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# A NEW BUSINESS MODEL FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE?

A CHALLENGE PAPER

by the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council  
on Humanitarian Assistance

Understanding conflict. Building peace.

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A challenge paper

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## Preface

The Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance was established in 2008 under the aegis of the World Economic Forum. It is one of about 70 Councils which together have been charged with developing proposals to address global problems. Participants come from academic, business, non-governmental and inter-governmental backgrounds, but sit in their personal capacities. In the words of WEF Chairman, Klaus Schwab, ‘The challenges faced by the world today are more complex, more interrelated, more intractable than ever before. Confronting these global challenges requires collaborative thinking, creative solutions and, most importantly, a systematic approach to implementation. These Global Agenda Councils and their deliberations will provide a 21st-century approach to dealing with the issues that face us all, from systemic financial risk to climate change. What we need now is an entirely new global cooperation system’.

Those of us who were privileged to sit on the Humanitarian Assistance GAC shared Klaus Schwab’s sense of urgency. We began our work with a strong commitment to the moral imperative of protecting the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable in our global society. Our professional experience and knowledge made us conscious that humanitarian needs had grown and were likely to grow further, not least under the pressure of climate change. We acknowledged the energy and professionalism of humanitarian organisations. And we recognised many new initiatives, including by the private sector and other “new actors” in the humanitarian field. At the same time, standing back from the immediate needs, and working with other Agenda Councils on a wide range of economic and technical topics, we identified the need for further innovation.

The main focus of our discussion was on the factors that produce humanitarian crises, and on how to manage response so that further crises become less likely. This led us to examine risk analysis and mapping, disaster prevention and preparedness, and rehabilitation and recovery. We found ourselves emphasising national capacity-building as the key scaffolding of risk management and disaster response, implying new roles for aid donors and private-sector partners. We called this a new “business model” for humanitarian action.

In the time available to us, we were able to sketch our ideas and provide a platform for further work. We developed our thinking through a series of extended “virtual meetings” and at the first annual meeting of the Global Agenda Councils, convened in Dubai in November 2008. Formally, our work ended in June 2009. Some members of the Council stood down at that time, and new members joined. However, a sub-set of the original members has decided to publish this summary of our initial thinking – not as the last word on the topic, far from it, but as a contribution to the 2009–10 Council, and also as a report to our fellow Councils and to the wider community.

We offer the analysis in our personal capacities, but also on the clear understanding that this is work in progress. The report has been a collaborative project, but none of us wishes to be bound by every word or every position. We ask readers to accept the report in the spirit in which it was written: as an account of an evolving conversation, as what we might call “draft thoughts”.

We would not have made the progress we have without the support of our coordinators at the World Economic Forum, first Shruti Mehrotra and then Olivia Bessat. Our thanks to them. Shruti Mehrotra provided leadership and energy to the World Economic Forum’s initiatives on business contributions to disaster relief, which have provided many useful insights and links. I would also like to thank Dan Smith and his colleagues at International Alert, especially Ilaria Bianchi, for taking on editing and publication. Dan Smith has been an invaluable member of the Council on

his own account, and we are grateful for this additional contribution. I would like to thank all the members of the 2008-9 Council, including those not involved in this publication, for their collaboration.

As our report goes to press, the world is again shocked by the human impact of natural disasters, in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and the island countries of the South Pacific. Conflict continues to impose unbearable burdens on innocent women, men, and children. The financial crisis has driven 100 million people below the poverty line, and made them more vulnerable. There can be no doubt that Klaus Schwab is right about the scale of the challenge we face. The Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance will continue to play its part in the search for solutions.

