actors. Nevertheless, beyond the web-based sites, there is no coherent approach across the entire UN system to information and data collection, or to knowledge management. Some suggest that the lack of robust coordination mechanisms explains the discrepancy in standards. Others – particularly UN staff – suggest that a combination of poor training and insufficient resources results in inadequate, systems. In sum, such general concerns spill over into concerns about other coordination tools, such as assessments, the adequacy of appeals, and the lack of strategic vision in the appeals.

4. **The UN's service delivery role.** Relatively few interviewees mentioned the delivery capacity of the United Nations system - whether that be service or programme delivery, or project control. This suggested to the Study Team that either there were few complaints about the UN's delivery and distribution role or that it was not regarded as an area in which the UN had a comparative advantage.[16] Those that did refer to this aspect, however, considered the UN too expensive a choice as compared to other actors, which may partially explain the expansion of aid through NGOs in recent years. The UN was accused of employing too many internationals, when local, and generally fewer, staff could be used. More concerns, on the other hand, were expressed about the failure of protection roles and responsibilities at the field level, rather than strengths or weaknesses of delivering 'relief programmes.'

   Whether or not donors and others outside the UN system regard conventional operational activities as a UN system value-added, several agencies emphasised the importance that programme implementation gives in terms of greater authority to lead and more control on the ground (including negotiating access). Beyond their expertise, which is considerable and a recognised value-added, UN agencies have advantages that stem from sheer economies of scale. Further, as several observers mentioned, the international community has become accustomed to the

[16] This conclusion is based upon the ways that interviewees responded to two questions: 1) 'What do you regard as the comparative advantage of the UN's humanitarian system?,' a question that led into issues of value-added; and 2) 'What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the UN system's involvement in humanitarian assistance?,' a question intended to elicit reactions to all aspects of the UN's 'humanitarian product.' In this context, only the World Food Programme was an exception, and its logistics work on the whole was regarded as a vital function to the humanitarian community.

UN's operational role.[17] Nevertheless, five related issues require further discussion:

a. Security dilemma. UN security regulations often restrict access for UN personnel to crisis zones. When UN staff are not 'on the ground,' many partners of the UN system argue that such restrictions undermine the UN's ability to coordinate, monitor, and indeed implement.[18]

b. Transitional momentum. Humanitarian assistance should move as quickly as possible to transitional and recovery arrangements. More often than not, however, these arrangements are constrained by a paradox unintentionally caused by donors. That is, donors appear unwilling or unable to fund transitional activities from a separate budget line.[19] In particular crises, development and transitional activities therefore have to be funded from humanitarian budget lines because those crises are considered 'emergency-only.' At the same time, humanitarian actors, including those from the UN system, are seen as unwilling to foster post-relief activities or attitudes because their perspectives are too embedded in the relief culture. There is also the implicit assumption that moving away from relief would deprive humanitarian organisations of much needed funding. Even when they do encourage such transitions, they are accused by donors of promoting mission and mandate creep.[20]

c. Perspectives on 'mission and mandate creep.' There is a general perception amongst the humanitarian community that donors do not provide funding with an eye towards mandated responsibilities, but rather base decisions more on the organisation's recent 'performance' and agencies' willingness to accommodate donor concerns. In other words, despite their frequent criticism of it, donors often promote 'mission and mandate creep.' Donors are also blamed for failing to see that often – in the day-to-day realities of field operations - supposed 'mission and mandate creep' in fact reflects inter-organisational support.

d. The implementation lottery. Efforts made to fuel agency field-based programmes and projects cannot escape the reality that funding allocations often resemble a lottery. Donors still use the standard litany regarding inappropriate and poorly timed programmes and projects to attack the UN system, though funding dynamics and decisions have little to do with rational assessments of need and are based upon more complex factors than donors may recognise.

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[17] For example, according to a senior representative at United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNICEF together with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is the world's largest purchaser of vaccines; owing to economies of scale, it gets a reduced price.

[18] The tragic event in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, when 22 people were killed in the UN's compound, is testimony to the complex issues which face the United Nations in seeking to operate in insecure environments.

[19] The Norwegian government has recently initiated a budget line for transition activities. This initiative has caught the eye of other donors.

[20] The United Nations Development Group (UNDG)/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) Working Group on Transition Issues, chaired by Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, is attempting to address these issues.

e. Reverse dependency syndrome. There is no overall picture of the extent to which UN agencies actually deliver and distribute. For most agencies, this issue is less of a concern than being able to develop and oversee implementation of their own programmes and projects. Some external actors, however, worry that UN agencies can become too dependent on their implementing partners. They argue that the agencies' dependencies in turn lead to an unwillingness to criticise their implementing partners or acknowledge their failures. This is yet another dimension of the credibility gap confronting the UN system.

These four areas - the normative, leadership, coordination, and service delivery roles – are seen to reflect the UN system's value-added, yet as noted, the general perception is that the UN does not perform to the standards expected in any of these core areas. The next chapter describes three models that, if implemented, could significantly capitalise on the comparative advantage of the UN humanitarian system.

CHAPTER 3

ENHANCING PERFORMANCE

GA resolution 46/182 was ground-breaking for the United Nations in one major respect: for the first time, member-states demonstrated their commitment to a UN role in dealing with disasters and emergencies from a holistic perspective.[1] The resolution emphasised the UN system's unique status in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community.[2]

The resolution, however, was - and remains - an imperfect legacy. It did not resolve the profound ambivalence of many member-states about how such a role should be pursued and implemented. Its imprecision reflected a reluctance to come to grips with a range of uncertainties, such as the nature of 'complex emergencies,' the institutional consequences of 'coordination,' the implications of the term 'consent,' and lead responsibilities along the 'relief-to-development continuum.'

Uncertainty about the UN humanitarian system's role – *what it actually is, what it should be* – is perhaps one of the most basic factors affecting relations with the wider humanitarian community and, in the context of this study, with the donor community. This is not to suggest, as noted in Chapter 1, that greater clarity on this front will lead to enormous increases in funding, but rather that the lack of precision affects the broader issue of the United Nation system's integrity. The unpredictability of present and foreseeable humanitarian financing make it increasingly important to resolve the ambiguities and ambivalence reflected in GA resolution 46/182, perpetuated often for institutional self-interest. If not, many of the resources available to the UN system and to others for humanitarian assistance will be wasted through duplication, unnecessary competition, and lack of vision and strategic objectives.

Strategic refocusing

GA resolution 46/182's reference to leadership, coordination and ensuring prompt delivery of humanitarian assistance complicates the UN system's 'business model' in at least three ways. The first is the seemingly uncomfortable balance between a resolution that called for ***external*** leadership and coordination by the UN system and the ***internal*** leadership and coordination of the UN system.[3] The second concerns the extent to which member-states' call for more efficient assistance delivery should be

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[1] Since a series of major 'natural disasters' at the beginning of the 1970s, concern within the UN and amongst member-states increased about an appropriate UN role in disaster response. GA resolution 2816 created the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), and was until 1991 probably the most important structural innovation that had taken place in the UN. However, there were various *ad hoc* arrangements made, including what was called the Office for Emergency Operations in Ethiopia (OEOA).

[2] GA resolution 46/182, para.12.

[3] The dichotomy is important. Heeding calls for more UN system leadership and coordination, the concerned agencies typically reacted by boosting their efforts to work within the extant framework and seeking to refine the available instruments, including CAP, IASC and OCHA. Inasmuch as these instruments were directed primarily at the UN system's internal workings, these efforts noticeably failed to lift the UN system's performance on leadership and coordination towards the wider humanitarian community, leaving the crisis environment all too often short on direction and coordination.

regarded as support for greater UN operational responsibilities.[4] Finally, in 1991 there was an assumption that the parameters of humanitarianism were relatively certain. This has not proved to be the case.

If the UN system is to use its comparative advantages, it will ultimately need member states to address the ambiguities in GA resolution 46/182.[5] Nevertheless, even with such a basic revision, the UN system needs to and can reposition itself in four ways, involving shifts 1) from an internal to a greater external focus; 2) from an operational to a greater normative focus; 3) from a loose to a more focused definition of humanitarianism; and 4) from a symptom-oriented to a more causation-focused approach to humanitarianism.

1. **From an internal to a greater external focus**. On many levels the United Nations has reached out to a wide variety of actors to promote greater overall coherence and coordination of humanitarian activities. GA resolution 46/182 symbolises the UN's awareness that humanitarian issues must incorporate the views of as many actors as is reasonably possible, and in that regard the IASC – through *ad hoc* and standing invitations to major NGO consortia and the Red Cross movement – reflects an effort at greater inclusiveness. There still remains a feeling, however, that the United Nations system remains 'too introverted,' seeing itself as the centre of a humanitarian system over which, in reality, it has little control.

   Ironically, GA resolution 46/182 may in fact be responsible for this perception, since the IASC's invitation for non-UN organisations to participate divides the community into 'insiders' and 'outsiders.'[6] Many actors consider that the UN centric-focus of the United Nations has undermined the prospect for wider humanitarian community leadership and coordination functions, often leaving crisis situations short on direction. This is seen by many as an alienating and confrontational factor. UN agencies may 'choose' their operating partners, and may invite 'outsiders' to UN meetings. Hence the UN is seen as standing at a distance from the wider humanitarian community and its instruments – e.g., the CAP, OCHA and even the IASC – thus re-enforcing a perception of isolation and introversion.

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[4] Throughout this text, references are made to the UN's 'operational role.' This role can be described in various ways, each of which has particular implications. Examples include 'direct aid delivery,' distribution and dissemination, operations and operational capacities and implementation. For the purpose of this study, 'operational role' is less concerned with such terms, and more with agencies' control over projects and programmes. It is the issue of 'control' – and the consequent funds needed to maintain such programmes and projects – that lies at the heart of turf battles and inter-agency competition. In the vast majority of UN programmes and projects, direct aid delivery, distribution and dissemination are activities for the most part undertaken by non-governmental organisations, as 'implementing partners.'

[5] A recent study has concluded that the UN is perceived by many donors to be just one of a host of actors that occupy the humanitarian assistance realm. Macrae, J. et al, *Uncertain Power: the changing role of official donors in humanitarian action*, Humanitarian Policy Group, Report 12, December 2002, p.24.

[6] On various occasions, a 'core group of IASC members' holds meetings prior to or after normal IASC meetings. These meetings normally involve UN OCHA plus the three key UN operational agencies, viz, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP.

In some respects this is inevitable given the global, political, peacekeeping and humanitarian responsibilities of the organisation. Nevertheless, how the UN relates to the wider community, how it deals with security issues and related operational concerns, and how partnerships are forged and maintained all suggest a degree of institutional self-absorption that alienates the growing number of actors in the competitive aid environment.

The ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment resolution of 2002 (2002/32) demonstrates a clear concern to engage the wider humanitarian community and to make instruments such as the CAP more externally-oriented. Indeed, a number of positive incremental changes in this direction have already taken place, but a bolder paradigmatic shift is nonetheless needed.

2. **From an operational to a greater normative focus.** The extent to which UN agencies should be operationally involved in humanitarian activities has been a matter of historic debate.[7] Even after two decades since most UN agencies adopted – both conceptually and operationally – tools to deal with humanitarian crises, that debate still continues – particularly among those outside the UN system.[8] For the agencies, there is a sense that funds to support their institutional survival are found 'at the delivery end of the humanitarian supply chain.' Given the assumption that in particular crises, donors' humanitarian pockets – as opposed to their development pockets - are the only ones with resources, 'everybody in the UN system' is seeking a role in humanitarian operations.

   It is not that operations, *per se*, are inappropriate activities for the United Nations system to assume, but rather, that they impact on the system's normative role. As noted earlier, the UN system is seen as but one actor amongst a bevy of others.[9] The distinctiveness of the UN is its imprimatur of norms and standards. The concern is that this role be protected.

   The pros and cons of UN agency operational involvement in humanitarian crises are multiple, yet one persistent theme has emerged. All too many humanitarian actors perceive an inherent conflict in having the same organisation serve as both 'judge and prosecuting attorney.' In other words, there is a conflict of interest in

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[7] Until the middle of the 1980s, most major UN agencies felt that humanitarian assistance – or, as it was normally described then, 'disaster relief' or 'emergency relief' – was regarded – and resented – as a deviation from agencies' principal responsibilities, namely, development. This applied particularly to UNICEF and the World Food Programme. On relatively rare occasions, however, UNHCR's protection mandate forced it to become 'operational' through working partners.

[8] Even within UN agencies, however, many of those involved with humanitarian crises are circumspect about the growing operational role of UN agencies. In interviews at UN operational agencies, some staff members commented that 'there are a few – but really only a few – cases where the UN needs to be. These are areas where the UN must distribute, where for example, donors cannot work with governments.' (UN official, 11 April 2003). This concern comes up far more frequently in interviews with donors, who point to their concern about the reliability of assessments in which agencies are also seeking funds for resources. Related to this concern are references to the need for better advocacy, in-depth analyses, and negotiations with those authorities who can ensure humanitarian access – all of which are seen as 'compromised' by the need for UN agencies to maintain their operational structures and activities.

[9] See Chapter 2 for more information. Also note: *op cit*, Macrae, J. *et al*, *Uncertain Power: the changing role of official donors in humanitarian action*, Humanitarian Policy Group #12, London, 2000, p.24.

the UN acting as the purveyor of norms and standards, while at the same time seeking resources to sustain its own operations. At the heart of this conflict of interest is the concern that responses to crises are all too often determined by perceptions of institutional needs.

The United Nations must therefore resolve the tension arising from the recognition that humanitarian operations can be undertaken by a bevy of actors, but only the United Nations can serve as the bearer of humanitarian norms, standards and principles across the globe.

3. **From a loose to a more focused definition of humanitarianism.** Humanitarianism means different things to different actors. It has become the barrier reef upon which all the barnacles of human concerns seem to lodge. While it could be argued that an overarching rubric reflects the complex inter-relationships that create and perpetuate human vulnerability over time, nevertheless, many of the issues subsumed under its mantle conflict with the need to ensure, in a very public manner, impartiality, neutrality and independence. At the same time, the vague concept of humanitarianism complicates not only what agencies should be doing, but also the means to promote accountability.[10]

A more focused definition of humanitarianism must tackle both the symptoms and the causes of humanitarian crises. It should also take into account the protection of civilians in armed conflict. These fundamental issues - already critical concerns for humanitarian actors - must be further developed. The question is whether these issues, which lie at the core of human vulnerability, can be subsumed within a system which is first and foremost concerned with the protection of human life.[11]

One of the dilemmas faced by the humanitarian community is that humanitarian assistance is often used as a substitute for more appropriate political action by the international community. Those directly responsible for longer-term solutions, e.g., development, have been slow in appreciating their roles in addressing human vulnerability. However, rather than undermining the distinct and vital role of the humanitarian worker and humanitarian core principles, the humanitarian system has to determine where and how causation must be addressed, and who has the responsibility to address it.

Reducing human vulnerability has to gain increased prominence and greater international attention than has been the case to date. It will require a wide-range of powerful instruments, combining the substance of Millennium Development

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[10] It is evident that there is a need to clarify what the parameters of humanitarian action should be, according to the *Implementation Plan for Good Humanitarian Donorship*, Revised Final Draft, elaborated in Stockholm, 17 June 2003, Article #4. At the Stockholm meeting, bilateral donor participants agreed that 'donors will aim, in consultation with the United Nations and the OECD-DAC, to agree on a common definition of official humanitarian assistance for reporting and statistical purposes…..'

[11] David Rieff, in 'Humanitarianism in Crisis,' *Foreign Affairs*, New York, 81:6, calls for a more restricted view of humanitarianism, one which 'is best advised to focus on saving lives, whatever the compromises it has to make along the way….Must humanitarians, whether out of despair, conformity to intellectual and moral fashion, or groundless hope, insist on trying to be the Archimedian lever for perpetual peace, the universal rule of law, or, in Oxfam's more modest formulation, the creation of a fairer world?'

Goals, human rights, emergency and disaster prevention, and preparedness and planning processes that are little used to date.[12] The role of the United Nations must be to urge the international community to focus on human vulnerability as well as humanitarian crises, and to accept that the latter must not be a substitute for the former.[13]

4. **From a symptoms orientation to a more causal focus.** Most conventional humanitarian action addresses symptoms of crises, that is, the immediate manifestations of needs, e.g., water, health, food, and shelter. While the rhetoric on humanitarian action points to a broad agenda, humanitarian assistance still focuses on symptoms of crises. Too little is done to deal with causation, or those factors that lead to human vulnerability and its reduction.

   As opposed to a symptoms orientation, a causal focus offers little drama. If one begins with the need to give maximum attention to those factors that create human vulnerability, the challenge takes place in the relatively undramatic arenas of prevention, preparedness, transitional recovery and development. Such a redefined focus would attract little publicity, and might prove difficult for fund-raising, yet such a focus would in fact suit the UN system. It requires presence, access to key national authorities, sustainability and also links with the Bretton Woods Institutions and other international financial institutions.

   There are few humanitarian organisations outside the UN system that could or presently do occupy the vulnerability reduction terrain in a broad, strategic manner. There are few organisations that have the combination of expertise to do so, and few with the ability to deal both at the community as well as state-structure level. In other words, effective vulnerability reduction will require direct involvement with community groups, traditional structures and other social networks in a growing number of instances, and in turn, may even bypass state systems. This adjustment will present a challenge for the UN system, but once again, there are few other organisations with the skill set to establish that balance.

Three strategic models

The *strategic refocusing* issues noted above establish the parameters for the three models discussed below. These models should be seen as heuristic devices to enable the UN system and the wider international community to determine the UN system's humanitarian value-added. In turn these models should form the bases for alternative

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[12] This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

[13] The growing attention to what has been called 'human security' is also relevant. As Andrew Mack of the University of British Columbia's Liu Institute for Global Issues notes in his project proposal for a Human Security Report, there are many definitions of human security. 'It is not necessary, however, to accept any current definition of human security in order to support what is perhaps the concept's single most important implicit challenge…, namely, the designation of the individual, rather than the state as the 'referent object' of security..' The Government of Japan has sponsored a Human Security Commission, chaired by Mme Sadako Ogata and Professor Amartya Sen, which will report to the UN in 2003.

frameworks to develop the system's strategic and tactical objectives The three are the *standard-bearer model*, the *global reach model* and the *critical intervention model*.[14]

The elements particular to each model are not exclusive, but they nevertheless highlight the specific thrust and orientation of each.[15] Each model assumes that the UN system should have an active on-the-ground presence in countries and regions threatened or affected by humanitarian crises. Each also defines different types of on-the-ground activities.

The models would require different approaches to funding - important for donors and UN agencies to understand. None introduces significant savings for donors, but they all require different funding arrangements and investments.

1. **The *standard-bearer* model.** The UN system's value-added in dealing with humanitarian crises centres on five core components: 1) upholding humanitarian principles; 2) fostering and promoting norms and standards; 3) coordinating the efforts of humanitarian actors; 4) assessing the needs of the affected; and 5) monitoring humanitarian operations. The *standard-bearer* model seeks to strengthen each of these five components, while at the same time eliminating the UN's immediate operational involvement in humanitarian crises. This model would refocus the UN's operational capacities on long-term human vulnerability reduction.

   The *standard-bearer* model severs the perceived conflict of interest between the UN's normative and operational roles, and brings the full weight of the UN humanitarian system to bear on what it and few others can do as effectively, or with the same degree of legitimacy.[16] In its broadest sense, the model re-enforces the UN's all-important credibility, confirms that core obligations of GA resolution 46/182 are fulfilled, offers donors a specific set of anticipated functions, and promotes human vulnerability reduction:

   a. <u>Upholding humanitarian principles</u>. The competitive aid environment incorporates a number of actors whose motivations are not solely humanitarian. Hence, it is essential for the UN to protect and promote humanitarian principles, ranging from protection of civilians in armed conflicts to implementing international humanitarian law. In this regard, humanitarian advocacy becomes an even more vital weapon in the UN's arsenal. In maintaining humanitarian principles, the UN will also negotiate with relevant authorities to ensure that these principles are implemented.

   b. Fostering and promoting norms and standards. The growth in the number of recognised emergencies and disasters needs to be met with agreement on norms and standards, and how to monitor their implementation,

[14] Models are by definition stark portraits of alternative realities. They are not intended to reflect the nuances of institutional compromise nor factors associated with human frailties and contending interests. They are designed to posit choice, unencumbered by the complexities of day-to-day realities.
[15] See Table 1 for a comparative analysis of the three models' key elements.
[16] While the International Committee of the Red Cross clearly balances its normative and operational roles with great effectiveness, the assumption underlying the *standard bearer* model is that the very specific focus of the ICRC cannot be compared to the broader role that the UN system will have to play in natural as well as man-made crises.

utilising the technical expertise of individual agencies. Norms and standards assume greater importance if operational equity is to be assured and if a growing number of humanitarian actors are not to use different criteria in providing assistance.

c. Coordinating the efforts of humanitarian actors. At headquarters as well as at field levels, coordination would be enhanced through expanded use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee mechanism, and by delegating more authority to the designated coordinator. The result – *inter alia* - would be more reliable assessments, prioritised appeals and greater overall accountability.

d. Assessing the needs of the affected. Based on the principle of equity, assessments need to reflect appropriate and timely assistance requirements as well as priorities. These assessments must also be inter-sectoral and results-based.

e. Monitoring humanitarian operations. Monitoring should be an essential function both at field and headquarters level. Operational monitoring at headquarters level would link into effective advocacy and early warning planning. At the field level, it would become a central function of the UN system, consisting of a) identification of areas that were not receiving adequate assistance, based on integrated disaster and emergency appeals b) evaluation of humanitarian interventions, and c) based on (a) and (b), reporting on ways that needs can be more effectively met. Donors would provide direct support to relevant UN agencies so that *operational accountability* can be assured.

2. **The *global reach* model.** In essence the *global reach model* is a perpetuation of the present UN humanitarian system, only with significant efforts to improve 'the product.' In other words, to fulfil its role, the UN must continue to combine its broad normative, coordination and monitoring responsibilities with its operational and distribution activities, while also enhancing its performance at every level. The model keeps the UN system in the competitive fray, assuming relatively little product differentiation between it and other humanitarian actors, and depends on relatively aggressive self-promotion.[17] The model assumes that the UN humanitarian system provides a critical 'welfare role' when impoverished governments, poor governance, and weak and collapsed states cannot.[18]

Two implicit sets of contradictory assumptions underlie the *global reach model.* The first is that the UN has a unique and essential normative and operational

[17] In a June 2003 Peer Review Group meeting, two members of the group felt that the model should be titled, the ***enhanced status quo*** model. It was felt, however, that the competitive aid environment in which the UN would have to operate would require a more aggressive stance than 'status quo.'