### **Simon Maxwell**

Chair

Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance

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## Introduction

Many millions of people are currently affected by humanitarian crises, and the number is sure to rise. There were 36 armed conflicts in the world in 2008 (up from 34 in 2007)<sup>1</sup>, and 414 natural disasters affecting 211 million people.<sup>2</sup> Overall, there were 16 million refugees, 50 million people internally displaced,<sup>3</sup> and 90 million in need of food aid.<sup>4</sup> These are the most vulnerable people in the world, and the primary focus of humanitarian relief efforts, which currently cost approximately US\$9 billion per year<sup>5</sup> and engage over 200,000 aid workers around the world.<sup>6</sup>

More generally, many hundreds of millions face unacceptable risks. The latest World Bank estimates show 1.4 billion people living below US\$1.25 per day. Some 800 million people do not get enough to eat. More than a quarter of all children under five in developing countries are clinically malnourished. Each year, the number of children under five that die is close to 10 million.<sup>7</sup>

Despite long-term progress in tackling absolute poverty and making progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015, the numbers of people in need of humanitarian relief seem likely to rise. The World Bank estimates that an additional 90 million people may fall below the poverty line as a result of the global financial crisis.<sup>8</sup> The Global Humanitarian Forum warns that climate change is causing an ever-rising number of deaths, with the total already reaching 300,000 a year.<sup>9</sup> And the UN has recently warned that 1 billion people living in slums and shanty towns are at particular risk of natural hazards.<sup>10</sup> The Humanitarian Futures Project at King's College, London, forecasts that the humanitarian case load will rise by 25% by 2015.<sup>11</sup>

The members of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance insist on the salience of this issue in the wider conversation about global well-being. The humanitarian imperative is rooted in the right to life and the requirement under international law without favour to protect and preserve human life and dignity. In addition, there are many strong linkages to parallel conversations about state fragility and climate change, public finance and private engagement, national capacity and international collective action.

We think the humanitarian caseload will increase and become more complex. In addition to the short-term impact of the financial crisis, we foresee increasing and unprecedented problems caused by climate change, the pressure on natural resources and sudden shocks, such as pandemics. These problems will intensify political instability and risk and bear most heavily on weak and fragile states. We expect vicious feedback loops and risk of downward spirals as each risk factor exacerbates the others. The greatest intersection of risks today is found in poor countries characterised by state fragility.

We believe national capacity to deal with crises will grow and should be strengthened. When emergencies hit, the default response is often driven by an international alliance of aid donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and some private-sector companies. We expect there will be a significant shift, from what we think of as the Darfur model of high international engagement, to a hybrid model in which governments play a larger role (such as in the Pakistan earthquake in 2005), and in cases where government capacity is adequate, to a government-led model, as with the Sichuan earthquake in China in 2008.

Because of the combination of the likely increased frequency of extreme events and the importance of the pressure from slow onset change, a new approach needs to be less focused on events and more focused on pattern and structures. This means keeping in focus both extreme events as well as their causes and aftermath. Such a new approach will retain the traditional ethical and legal

principles of humanitarian action, and link them to the broader context of poverty, vulnerability and poor governance in which different principles come into play.

We believe that the international community needs a new vulnerability and protection business model. This new model should have six requirements:

- A comprehensive risk framework;
- A reworked balance of spending between response, prevention and recovery;
- A big investment in national and local capacity;
- Fuller engagement of the private sector;
- Linking of the humanitarian to broader social and economic development issues; and
- Regional and international readiness to address cross-border humanitarian issues.

The first requirement of this new business model is a comprehensive risk framework. We often find ourselves having to engage in an enterprise of risk management with incomplete information about how things will unfold. Such uncertainties are only being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. We must plan to be ready for events for which we cannot plan.

The second requirement is to rework the balance between crisis response and the upstream and downstream issues of prevention and recovery. More resources are needed both to reduce risk in the first place, and reduce the risk of relapse after a crisis occurs.

The default mode of the current humanitarian model in general is external assistance; the default mode of a new vulnerability and protection model should be self-reliance. The third requirement of this new model is to enhance the capacities, readiness and resilience of exposed societies so they can better handle extreme events. Ensuring that civil society and local communities are involved will not only make response efforts faster, but more efficient as their involvement will make it possible to identify and meet the diverse needs of various groups in affected communities, groups differentiated, for example, by gender, age, and social class.

The fourth requirement is to engage the private sector more fully, not just as a source of donations but also as a source of key skills and technologies, during and after crises. We commend the World Economic Forum's initiative on the private sector in humanitarian relief as well as other efforts to incentivise appropriate and beneficial private-sector investments in risky regions.