[18] One example of this 'welfare role' is that performed by the United Nations Relief Works Administration (UNRWA) in Palestine. UNRWA, as Minear notes, that 'many of the concerns that have preoccupied the humanitarian enterprise elsewhere have not been brought to bear on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or, conversely, have benefited from the experience there.' Minear, L., *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries*, Bloomfield, Conn., Kumarian Press, 2002, p.183. By implication, it would therefore be worthwhile for the IASC to see what lessons UNRWA might offer to other 'welfare' type situations.

function, which reflects a general acceptance of its special status in the humanitarian assistance world. The second is that market forces will drive the system, and that the most effective institution will prevail in the competition for resources. Both assumptions are flawed, since it is not the UN system's dual role, i.e., assessor and deliverer, that is seen as unique and offering the greatest value-added; nor do donors base their resource allocation decisions on rational free-market choices.[19]

Nevertheless, the *global reach model* accepts that the international community has become accustomed to the UN system's service delivery role, with its perceived strengths and weaknesses. Dismantling these services would be highly disruptive. The key issue in the *global reach model* is not fundamental structural change, but rather substantive improvements in the present system.[20] This would require coordination mechanisms to go beyond 'collegiality' and information exchange. It would also require assessments driven by on-going demographic and socio-economic analyses, response mechanisms not constrained by security considerations, consolidated inter-agency appeals that prioritised needs and embodied results-based schema, and humanitarian workers who understood the humanitarian principles underlying their work, with the technical expertise to achieve results-based objectives.

Such improvements would include:

a. Special humanitarian response force. In certain circumstances, UN security regulations will have to be made more flexible to ensure a UN presence and response capacity. Towards that end, a volunteer force with special contractual conditions should be constituted to ensure the UN system's involvement at the sharp end of highly complex emergency situations.

b. Personnel structure review. The UN's personnel structure as presently constituted depends on too many international staff members, when greater reliance could be placed on local hires. A small group of influential donors have raised this issue in Executive Board forums, but – according to these donors – little has changed. In any event, such personnel changes would lead to better use of limited resources, and would also build local and national capacity. At the same time, more attention must be placed on training of the UN's international and local humanitarian staff, both in matters of humanitarian norms, standards and principles, and in operational practice.

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[19] Smillie, I. and L. Minear, *The Quality of Money: Donor behaviour in humanitarian financing*, Humanitarian and War Project, The Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, Sommerville, Mass., 2003, p.2

[20] Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, *op cit*. both appear to believe that donor decision-making on the whole has relatively little to do with performance criteria, a conclusion confirmed by research undertaken for Study Four. At the same time, at least four bilateral governments interviewed for Study Four indicated that they would relate better performance to increased – though not large - financial contributions. One could suggest that private sector donations as well as non-traditional donors might be influenced by reputation and perceived quality of UN agency performance. These issues do not seem to have been addressed in any study to-date.

c. Strengthened coordination authority. If the UN is to maintain its operational capacity for dealing with humanitarian crises, then it will have to look towards more effective command-and-control mechanisms to ensure that agreed strategies and results-based objectives, to which the UN is operationally committed, will be achieved. To that extent, some form of personnel assessment, along with a sanctions and rewards scheme, should be considered for the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator.

d. Independent assessment mechanisms. The UN will need to convince potential donors that the perceived conflict of interest between assessing needs and delivery services has been overcome. Towards that end, mechanisms (e.g., body of independent experts) are required to ensure *inter alia* that assessments introduce greater objectivity and do not inadvertently or overtly reflect institutional interests.

e. New approaches for resource mobilisation. The *global reach* model inevitably assumes that the UN will still be regarded as yet another competitor in the struggle for resources. While many UN agencies have adopted innovative approaches to fund-raising, they need to demonstrate to donors that they would embrace more inter-sectoral - and fewer institutional - approaches to humanitarian assistance.

3. **The *critical intervention* model.** In the *critical intervention model*, it is assumed that there will be times when only the United Nations can control programmes and project implementation. Such *critical interventions* should be rare and occur only when, for example, acute problems of access, uncooperative governments or complex peace operations severely complicate the relief process. The present situation in North Korea is a case in point. The UN system's move to a more hands-on, delivery role not only reflects the unusual nature of a particular crisis, but also serves as a signal to the international community that extraordinary action will have to be taken to address humanitarian needs. Such action might involve the UN Security Council, intervention by member-states, and sanctions.

While the practical realities of when and how 'to intervene critically' need to be addressed, the principle is that the UN's direct involvement in operations is reserved for those instances 'when no one else can do it.' Even then, NGOs would continue to undertake the vast majority of distribution. The significance of this model – both perceptually and practically – will be the message conveyed that no matter how difficult the crisis or emergency, every effort will be made to reach the affected communities.

To make the *critical intervention model* function effectively, the *standard-bearer model* would be complemented by the following elements:

a. **Stand-by capacity.** The UN would need to ensure that stand-by capacity arrangements were made at headquarters and field level so that response partners were ready to be deployed when required.

b. **Special humanitarian arrangements with the UN Security Council.** Through the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator

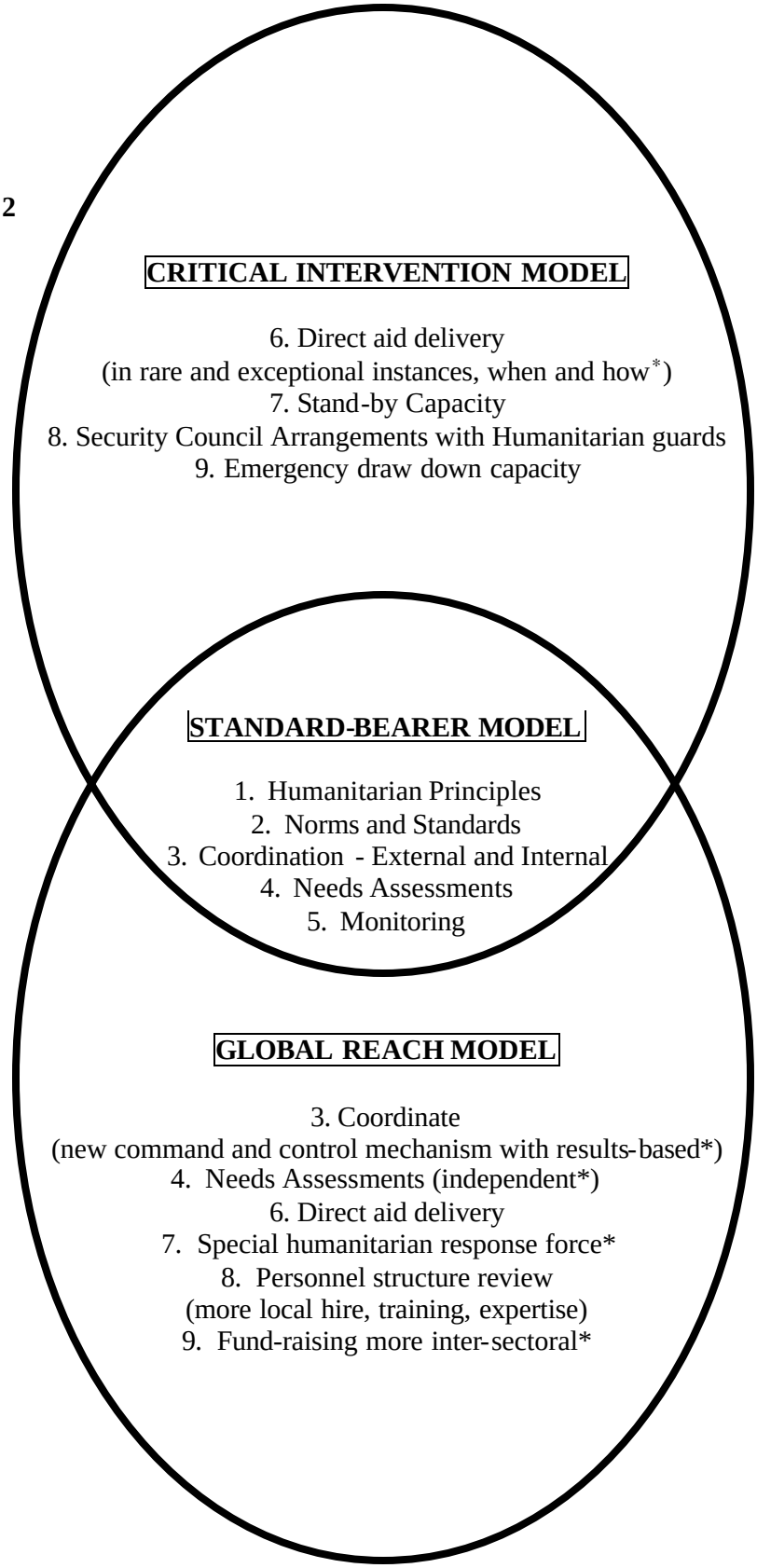
(ERC), rapid action procedures would need to be in place to gain the concurrence and support of the Security Council for special humanitarian intervention procedures, including humanitarian guards.

c. **Emergency draw-down capacity.** As part of stand-by capacity arrangements, warehouses would be designated, with materials on hand to support special intervention procedures, and logistics.[21]

Table 2 on the next page provides a pictoral for the three models, with the common elements in the centre of the circles. The extent to which these models can strategically reposition the United Nations humanitarian system now, and in the foreseeable future, will depend on the structural and procedural implications of each model. Chapter 4 examines how these models might be realised, and how present structures and procedures might be adjusted.

[21] This could be done in a similar fashion to that used for peacekeeping missions with the UN Logistics Base (UNLB) in Brindisi, Italy.

TABLE 2



* Asterisks depict areas where further studies have been recommended if these reforms are to be implemented.

CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURAL AND PROCEDURAL IMPLICATIONS OF STRATEGIC REFOCUSING

The preceding chapter outlined options that could be adopted by the UN humanitarian system if it were to reposition itself in light of the dynamics and trends of the humanitarian market place. Three models were suggested, each requiring structural and procedural changes. Both the *standard-bearer* and *critical intervention* models, however, go well beyond the institutional fine-tuning proposed for the *global reach* model. Indeed, these two models would enhance productivity, satisfy beneficiary and donor needs, and maximise the overall humanitarian impact. Chapter 4 thus describes the changes that would be required to implement these two models.

In many respects, the proposals outlined in this and the preceding chapter are consistent with the broad programmes of reform recommended in recent reports by the Secretary-General.[1] That is, there is an acknowledged need for the organisations of the UN to concentrate on priority activities, improve inter-agency cooperation and provide better services. In the humanitarian context, this translates into the aforementioned *repositioning strategies*, which hone in on 'core business' in light of the UN system's comparative advantage and move towards an external orientation. Significantly, they would deliver a more accountable humanitarian product.

Streamlining the UN system to enhance humanitarian response

A closer and more defined relationship between the UN system and the humanitarian community is essential to ensure that the UN's proposed repositioning has maximum impact. The current channels between the wider humanitarian community and the UN system remain too diverse and disparate. The ECOSOC humanitarian segment, the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group and the myriad humanitarian contacts at field and headquarters levels do not provide strategic direction and oversight for the entire system. Initiatives can be taken, however, to make this disparate web of actors more systematic in their humanitarian response.

One step would be to have a mechanism that could evaluate the activities of the humanitarian community in general, and the UN system specifically. Such a mechanism would consist of a group of eminent persons that would report regularly on issues of key concern, e.g., responses to humanitarian crises, donor contributions and equity, and protection and advocacy. This group of eminent persons would be funded independently, facilitated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and through the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator have direct access to field operations.[2]

The group of eminent persons would at the same time propose broad strategic objectives for the humanitarian community in collaboration with the IASC. This

[1] See Annex III for reports.

[2] This reflection is not new, having previously emerged in the UN Secretary General's Agenda for Reform. This contained a proposal to create an IASC Steering Committee (for improving UN system-specific coordination) and a governing board for humanitarian affairs to give policy directives on overall humanitarian issues and oversee the coordination of humanitarian response.

proposed mechanism would ensure accountability, measuring both strategic and operational objectives against performance.

The IASC would manage and implement strategic and operational objectives, bearing in mind *inter alia* the strategic recommendations proposed by the group of eminent persons. The IASC's role should be enhanced, in turn, by having field-based IASC structures serving as 'country teams' for UN humanitarian coordinators.

Procedural and structural adjustments in the core areas

1. **Enhancing the UN's standard-setting role** . Stronger performance of the UN system in the normative realm requires that a) the definition of humanitarian assistance be agreed and understood, b) the UN system substantially increases its commitment to monitoring, promoting and advising on the interpretation of humanitarian principles, norms and standards, and c) priority attention to upholding these principles, norms and standards becomes a core function of the UN system, both at headquarters and in the field.

   The UN's normative role should be re-enforced by a serious commitment to advocacy. While there have been examples of effective advocacy, as noted in chapter 2,[3] there has been no holistic vision about the nature of humanitarianism and human vulnerability, nor a corresponding effort to identify humanitarian trends. A human vulnerability index could provide such a service, similar to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) human development indices, which would analyse and anticipate the rise and fall of 'disaster and emergency agents' and their possible consequences.[4] If the UN system were able to advocate wider humanitarian concerns, it would help to streamline the work of others in the international community and also surely benefit those in need. If the UN is to fulfil the normative role that few can do with its global legitimacy and authority, then it will have to become less reluctant to take the moral high-ground.

2. **Reviewing the UN system's leadership role.** Leadership is one of the most sensitive issues in relations between the UN system and the humanitarian community. While the role of the UN system in promoting agreed normative standards is universally accepted, there is less clarity as to what leadership means in practice. Policy development, advocacy and emergency appeals are important components of leadership, but, as discussed in Chapter 2, leadership suffers because these elements are not performed to the degree expected and required

   To mark the changeover to a more focused *'standard-bearer'* business model, the goals and first principles of the UN system's strategy need to be reconsidered, along with the assumptions underpinning the operational response. Humanitarian leadership also needs to be reformed in a manner that is sensitive to the unusual characteristics of the UN system, but at the same time, reflects important lessons from corporate innovations and organisational analysis. Sources of leadership and

[3] For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict, the promotion of gender issues and HIV/AIDS.

[4] UNDP is preparing a vulnerability index that reflects natural disaster trends. This concept might serve the basis of an index that looks at a broader range of factors creating disaster and emergency vulnerability, and also analyses the significance of such trends in the immediate and longer-term.

management need not be the same, and indeed, within the UN system, the two might usefully be separated. Leadership is concerned with overall vision, broad-based strategy, advocacy and ensuring that principles are promoted and maintained. Management focuses on the implementation of agreed strategies and ensuring that results-based objectives are achieved.

The exercise would refine existing tools and incorporate new ones. Leadership instruments could include, *inter alia*, a global policy framework to elaborate the goals and principles of humanitarian assistance, and the structure to support those goals. In that sense, the group of eminent persons would be a channel for leadership in the broadest sense, one in which humanitarian concerns and standards of the UN system would mesh with the views and visions of the wider humanitarian community.

At the local level, leadership would also benefit from an improved selection process for humanitarian coordinators - one that identified individuals who combine forward thinking and communication skills with experience in emergencies, and recovery and development work in emergency situations. To strengthen the effectiveness of the coordinators, decentralised decision-making authority and *ex-post* accountability would be essential. Such proposed changes are, however, merely illustrative, and should not pre-empt a comprehensive product development assessment and process.[5]

3. **The UN system's coordination role.** The UN's coordination role is by no means accepted by all actors. Chapter 1 has suggested that this role is often compromised – particularly in the field – because the UN system competes with a growing number of organisations to maintain its own operational involvement.

   To enhance its coordination performance, and reposition itself within the wider humanitarian community, the UN system should examine the full range of coordination 'instruments,' including information collection and dissemination, and resource mobilisation. The CAP, the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP), the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Humanitarian Coordinator systems have added greater cohesion within the UN system, but not to the rest of the humanitarian community. To a degree, this suggests that the UN system's strategic objectives and other aspects of its response, such as humanitarian appeals, are not as outwardly focused as they should be. Six areas require further reform:

   a. **Strategic Planning.** Strategic plans should be developed in collaboration with relevant actors for all affected countries. These longer term plans would serve as the basis for CAP strategies. These plans would have built-in 'experiential learning' mechanisms to improve resistance to the negative manifestations of potential disasters. A Strategic Planning Process (SPP) would provide on-going assessments and analyses of trends

[5] As the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) is normally also the UNDP Resident Representative, this creates the impression that the UN RC/HC has, due to his or her UNDP responsibilities, vested interests that limit impartial judgement. The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator role, with its coordinating, advocacy and negotiating functions, should be regarded as distinct and separate from any specific agency activity.

and events that could affect agreed development goals, including patterns of vulnerability. These would be integrated into the in-country system within the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's office, supported by the IASC country team, and when possible, led by or shared with the host government. This system would be designed to anticipate, and when possible, mitigate disaster and emergency vulnerabilities.

b. **Common Appeals Process.** The Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process (CAP) needs to evolve into a *Common* Appeals Process, reflecting a broader assessment and appeals base. The new CAP would be results-based, and sectorally and inter-sectorally focused. Its strategic component would indicate areas where an emergency or disaster has derailed the longer-term development and vulnerability reduction objectives, and focus on prioritised actions to protect lives. As opposed to the current instrument, the *Common* Appeals Process would function principally as a disaster or emergency appeal instrument, with a 'gateway,' or, segue into transitional arrangements. In times of acute crises, a preliminary CAP – now known as a Flash Appeal – would be issued, but the need for a Consolidated Humanitarian Assistance Process (CHAP) exercise would be superseded by the on-going Strategic Planning Process.

c. **Common Monitoring and Evaluation System.** A common monitoring and evaluation system would ensure humanitarian accountability and learning, and be based in the office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. It would assure that norms and standards are defined and met, that responses are adequate and fulfil objectives, and that gaps in funding, assistance and other accountability issues are closed.[6] The IASC country team would oversee these activities and take part in the selection and assembly of the teams performing the various tasks, from the first rapid assessment to the more detailed sectoral and thematic studies. The IASC country-team would also be responsible for identifying unfulfilled needs, monitoring resource flows, and supporting efforts to mobilise resources on behalf of the in-country humanitarian community.[7]

d. **Reporting.** Reporting mechanisms – indicating the extent to which the objectives of results-based planning have been achieved – need also to reflect the efforts of the broad-based community, rather than any single section of that community.

e. **IASC country team mechanism.** The country team, guided by a UN Humanitarian Coordinator, should include partners that reflect the composition of the IASC. This IASC country team should be involved in issues affecting the wider humanitarian community as well as those

[6] It is no small feat to be at the centre of humanitarian accountability and learning. This needs to be reflected in the UN agency presence and expertise on the ground, which should regard monitoring and evaluation as one of the core field-based functions in the humanitarian market place.

[7] Throughout the text scant reference is made to governments of disaster and emergency affected countries and their important roles in assisting their own people. While the focus of this study is principally on the UN and the wider international humanitarian community, the role of government will have to be recognised and accommodated for in these proposals.

affecting the services of the UN system. Having non-UN actors concerned with the performance of the UN would also expand ownership of the process, and help reinforce the perception of shared responsibility and accountability over the response. It would be of practical as well as symbolic significance if the IASC country team member organisations could provide the human and other resources to support the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's office.

f. **Field-Headquarters Linkages**. At the same time, coordination needs to be more effective between headquarters and the field. Here, the mechanism of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should be the linkage and conduit to and from the field and headquarters for all humanitarian actors. If the IASC is to serve as an effective mechanism, however, it will also have to be a more representative body, and one which is willing to speak with more authority. A review of the IASC membership and its procedures is now needed to address these issues.[8] From a UN perspective, more attention has to be paid to the ways in which UN system strategies concerned with or affecting humanitarian operations in the field are developed. Far greater effort also needs to be made to foster joint-field/headquarters planning and monitoring processes at the strategic level.

Structural Alternatives - Of the UN but not in the UN system

The *standard-bearer* and *critical intervention* models present definite challenges in institutional and political terms. Efforts aimed at getting stronger leadership and coordination ('OCHA with teeth') may be blocked by an overly cautious, intensely competitive and highly bureaucratic UN Secretariat – a Secretariat that by no means regards humanitarian issues as an overarching priority. One way around this would be to look for leadership and coordination outside the current set-up.

The coordination role could be couched in a hybrid structure modelled after the UN's **Office for Emergency Operations in Africa.** The OEOA, which existed between 1984 and 1986, was managed by senior UN officials, but had the advantage of being 'of the United Nations but not in it.' In other words, though it had direct access to the Secretary-General, it worked independently of the Secretariat, both procedurally and administratively. Its management and administrative staff was comprised of representatives of UN agencies as well as NGO representatives, and it focused its efforts on coordination and advocacy. Though agencies were generally pleased to see the innovation come to an end at the time, various senior UN officials within the UN now still regard the OEOA as a possible model for the future.

[8] A study of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is being undertaken by the Center for International Cooperation, New York University.

Towards Greater Systemic Coherence

The UN system's conversion into a central services organisation for humanitarian response would be incomplete without realigning the system's internal decision-making and work processes towards external leadership and coordination. More refined performance requires a high degree of synchronisation of agency policies and capacities, and of the system's administrative decision-making apparatus and incentive structures. Reducing the ambiguity surrounding management and leadership within the current system and shedding unnecessary layers of coordination would release the energy of the UN system.

1. **Effective harmonisation.** While the intention of GA resolution 46/182 was to promote overall system coherence in responding to humanitarian crises, it provided few incentives for the agencies to harmonise. That said, the resolution resulted in common policies and structures. Owing to independent agency cultures and governance structures, however, efforts at harmonisation continue to prove difficult. Agencies show little inclination to look for functional complementarity, and, though greatly improved over the past few years, inter-agency rivalries for visibility and resources too often persist. Not surprisingly, coordination and leadership emerging from this system have been less forceful and coherent than were originally intended.

   Short of a single operational organisation, which has on occasion been held up as an ideal for the UN humanitarian system,[9] harmonisation will depend less on commitments to it as a policy objective, and more on functional initiatives, some of which are already underway. The prospect of shared management and pressures to ensure internal and external accountability will probably add momentum to this drive. In any event, steps towards greater harmonisation should include integrated information and shared expertise, agreed standards of quality, common processes for assessing situations, and for hiring, training and assessing staff, and a fully integrated monitoring and evaluating framework.

2. **A more effective management structure.** Ambivalence and ambiguities surrounding the concept of coordination and the instruments outlined in GA resolution 46/182 hinder UN humanitarian operations. As a result the complementary assets of the UN agencies are not used to their best advantage and significant economies of scale and scope remain under-exploited. Simple institutional re-engineering could supercharge the system.