The fifth requirement of the business model is to link the humanitarian concern to broader development issues, strengthening social safety nets and supporting resilience. This requirement will necessitate unprecedented collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and interests.

Finally, as cross-border challenges will grow, regional organisations backed by the UN will need to be able to mediate and mitigate these problems as they arise.

It is our recommendation that these six requirements should be examined, assessed and fleshed out by those engaged in the pressing problem of meeting the increased humanitarian caseload. It is our intention to contribute with our own work and energy to implementing this recommendation.

The rest of this document fleshes out the argument for each of these six requirements.



# 1. A comprehensive risk framework

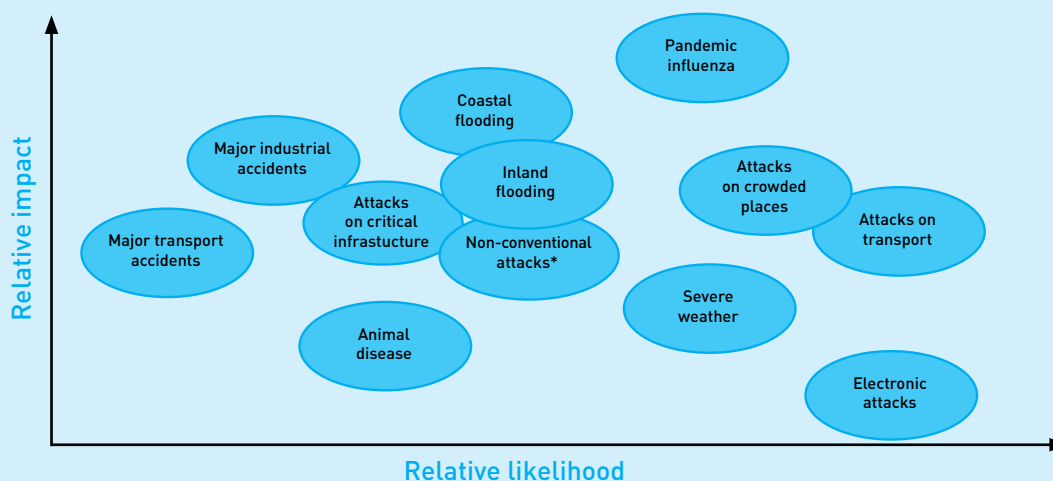
Addressing a growing and increasingly complex humanitarian caseload will not only require improved tactical responses, but a long-term strategic vision and plan based on a comprehensive risk-management framework.

The private sector has developed very sophisticated versions of such risk-management frameworks particularly within the insurance industry. Similarly, over the past three decades, governments have been steadily developing such frameworks concerning several types of natural and technological hazards. Within the context of the Hyogo Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Reduction, 45 countries now have national platforms for disaster risk reduction. For example, the UK has a National Risk Register and a Resilience Strategy (as shown in Box 1), and similar efforts have been undertaken in the US by the Department of Homeland Security.

It is now time for such a comprehensive risk framework to be developed for the humanitarian domain at the international level, including not only natural disasters but conflicts and combined “complex emergencies” as well. Such a framework will enable the various actors within the humanitarian sector to define a shared vision and plan for their efforts in the medium and long term. More specifically, such a framework would enable actors to better document current challenges, forecast future threats, inform their decisions on how best to intervene in and mitigate crises, and more strategically implement risk-reducing recovery efforts in the aftermath of humanitarian crises.

## Box 1: The UK National Risk Register and Resilience Strategy

The UK National Risk Register is derived from a national, cross-government assessment of the likelihood and impact of hazards and threats to the country over a five-year period. The register identifies risks of such severity that central government intervention would be required, and provides guidance on preparedness and emergency planning. The figure below illustrates the relative likelihood and impact of various risks to the United Kingdom.



\* The use of some chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials has the potential to have very serious and widespread consequences. An example would be the use of a nuclear device. There is no historical precedent for this type of terrorist attack which is excluded from the non-conventional grouping on the diagram.