   At the global level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee would need to improve its competence as a management body. It should be guided by those strategic objectives that reflect the views of the wider humanitarian community, including the group of eminent persons, and be held accountable for the outputs of the UN system as a whole. In order to make the IASC more action-oriented, the IASC should clarify those areas where the Emergency Relief Coordinator can take decisions without consensus, and facilitate decision-making by having IASC

[9] A study of the Joint Inspection Unit in 1995 invokes this ideal, as did an initial proposal by Maurice Strong in the Secretary-General's reform agenda. See also Daes, Erica-Irène, 'The Involvement Of The United Nations System In Providing And Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance,' Joint Inspection Unit, 1995. Page vi.

representatives form part of the ERC's office. Initiatives to make the IASC more action-oriented would also be replicated in field-based structures involving the Humanitarian Coordinator and the IASC country team.

Since the Emergency Relief Coordinator is both chair of the IASC and head of OCHA, this dual role should lead to greater synergy between the UN system and the wider humanitarian community.[10] This synergy would be evident in a range of common decisions and appraisals, including those pertaining to standards and norms, advocacy, resource mobilisation, relationships between military and humanitarian actors and gender concerns. In parallel, consideration should be given to ways in which the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) could be extended beyond the UN system to benefit the wider community.

Repositioning the UN system to make it more externally oriented will strengthen its capacity to fulfil its vital normative and accountability functions. To achieve this, the donor community will have to recognise that the UN system's normative role will require funding. Resources are necessary for proper assessments, accountability, monitoring, and evaluations at field and headquarters levels, and again, revision of the CERF should include funding for these functions.

The ERC would seek the guidance of the IASC for utilising these funds, and because IASC representatives would be in the ERC's office, this should ensure speedy decisions for the utilisation of these funds. At the same time, the ERC would be expected to keep the humanitarian governance board informed about how the use of such funds coheres with the board's agreed strategic objectives.

The table below offers a schematic overview of the functional structure that is proposed to support the *standard-bearer* and *critical intervention* models.

Table 3: UN Humanitarian System – Proposed Institutional Framework

Functions	Global level	Field level
Governance (strategic direction / oversight)	Group of eminent persons	IASC country team with interested UN member-states. (The vital issue of government representation is not considered in this schema.)
Executive management	Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)	Humanitarian Coordinator
Management and technical support	OCHA	Humanitarian Coordinator's IASC supported office
Policy coordination and implementation	IASC	Humanitarian Coordinator and the IASC country team
Technical coordination	IASC Technical Working Groups	IASC country team technical working groups
Strategic planning	Group of eminent persons in collaboration with IASC	Humanitarian Coordinator and IASC country team as part of Strategic Planning Process (SPP) and Common Appeals Process (CAP)

[10] Overall coordination is different from what OCHA alone can and does achieve. It requires all the agencies of the UN humanitarian system to apply their combined assets for the humanitarian response. While leadership and management require a synergistic relationship, they are often separated so that vision is not constrained by more institutionalised management perspectives, and humanitarian objectives do not collide with institutional interests.

If adopted, these proposals would enable the UN system to take the lead in meeting the humanitarian challenges in the foreseeable future. The refocusing process will have to be accompanied by a review of administrative decision structures and incentives, and procedures and staffing (recruitment, selection and training).

Mobilising critical intervention capacities

The UN system's value creation at the operational level is captured by the *critical intervention* model, when the UN would deliver humanitarian services only in situations where alternative delivery mechanisms are unavailable or undesirable. While the *critical intervention* model shares the overall accountability and management framework of the *standard-bearer* model, its implementation instruments are different. As noted in the preceding chapter, they range from special humanitarian intervention forces to UN Security Council arrangements.

In suggesting that the UN system might have a unique role to play in *critical intervention* situations, one returns to the complex issues that serve as the basis of this study. To what extent do UN agencies actually deliver, or is the issue about controlling programme and project delivery? To what extent are the costs of maintaining in-house operational capacities justified when outside suppliers might provide assistance as effectively? And to what extent would the definition of *critical intervention* situations become blurred, with the UN system once again slipping back into the present situation, at the expense of its real value-added: preserving principles, norms and standards and guiding the efforts of the wider humanitarian community?

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Changes in humanitarian financing reflect transformations far more profound than financial flows *per se.* As domestic and international political interests become more publicly intertwined with disaster and emergency response, these changes threaten the principles of humanitarian action. In addition, new actors have entered the humanitarian arena, whose competencies may or may not enhance humanitarian response, but whose involvement contributes to 'the competitive aid environment.' While the recommendations arising from this study focus on the UN system, they would also, if implemented, require substantial change in the attitudes and approaches of many governments and organisations within the humanitarian community. [1]

Conclusions

1. **The humanitarian market place, market forces and market failures.** The market, in which demand for humanitarian aid meets supply, is imperfect at best. In GA resolution 46/182, the UN system was tasked to address weaknesses in the humanitarian aid sector by providing coordination and leadership, and other activities to facilitate the delivery of relief in crises in an equitable manner. The UN system was called upon to foster a more coherent humanitarian response and provide 'public goods' to the humanitarian community that were not being adequately supplied.

    a. An ill-defined market. There is no distinct or consistent pattern to the changes in humanitarian financing. Moreover, the market is further complicated by new actors, particularly the military and the private sector, and an expanded interpretation of humanitarianism, one that moves beyond life-saving concerns to those of recovery of livelihoods, gender and food security, among others. There are no indications that the number of humanitarian actors will stabilise or decrease, or that the concept of humanitarianism will reflect agreed limits.

    b. An under-performing market. Competition is inherent, not only between organisations, but also between donors. With the addition of more actors, competition is likely to intensify. While trends suggest that the humanitarian financing pool will probably increase, the increase will not signify equity but rather point at the distorting effects of visible crises. Funding criteria will be based less on mandated responsibilities and more on presence, past performance and a 'service orientation' that denotes a 'can-do-that-too' attitude. That said, to date, there is no substantive agreement on a donor strategy or common approach to humanitarian funding, and one can only conclude that funding is all too often based on criteria that have little to do with the needs of the beneficiaries.

    c. A stagnant market. For the United Nations system, there are few indications at present that humanitarian funding in percentage terms will

[1] This, it could be argued, was clearly recognised by representatives of 17 bilateral donors, who sought ways to improve international humanitarian action, at the June 2003 Good Donorship meeting.

increase in the immediate future -- whatever improvements the system might make to its humanitarian services.[2] This conclusion would seem to fly in the face of various Good Donorship initiatives, including efforts to make the UN's funding more stable and predictable, and the instances of successful programme and project marketing at the field level. Nevertheless, a more effective public goods role should be adequate compensation.

d. Public goods versus market forces. Donors appear set on maintaining control over their funds even when contributed through the UN system. Earmarking is the result, and this reduces agencies' operational flexibility, puts the UN system in the position of a sub-contractor, tempts agencies to expand their mandates in order to garner additional resources, and forces them to respond to donor agendas rather than those based on need. Earmarking creates gaps and disparities. These factors underscore the UN's inability to ensure more equitable allocation of resources for 'forgotten emergencies,' and undermine the UN system's public goods role.

2. **The UN system's value-added and perceived performance.** The UN's value-added revolves around its public goods role, and not its effectiveness in the competitive aid environment. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the UN system continues to compete, to a point where some donors do not distinguish between the UN and other humanitarian organisations. Donor perceptions of the UN system's value-added centre principally on its universality and *a priori* the legitimacy and integrity of its humanitarian assessments and appeals. Its coordination role and ability to negotiate humanitarian access, to provide protection, and to promote humanitarian principles and standards are all regarded as UN value-added. Yet, this is squandered by the consequences of the UN system's efforts to maintain a robust service delivery role. It is interesting in this regard that there is no overarching set of agreed objectives or an appropriate mechanism to hold the UN system accountable for its humanitarian actions.

a. Preserving the core value-added. Humanitarian standards, norms and principles will become victims of the competitive aid environment. This is evident in terms of lapses in some of the most basic forms of protection, the emergence of conditionality, the use of assistance for 'hearts and minds' objectives, and the interplay of foreign policy objectives with the provision of assistance. It is the conclusion of this study that the UN humanitarian system is seen as compromised in two ways: 1) the UN fails to promote, advocate and monitor humanitarian principles, standards and norms in a consistent and assertive way; and 2) the UN has often sacrificed principles for reasons of operational convenience.

b. Leadership and management. As the UN humanitarian system is seen as just another actor, these perceptions detract from its unique legitimacy and universality. In turn, this affects its important leadership role. While the UN system has expanded its resource base through private sector partners

[2] E.g., please see Minear, *The Quality of Money,* op cit.

and new bilateral donors, such innovation has not extended to humanitarian leadership. The UN continues to take a fragmented and sporadic approach to advocacy, does not promote a strategic vision, and has no global approach to vulnerability reduction. One cannot help but draw the conclusion that leadership often plays second fiddle to management.

c. Coordination. Coordination is a headquarters as well as a field activity. At both levels, collegiality and inter-personal skills remain a substitute for mandated decision-making power and responsibility. If those who seek 'coordination with teeth' - as more than a few have remarked during the course of this study - then teeth will have to be given. Their marks will have to be noted in such basic coordination instruments as joint assessments, the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process, monitoring, accountability and reporting. The wider humanitarian community, particularly traditional donors, wants assessments based on sectoral and inter-sectoral needs, results-based programmes, prioritised CAPs, and accountability with results and impact. These are reasonable requests, but hindered by the lack of a coordination structure with expertise and authority.

d. The UN's direct aid delivery. The UN's direct aid delivery role does not seem to be valued by those outside the UN system. Direct aid delivery – operating programmes and projects – is seen as the source of too many UN 'compromises.' The duality of a system designed to provide objective assessments and appeals, which at the same time is closely tied to UN agencies' programmes and projects, threatens its credibility. The UN system must protect its integrity and objectivity.

3. **The growing coherence gap and the UN system's role.** The basic intention of humanitarian assistance is to save lives. Over the years this purpose has been supplanted by other activities referred to as humanitarian. A gap therefore has emerged between the original intention and the range of activities now deemed to be humanitarian. The result is that the focus is no longer only on the primary goal, but rather on secondary activities that may in fact interfere with saving lives due to scarcity of resources. The gap also blurs the connection between immediate humanitarian needs and ways to initiate recovery, rehabilitation and development.

a. A time for strategic vision. The humanitarian community, including the United Nations, has made considerable progress on various fronts over the past two decades. Agreement about the interface between humanitarian actors and the military is ostensibly one; greater gender sensitivity another; and the emerging commitment to protect civilians in times of armed conflict yet another. There are many positive initiatives, but there is no agreement as to the construct within which they fit, nor is there a sense of an overall 'mission statement.'

b. The UN system's parallel capacities. For the UN system, humanitarian principles complicate, but do not exclude, the use of political and security

instruments to ensure the well-being of people affected, or potentially affected, by crises. A UN system asset – highly sensitive and too rarely used – is its political, economic and security expertise. This should be used more consistently in order to find ways to prevent or at least mitigate humanitarian crises.

c. Disjointed incrementalism. Throughout this study, reference has been made to the UN humanitarian system, or UN system. To the extent that such a system exists, it is worth reflecting that little thought has been given to ways of rationalising that 'system' to make it more effective – not in terms of individual institutions, but in terms of fulfilling the needs of disaster and emergency affected peoples. In any corporate endeavour, leadership ascertains the extent to which component parts need to be modified, eliminated, enhanced or integrated. While 'reform proposals' have questioned the efficacy of the UN's baronial structure, there has been no holistic, system-wide analysis of the UN's humanitarian response capacity. One significant constraint to such an analysis is a lack of both strategic vision and objectives.

Recommendations

1. **Overarching vision.** The UN system should provide the framework for an appropriate, timely and coherent humanitarian response, and the necessary leadership, coordination and operational coherence to deliver it. Accordingly, the UN system will have to address the ambiguities that still surround the instruments and implementation procedures arising from GA resolution 46/182. It will have to strengthen its normative role significantly, and in that regard, it should consider the options provided by the *standard-bearer* and *critical intervention* models. The UN system should be more proactive and forthright in engaging with the wider humanitarian community, and at the same time lend clarity to the parameters of humanitarianism, *per se*. In a wider context, the UN system should lead the international community in a concerted effort to bring the cause of vulnerability reduction to the centre of global concerns.

2. **Implementing the vision.** Realising the vision will require more effective international leadership by the UN system and more efficient internal management of the UN system.

   a. Visionary leadership. The leadership role of the UN system must be strengthened. This could involve a spectrum of activities, from strategic advocacy and broad-based humanitarian strategies to internationally-accepted accountability standards for beneficiaries and the donor community. With this in mind, it is recommended that the following six initiatives be undertaken:

      i. *A global humanitarian framework be created*. This framework would establish the parameters of humanitarianism, while at the same time demonstrating the essential links between humanitarian action and recovery, rehabilitation and development.

ii. *A group of eminent persons be created*. This group would propose broad strategic objectives for the wider humanitarian community and a specific set of objectives for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The group would also focus on accountability issues affecting the humanitarian community at large, and the UN system more specifically.

iii. *The two repositioning models – the standard-bearer model and the critical intervention model - be considered by the UN system as possible alternatives to the global reach model.* These two will ensure that the UN's comparative advantages lead to more coordinated, coherent and accountable approaches to assisting the disaster and emergency affected.

iv. *Monitoring and evaluation systems for the broad humanitarian community be developed.* The humanitarian community needs an assertive system by which needs and the impact of assistance are constantly assessed. This would include the ability to determine requirements in an integrated and holistic way to guide the provision of assistance and to point to unmet or poorly met needs.

v. *The CAP be converted into a Common Appeals Process*. It is recommended that the CAP be made more expansive by including all organisations that can make positive contributions to relieve the plight of those in need.

vi. *A strategic planning process be the basis of country and regional programming.* The need to establish strategic plans that incorporate long-term national objectives is essential to human vulnerability reduction. This process should be led by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and the country-based IASC, and designed to gather information and data on an on-going basis. This exercise would *inter alia* enhance early warning systems and vulnerability reduction efforts as well as strategic perspectives for CAPs.

3. **Effective UN system management**. Over the past decade, the IASC has evolved as an important policy forum for the UN system and other components of the wider humanitarian community. The IASC now needs to be more actively engaged in the management of the UN system's overall response and coordination functions. It would be guided at the broad strategic level by the proposed humanitarian governance board. As a management board, the IASC would be responsible for ensuring results-based action, joint sectoral needs assessments, greater systemic coherence, and higher standards of accountability. For effective management, it would ensure a coherent relationship between the IASC structure at headquarters and the proposed IASC field structure. In that context, four inter-related recommendations necessarily follow:

a. <u>Enhanced decision-making processes</u>. It is of utmost importance to strengthen the decision-making process of the UN humanitarian system.

This point relates to all aspects of the UN system, from administration, human resources and finance to the mandates of agencies. Nevertheless, while this complex matter deserves further analysis, three recommendations should be considered now:

i. to create an IASC group within the office of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, which can speak for, and in some instances, make decisions on behalf of, their agencies and organisations.

ii. to have IASC agreement on areas of decisions in which the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator can act without consensus.

iii. to strengthen the authority of UN humanitarian coordinators in the field with regard to issues considered important by IASC country teams.

b. Restructured field offices and responsibilities. The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator system would be supported by local IASC country teams. Wherever possible, representatives of IASC member organisations should be part of the RC/HC's office. The country team would serve as a management board at the field level. The RC/HC, with his or her country team, would be responsible for assessments, prioritised appeals that were sectorally and results-based, and would be actively engaged in monitoring and evaluation.

4. **Vulnerability reduction focus**. While many organisations in the humanitarian community are engaged in addressing the symptoms of vulnerability, too few are systematically concerned with the causes of vulnerability. That is not to deny the efforts made by many to deal with issues of livelihoods and related concerns, but rather to suggest that these efforts are isolated rather than offering a comprehensive and holistic country or regional approach. This study recommends that the UN system take the lead at all levels to bring vulnerability reduction to the centre of global concerns. This will require commitment to develop and operate programmes that form part of human vulnerability reduction strategies. Such strategies would integrate crisis prevention and preparedness with development objectives, and be focused on ways to mitigate the causes of human vulnerability. The UN system must use its comparative advantages to embark on a vulnerability reduction strategy.

5. **The locus of global humanitarianism.** Linked to more effective management is the issue of where such management functions should be located institutionally. Given the constraints that departments within the UN Secretariat must face and the need for a more externally-oriented focus for the UN humanitarian system, consideration could be given to management structures that - similar to the proposed group of eminent persons - are 'of the UN but not in the UN.' This recommendation would be an alternative if the present structure could not be improved in ways to allow for quicker and more comprehensive early warning/vulnerability analysis, for speedier response capacity and for more effective platforms for advocacy. The UN's 1984 Office for Emergency Operations in Africa suggests a possible model. In any event, there is a need for a

UN humanitarian focal point at the coordination level, who has greater flexibility, fewer institutional constraints and is perceived as open to the wider humanitarian community.

6. **Links with Good Donorship and related initiatives.** As noted at the outset of this chapter, these recommendations can only be achieved and have their desired outcomes if they are part of a broader set of initiatives. In this context, the UN system should seek to relate its own efforts to those of others whose intentions are to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian responses to emergency and disaster affected peoples. In practice this would mean that through the proposed donor Implementation Group as well as through appropriate ECOSOC fora,[3] the UN system should press for funding arrangements consistent with the repositioning strategies and relevant models noted earlier.

7. **Follow-up analysis.** In the course of research and preparation for this report, the study team encountered areas where the study's recommendations and the wider humanitarian conundrum required additional analysis. These areas are noted below:

    a. G-77 views on and recommendations for improving humanitarian action;
    b. The utility, substance and structure of a *Humanitarian Vulnerability Index;*
    c. Alternative funding approaches and systems for the United Nations;
    d. Comparative analyses of UN agency service delivery capacities in humanitarian crises;
    e. Reconciling contending security interests for the UN humanitarian system;
    f. Ways to maximize
    g. An analysis of private sector delivery in humanitarian operations;
    h. An analysis of the effectiveness of the military in the protection of aid distribution, workers and goods, as well as the military role in delivery;
    i. Enhancing the effectiveness of UN agency personnel and administration for humanitarian operations;
    j. Expanding the global compact to humanitarian assistance;
    k. Ways to enhance Security Council involvement with humanitarian operations and activity.

[3] Arising out of the conclusion of the Good Donorship meeting of 16-17 June, it was agreed that an Implementation Group consisting of donors would be created for a one year period and based in Geneva to improve constraints arising out of present approaches to humanitarian financing.

CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE: HUMANITARIAN FUTURES

Never before have we been able to disrupt the fundamental processes of Earth's ecology, and never before have we created social, economic and technological systems – from continent-wide industrial agriculture to the international financial system – with today's enormous complexity, connectedness and speed of operation. Whether the issue is drug resistant diseases or shiploads of migrants dumped on our shores, our problems spill across geographical and intellectual boundaries, their complexity often exceeds our wildest imaginations, and they converge and intertwine in totally unexpected ways. The real danger of the 21st century, according to Homer-Dixon, is 'synchronous failure.'[4]

Professor Thomas Homer-Dixon

Most planning processes lack the perspective and scope needed to anticipate rapid change and complexity. The reasons for this involve a mixture of psychological and institutional factors, as well as all those difficulties involved in reconciling contending internal and external interests. The net result is that planning more often than not reflects maladaptive behaviour and inconsistent, if not dysfunctional, outputs.[5] This is all too evident in the realm of humanitarian systems and response.

As an epilogue to Study Four, we pose one final challenge to the UN humanitarian system. Despite the criticisms in this study about the expanding nature of humanitarianism, the UN system has – at the same time - taken a narrow view about those factors that make people more vulnerable to disasters and emergencies. The UN has failed to put humanitarianism in its proper perspective, and has regarded vulnerability as essentially a geographical or issue-specific construct. The basic concern – which goes to the core of this study – is whether all the proposed adjustments to the present UN system would adequately tackle the humanitarian crises likely to occur in the foreseeable future?

Humanitarian challenges in the future: an agenda

Francis Fukuyama warned in *Our Posthuman Future* that, 'the advance of technology is so rapid that we need to move quickly to much more concrete analysis of what kinds of institutions will be required to deal with it.'[6] His warning in that sense goes to the core of a proposed 'humanitarian futures' agenda, namely, the need to reconsider the ways that present and possible future institutions manage a geometric increase in information, change factors and the complex inter-relationship between them.

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[4] Presentation by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon, of the University of Toronto's Center for the Study of Peace and Conflict, 'Synchronous Failure: the Real Danger of the 21st Century,' for the US Congressional bi-partisan study group on 'Security for a New Generation,' 5 December 2002, US Capital, Washington, DC.

[5] Kent, R.C., 'Humanitarian Futures and Adaptive Failures, *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, 2:3, 2002.

[6] Fukuyama, F., *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, Profile Books, London, 2002 - p.17.

Yet, as this epilogue suggests, the agenda cannot be only about institutions and the psychological and structural factors that determine their direction. The agenda also has to be concerned with how to anticipate the future, utilising practical and non-linear techniques.

An agenda to prepare for the humanitarian challenges of the future would have at least three basic goals: 1) moving the focus on causes of humanitarian crises from the periphery to the centre; 2) flexibility and creativity within existing institutions to monitor and plan; and 3) new tools, such as scenario-building, to cope with the prospects and consequences of change. Some of these tools are already utilised on a regular basis by many large corporations and military forces.

1. **A paradigm shift will lead to new criteria for adapting to change, and potential human vulnerability will become an overt and explicit measurement tool.** This shift would be sustained by the growing recognition that disasters and emergencies are not aberrant phenomena, but are reflections of the ways that societies structure themselves and allocate their resources.

2. **Whether or not this important conceptual shift occurs, it will be essential to foster institutions that have the creativity, flexibility, information absorption capacity, and planning and policy-making authority to anticipate and respond to the correlation between change and vulnerability.**[7] In developing an organisational capacity responsive to rapid change and complexity, organisational structure, *per se*, is less important than the dynamics of organisations. From that perspective, an effective organisation of the future would have to reflect at least five essential characteristics, most of which are not well developed in the UN system.

    a. **Planning as a priority.** Frequently in modern organisations, the planning function is regarded as secondary to implementation-oriented functions. Planning, too, is frequently and incorrectly deemed a luxury, and long-term planning particularly so. Entities designed to think creatively and innovate within organisations are all too often the first for the axe when economic times become hard.[8] Planning as a central function is vital for organisational adaptation, but even in the corporate sector, it is still encumbered with the legacy that 'the future is simply an extension of the past,' and 'success would be assured with small incremental adjustments in existing goals and objectives.'[9]

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[7] Ad hocracy offers a good example of an adaptive entity. As described by Mintzberg, 'Ad hocracy is an organic structure that relies for coordination on mutual adjustment among its highly trained and specialised experts, which it encourages by extensive use of the liaison devices – integrating managers, standing committees and above all task forces and matrix structures…. All the distinctions of conventional structures disappear in the ad hocracy…. Ad hocracies are found in environments that are both complex and dynamic, because those are the ones that require sophisticated innovation, the type of innovation that calls for the cooperative efforts of many different kinds of experts.' See Mintzberg, H., 'The Structuring of Organisations,' Asch, D. and Bowman, C., *Readings in Strategic Management*, London: Macmillan Education, 1989.

[8] Jones, T., *Innovating at the edge: how organisations evolve and embed innovation capability*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2002, pp.14ff.

[9] Jones, p.139.

b. **Expanded planning time-frame.** Two to three years is considered long-term planning for most governments, although so-called 'blue-sky thinking' extends for much longer periods. Many planners incorrectly assume that a plan must reflect a defined period of time. Hence, when a former Hewlett-Packard chief argued that anyone today who has a five or ten year plan is 'probably crazy,'[10] he implied that to plan one had to be relatively certain about the environment in which one was operating. The key for planners in a time of intense uncertainty, however, is understanding that the only way to prepare for the short-term is to have a sense of probable future alternatives. This requires a planning process that is continuous, regularly revised and updated.

c. **Speculation as a main-line activity.** Speculative research (or blue-sky thinking) is normally relegated to 'think tanks' or frequently to non-mainstream sections within conventional organisations. Earlier, this discussion touched on the dynamics constraining out-of-the-box thinking in terms of group and organisational behaviour. Phrases such as 'that's a bit academic' or 'let's get practical' are as familiar in the UN as they are in the corporate world. The implication is frequently that there is little use in pursuing a matter about which one cannot be certain. Yet such insistence on certainty is myopic. Speculation, like planning, will have to gain greater respectability if an organisation is to be truly adaptive.

d. **Cross-systems organisation**. 'Exploration competencies,' or, the ability to harvest ideas and expertise from a wide range of sources, is vital for innovation.[11] Yet, attempts at innovation are too often 'internalised,' and the essential external cross-fertilisation necessary to maintain focus and development of ideas is sacrificed to insular institutional interests.[12] Adaptive organisations will need to develop open information and communication linkages with new partners, institutionally (e.g., commercial and NGOs) as well as geographically. They will need to find ways to institute 'a new kind of go-between' responsible for ensuring that trends and innovative ideas are exchanged and incorporated into planning processes[13].

e. **Promoting more inter-disciplinary methodologies.** Efforts at inter-disciplinary analysis struggle to incorporate the full weight of relevant perspectives, without over-simplifying or diluting the contribution of each discipline. It is a test rarely passed satisfactorily, except perhaps in the planning and making of policy on matters that are principally technical in nature.[14] All too often, though, even the concept of collaboration poses a difficult initial barrier.

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[10] Courtney, H., *20/20 Foresight: Crafting strategy in an uncertain world*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2001, p.160.

[11] Leifer, R. et al, *Radical Innovation: How mature companies can outsmart upstarts*, Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, 2000.

[12] Wolpert, J.D., 'Breaking out of the Innovation Box,' *Harvard Business Review*, Special Innovation Edition, 80:8, August 2002, p.78.

[13] Wolpert, pp.81ff.

[14] Studies by RAND Corporation and British Telecommunications Research suggest that technological change will be enhanced by 'multidisciplinary trends and interactions.' See: Anton, P., *The Global*

One fundamental problem is that of language. It is a well-known issue, yet it continues to hamper the contribution of science to the strictly non-scientific planning process.[15] The mutual challenge for the pure sciences, social sciences and planners is to break down the language barriers hindering synergy, which is so necessary to understanding and responding to the dynamics of change.

3. A third component of a humanitarian futures agenda involves far greater attention to tools such as '**scenario-building**.' Planners and policy-makers are inhibited in their efforts to plan for the longer-term for reasons noted above. As a recent study of future consequences of climate change suggests, however, the only way to develop means to deal with the possible consequences of such change is to identify 'a sequence of steps, each with associated uncertainties.' The first emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols need to be specified, but so, too, will their dependence on *unknown* socio-economic behaviour. These unknowns can be tackled by using scenarios designed to produce indicative rather than definitive analysis.[16]

   The scenario - both as a concept and a practical planning device - accepts the value of relative probabilities. In other words, while the future may be unknown, it is still possible to anticipate and plan responses for a number of different outcomes.[17] Scenario planning is intended to help management 'think outside the box,' or serve as 'mind-shifting exercises.' At the same time, it provides 'high-level descriptions that help to clarify very long-term strategic direction, threats and opportunities.'[18] Thus, while we may not be able to prevent disasters, with proper advance planning, we can at least mitigate them.

   As a leading advisor for the management consultancy firm, McKinsey & Co., has noted, managers normally react against probability-based scenarios. In one instance, he explained that when it came to assigning probabilities, 'many managers fall back into their binary view of uncertainty – and throw up their hands….[The] manager claimed that he couldn't produce a precise forecast. However, he actually knew quite a bit about the probability….'[19] Planning for that

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Technology Revolution: Bio/Nano/Materials Trends and their Synergies with Information Technology by 2013, prepared for the National Intelligence Council, RAND, Santa Monica, 2001, p.35. 'Positive feedback,' or the way that technologies will inter-relate and interact, means that different technological disciplines result in an acceleration of overall technological advance. See Pearson, I.D., 'What Next?,' *BT Technical Journal*, 19:4, October 2001, p.101.

[15] Van der Vink, G.E., 'Scientifically Illiterate vs Politically Clueless,' *Science*, vol. 276, 23 May 1997, p.1175; Blockstein, D.E., 'How to lose your political virginity while keeping your credibility,' *BioScience*, 52:1, January 2002, p.92.

[16] The Royal Society, *Climate Change: what we know and what we need to know*, Policy Document 22/02, August 2002, p.7.

[17] Goodwin adds, 'we are now emerging into another cultural epoch [where] it seems futile to suggest what lies in store fifty years into the future. However, there is a way to prepare for the unexpected so that the appropriate transition is facilitated even if it cannot be foreseen….'Goodwin, B, 'In the Shadow of Culture,' in Brockman, J., ed., *The Next Fifty Years: Science in the first half of the 21st century*, Vintage Books, New York, 2002, p.42.

[18] Courtney, H., *20/20 Foresight: Crafting strategy in an uncertain world*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001, p.1.

[19] Courtney, *op cit*, p.122

future will have to begin with the flexibility, receptivity and creativity that come from tools such as probability-based scenarios. Their effective use will be dependent on organisational dynamics, which ensure that such on-going planning processes remain a central organisational function.

The humanitarian futures agenda is predicated on the notion that human vulnerability -- as depicted in new and old disasters and emergencies – will in fact be exacerbated due to the current ill-conceived planning and policy-making processes. Both rich and poor ignore how their actions create vulnerabilities for themselves and for others. It is also evident that the relationship between resource margins, rapid technological, economic, demographic, environmental and security changes and human vulnerability has not been adequately explored. The humanitarian futures agenda is ultimately about steps that need to be taken to make planners and policy-makers more adaptive to the rapid change and complexity that will, if not met head on, leave human-kind more disaster and emergency prone.

Future humanitarian challenges for the United Nations

In a world in which human vulnerability is tied to rapid change and unpredictable variables, the UN humanitarian role will have to develop in at least three directions if it is to meet these challenges, including: 1) enhanced planning capacities; 2) greater integrated and operational coherence; and 3) more coherent and consistent advocacy.

1. **Enhanced planning capacities**. Over the past decade, the United Nations has endeavoured to plan more effectively. In fact, the 'Brahimi Report,' with its attention to the structures of UN peacekeeping operations, is perhaps the clearest, if not most recent, indication that the United Nations recognises the need to improve its approach to planning.[20] Planning for the UN in the future is, however, more than an issue of improving what already exists. It is a question of bringing planning, scenario-building, integrated methodologies and 'speculation' to the fore, ensuring the United Nations offers a guide to member-states by challenging the parochial consequences of conventional thinking.

2. **Greater integrated and operational coherence**. The call for greater operational coherence is not new. Normally such pleas revolve around the need for better coordination or clearer linkages between relief and recovery. Coherence is, however, needed for far more challenging issues. Societies have to be 'measured' in terms of vulnerability factors, many of which spill over onto others. As the UN looks to the future, such coherence must be approached with more creativity.

3. **Consistent and coherent advocacy**. As stressed in this chapter, disasters and emergencies are all too often caused by the ways that humans live, or are forced to live, their normal lives. This message is fundamental to an organisation that has a universal mandate and seeks to ensure the well-being of all human-kind. The

[20] It should be noted that the UN has been taking steps to improve its planning between headquarters and the field, and one important example is reflected in the *Report on the United Nations Panel on Peace Operations*, 17 August 2000 (the 'Brahimi Report'), but it remains unclear if any of the appropriate recommendations have yet been implemented.

challenge for the UN is how best to advocate for 'humanitarian futures.' The United Nations should assume leadership in establishing practical vulnerability analysis and reduction, and convey to the global community the hazards of failing.

ANNEX I

Terms of Reference for Study Four

CHANGES IN HUMANITARIAN FINANCING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS:

STUDY GROUP FOUR

OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND REPORT

The following note outlines the objectives of Study Four: ***A Study on the Implications of Changes in Humanitarian Financing for the United Nations System*** as well as the study's methodology and team participants.

I The study's overall objectives:

Based upon its Terms of Reference, Study Four is 'expected to provide realistic options for UN humanitarian system responses to the changes in the financing of the humanitarian enterprise and with recommending institutional changes to the UN for presentation to the 2003 Economic and Social Council….' This endeavour will result in recommendations that are to 'translate into a joint UN agency implementation action plan under the aegis of the IASC.'

There are two main questions that guide the purpose of this study:

[i] how is the competitive aid environment evolving and what are the forces shaping this environment. In that context, in what ways does this evolving aid environment impact upon donors, aid organizations, the larger humanitarian system and beneficiaries.

[ii] given this evolving environment, how could the UN be best configured to provide maximum benefit to beneficiaries, in terms of its role, its efficiency in the use of resources and its effectiveness as a provider of assistance, and therefore also to remain as an attractive option for donors?

As perceived by the IASC's Humanitarian Finance Working Group, Study Four is intended to have far reaching implications in the ways that the United Nations organizations operate and collaborate in the humanitarian sphere.

II Study Four's working objectives

Study Four has five inter-related working objectives. These are:

[1] To analyse the extent to which the competitive aid environment has changed and how these changes have affected the objectives and operations of the United Nations humanitarian system. From their various perspectives, Studies

One through Three will provide an essential baseline for Study Four's analysis of the impact of the competitive aid environment upon the UN's humanitarian objectives and operations. This first working objective will be important to determine whether or not there has been a significant reduction in resources allocated through the UN system to humanitarian operations, and, if so, the extent to which this reduction has affected the priority objectives and procedures of the UN humanitarian system as a whole. Stemming from this level of enquiry is the more fundamental issue of the broader relationship between the UN's humanitarian role and finance. In other words, to what extent has the latter determined the UN's role and objectives, or alternatively to what extent has the former provided a relatively consistent yardstick for donor contributions?

[2] To assess the perceived utility of the United Nations' humanitarian objectives and operations – the humanitarian 'product' – in order to determine those elements of the UN's 'value added' deemed essential to provide maximum support to beneficiaries. This second working objective is designed to determine the perceived utility of the UN's humanitarian 'product.' The product encompasses a wide spectrum of roles and activities, including advocacy, early warning, data and information collection, coordination, humanitarian negotiations [*e.g.*, access for relief workers and assistance], monitoring, evaluation and delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance. Given these extensive roles and activities, Study Four will appraise the UN's humanitarian product in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, comparative advantage and beneficiary impact. The basis for this assessment will *inter alia* reflect the views of representative groups of users and recipients, including non-governmental organisations, donors and affected peoples. Similar to working objective one, this second working objective will depend in no small part upon the findings of Studies One through Three, and the numerous operational evaluations that have preceded Study Four.

[3] To identify possible areas where the UN's humanitarian product can provide increased value-added to the efforts of the international humanitarian community as a whole and to enhance the well being of disaster and emergency affected peoples. The two previous working objectives will provide important insights into the dynamics that ultimately have determined the UN's humanitarian product to date, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of that product. These considerations will form the baseline for proposing ways that the UN could be configured to provide even more appropriate, timely and efficient assistance to emergency and disaster-affected people. Hence, working objective three will suggest ways to adapt and adjust the UN's humanitarian product. These in turn will relate to [i] present funding trends, [ii] prospects for new products which could attract more resources and [iii] those vital elements that need to be incorporated into the product regardless of resource factors.

[4] To ascertain the structural and procedural implications of any proposed humanitarian product adjustments upon the United Nations humanitarian system, including its agencies and inter-agency mechanisms at headquarters and field levels. Study Four's terms of reference emphasise the need to focus on the competitive advantage of the United Nations system and, in so doing, to assess the optimal configuration for the United Nations 'in this market.' The TOR accepted that

there may be 'institutional weaknesses within the United Nations humanitarian community.' Hence, working objective #3 and #4 are closely inter-related: the former will recommend the type of product development that will be required for the UN to exploit its competitive advantage in order to improve humanitarian aid flows; the latter will assess the structural and procedural implications of the proposed product developments, including realistic options to address perceived institutional weaknesses. In so doing, the Study will provide 'an aggressive implementation plan that clearly indicates action, key actors, outputs and key performance indicators.'

[5] To speculate on the adequacy of recommended product, structural and procedural adjustments to deal with the sorts of humanitarian crises that one might need to address over the next decade. Rapid change and complexity are hallmarks of this century. Study Four, in its final substantive section, will assess the extent to which the proposed product development, structural and procedural recommendations will be able to address the sorts of issues that the international humanitarian community might have to face in the longer-term future. In other words, working objective #5 is designed to consider the durability of the course of action recommended by Study Four. In so doing, it will consider various inter-related demographic, economic, political, scientific and security trends to speculate on factors that could reduce, mitigate or intensify human vulnerability in the future.

III Methodology

Study Four will depend to a significant extent upon the findings of Studies One through Three for a considerable portion of its information and data. At the same time it will supplement those findings with a series of independent initiatives outlined below:

Extensive evaluation review. There have been a number of important evaluations undertaken over the past few years that directly and indirectly address some of the main concerns of Study Four. With that in mind, considerable attention will be given to identifying key evaluations, their content and implications. In addition, there is an extensive and highly relevant literature upon which Study Four will draw;

Interview base. Study Four's project team will undertake a wide range of interviews. These will focus upon bilateral governments, including representatives of the G-77 and OECD countries, non-governmental organisations from developing and developed countries, UN agency representatives and independent analysts. Study Four will seek to ascertain the views of sample beneficiary groups, but these in light of time pressure may in the final analysis depend upon the views of those who have directly worked with beneficiaries and evaluations that incorporate beneficiary views;

Business models. Product lines, core competencies and functional efficiency are fundamental to the objectives of Study Four. Standard concepts of business analysis should offer useful and practical insights for the development of UN services and essential institutional and procedural changes. With this in mind, the project team will evaluate the utility of a number of 'business models' for the UN humanitarian assistance system.

Peer group reviews. Study Four will use a variety of fora to develop as well as to test out its findings, conclusions and preliminary recommendations. A series of peer group sessions will be convened with donors, NGOs and UN agencies in order to garner their own views about the issues raised by Study Four, and eventually also to provide feedback on paper and proposals emanating from Study Four.

V Team composition

The team is comprised of the following four members:

Mr. Mark Dalton recently led the Kosovo case study team for the DFID-funded project, A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change. He has had twelve years of experience in the humanitarian system, most recently in charge of IRIN's South and Central Asian operations.

Dr. Karin von Hippel is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, London. She served in the European Union and the United Nations in Somalia and then later for the UN in Kosovo. Her publications include Democracy by Force [Cambridge, 2000]

Dr. Randolph Kent is Study Four's Team Leader. He was UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Somalia [1999-2002], and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Kosovo [1999] and in Rwanda [1994-1995].

Dr. Ralf Maurer is an expert in organisational design and performance, specialising in management, strategy and coordination. His recent work includes a comprehensive evaluation of the UNAIDS programme. In a previous capacity, he served as a former UNDP programme manager.

ANNEX II

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group met on 15 September 2003 to review Study Four and, based upon that study, to determine what actions it would take arising from that study. Below are the minutes of that meeting:

Workshop on the Changing Humanitarian Environment
IASC Discussion
15 September 2003

Summary of Discussions

1. This workshop was organized at the request of the IASC to discuss in more depth the analysis and recommendations put forward by an OCHA-commissioned study (Study 4) regarding the implications of a changing humanitarian financing environment[1]. The meeting was attended by UNHCR, IFRC, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, ICRC, UNDP, and OCHA (list of participants attached).

2. Following a presentation by Randolph Kent, the author of Study 4, a lively debate ensued on the current humanitarian environment.

3. There seemed overall consensus on the main challenges of the current environment of humanitarian work: (a) the need for more humanitarian accountability towards beneficiaries on the part of agencies and donors. This requires ensuring that norms and standards are met; that the needs of beneficiaries are met; that funding is prioritized according to need; and that a more results-based performance framework is developed by the agencies (b) the need for humanitarian agencies to strengthen strategic analysis and become more strategic about the effects of development and political action or lack thereof on vulnerability and humanitarian action and (c) the scope for developing more coherent inter-agency advocacy strategies (e.g. towards political actors, donors).

4. There was a lengthy discussion on the extent to which humanitarian action should incorporate longer-term issues such as transition, protracted relief, capacity building and the MDGs and the implications this has for humanitarian work. Several participants felt that humanitarians needed to think "outside of the humanitarian box" and reflect these concerns.

5. The necessity to keep up a consistent dialogue with donors, for instance by linking up with the good donorship initiative. The dialogue with donors should also include a discussion on the need to address and fund the root causes of humanitarian crisis through primarily development work.

6. Various triggers for humanitarian response were discussed and it was agreed that these triggers as well as the resulting humanitarian space needed to be better understood and more systematically applied. The implications of failed governance and an overall tendency towards increasing chronic poverty were also raised

7. Key concepts such as vulnerability and humanitarianism require a clearer definition.

8. The need for improved and integrated assessments applying a commonly agreed methodology and data set was discussed at length and endorsed. This would enable the humanitarian community to present a more objective picture of humanitarian crises and allow for more transparent priority-setting. It was however stressed that this was not only an issue of

[1] This study reviews the outcome of three donor-commissioned studies on humanitarian financing, needs assessment and donor behavior and had been presented to the IASC WG meeting in Geneva in July.

improved assessments but also of making the humanitarian "market" more functional. Improved assessment will help the humanitarian agencies to do "their part of the deal" viz donors but this does not necessarily lead to a more measured and objective response by donors nor a "market " in which resources better match needs.

9. Challenges to humanitarianism were raised such as humanitarian action of military actors, lack of sustainability of humanitarian action, linkages between humanitarian, political and developmental concerns, increased levels of impoverishment stretching system to deal with welfare/poverty issues; neutrality of humanitarian action.

10. Advocacy on the objectives of humanitarianism, on vulnerability and on inadequate resources emerged as an issue of common concern and an area that merits the development of joint strategies and implementation. Advocacy strategies should also reflect bottom-up approaches (e.g. through the use of the IFRC global outreach capacity country associations).

11. The key challenge for humanitarian agencies, as summarized by the Chair, is how to move from responding in an increasingly difficult operating environment to one where the Agencies are framing the environment and creating the conditions in which humanitarianisms is understood by everyone. The Agencies need to act more strategically in order to respond more effectively.

12. Reviewing the recommendations put forward by the study, it was agreed that these should be addressed within five broad areas for action:

A. FOCUS ON HUMANITARIANISM AS A SUBJECT

- recognizing that there are linkages between political and development action.

Suggested Action Points:

i. A report on the parameters of humanitarinism to be developed for ECOSOC 2004, focusing on ways to establish an agreed framework of humanitarian assistance and that would reflect clear linkages to development approaches to vulnerability reduction.

ii. OCHA to prepare a compilation of existing major studies on current humanitarian issues

WORKING WITHIN COUNTRIES

– encouraging IASC mechanisms at the country level.

Suggested Action Points:

i. Establish a phased process to develop mechanisms for bringing in IASC members at country level in crisis work along agreed IASC guidelines.

ii. Request HCs to prepare short presentations on how IASC-like structures have been constituted at country level. Each HC should present this paper at the next HC retreat where the spirit of this idea should be promoted.

IMPROVED PERFORMANCE.

- agreeing on the need to look at systems capacities and performance.

Suggested Action Points:

i. Establish a technical subgroup to the current IASC WG on the CAP to develop common approaches for integrated, inter-agency and cross-sectoral needs assessment and objective criteria for vulnerability analysis. Such work should furthermore lead to the development of results-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems. The first task would be to define the parameters of vulnerability.

ii. Approach partners with relevant experience (e.g. OXFAM, specific donors) to contribute to the work of this group.

iii. Develop clear terms of reference for this technical group

iv. Develop linkages to the Good Donorship Initiative through the "Contact Group".

v. *Undertake a system-wide analysis of humanitarian response capacity including ways of improving humanitarian response. (to feed into planned IASC emergency response meeting to review agency performance and response capacity.)*

vi. *Report to ECOSOC 2005 to provide feed-back on budgetary and material capacity of agencies to address emergencies.*

FOCUS ON VULNERABILITY

- agreeing on the need for defining and tackling vulnerability

Suggested Action Point:

Define the critical factors in vulnerability reduction and develop practical methodological approaches towards that end, engaging the active involvement of the development community.

IMPROVED COMMON ADVOCACY.
- recognizing the need for a common advocacy strategy

Suggested Action Points:

i. *Develop stronger and common advocacy messages*
ii. *Stimulate humanitarian action at grass roots level (e.g. Red Cross Movement)*
iii. *Develop common message on needs, understanding of vulnerability on agency consensus basis while not ignoring humanitarian environment at field level*

13. The recommendations on strengthening the humanitarian coordinator and strengthening the credibility of the HC and humanitarian staff were deferred to the next day's discussion on the IASC Review.

Annex I

Participants List
Humanitarian Financing
September 15 (Room B) 2003
UN Secretariat General Assembly Building

Name	Organisation
Anne Willem Bijleveld	UNHCR
Kemlin Furley	
Arnhild Spence	IFRC
Mark Bowden	OCHA
Helena Fraser	
Susanne Frueh	
Mike Gaouette	
Claude Hilfiker	
Lise Skinnebach	
Stephen Tull	
Magda Ninaber Van Eyben	
Francesco Strippoli	WFP
David Nabarro	WHO
Tanja Sleeuwenhoek	
Nils Kastberg	UNICEF
Eric Laroche	
Nicola Dahrendorf	
Christian Skoog	
Jacques Villettaz	ICRC
Marie Dimond	UNDP
Kirsi Madi	IASC Secretariat
Bradley Foerster	
Bruce Jones	IASC Review Consultants
Abby Stoddard	
Randolph Kent	Author of Study 4

ANNEX THREE

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