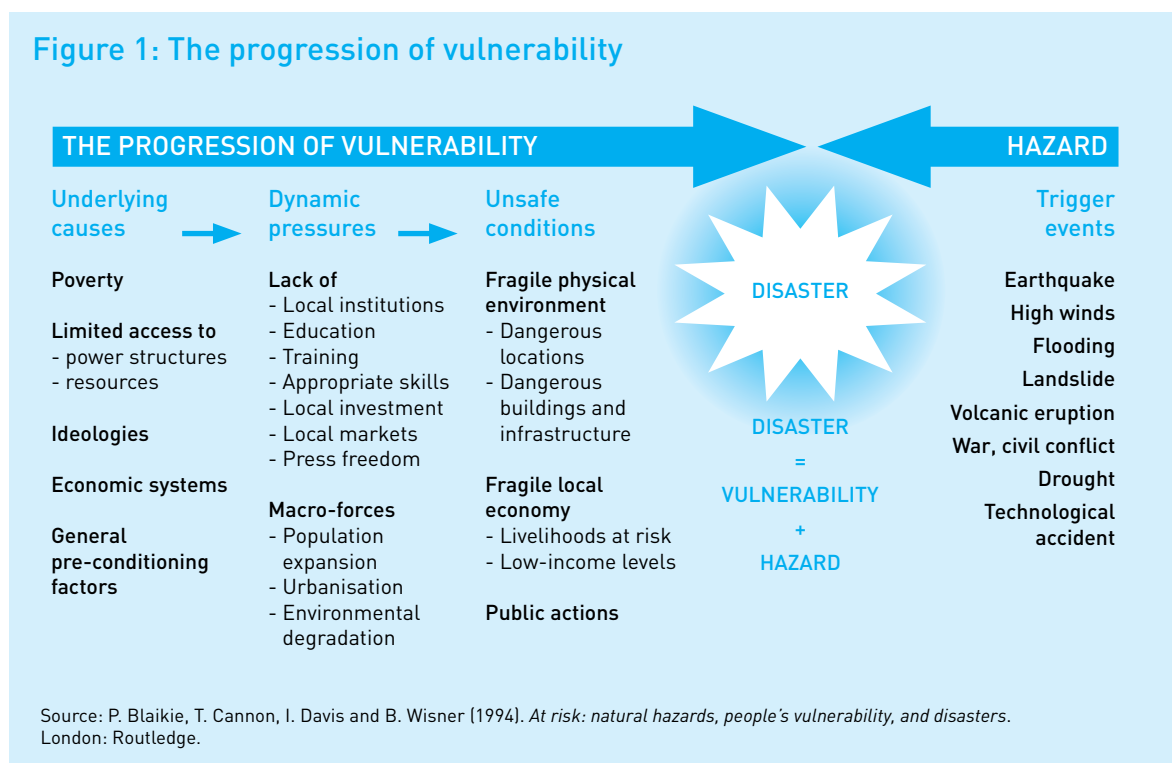
Source: UK Cabinet Office website, “National Risk Register”. Available at [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/corp-assets/publications/reports/national\\_risk\\_register/national\\_risk\\_register\\_introduction.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/corp-assets/publications/reports/national_risk_register/national_risk_register_introduction.pdf), p.3. Accessed on 7th October 2009.

The development of such a comprehensive framework requires both risk assessment and risk management:

- Risk assessment identifies threats and quantifies the likelihood and severity of their potential impacts. Impacts are assessed not only in terms of numbers of fatalities, illnesses, and injuries, but by measures of social disruption, including the inability to gain access to food, water, education, and health care. Economic damages represent another important dimension of the impacts, while the risk to humanitarian aid workers must also be assessed.
- Risk management involves developing strategies for responding to these identified and quantified risks. Information about the costs and effectiveness of such strategies must then be integrated with the risk assessment to guide effective decision-making.

Within the humanitarian domain, risk assessment involves forecasting the location and severity of potential humanitarian crises. Such forecasting necessitates assessments of both vulnerability and resilience of population groups and their respective environments. The level of vulnerability associated with a specific place is a function of the social, physical, economic and environmental characteristics that make that place more susceptible to harm, while resilience takes into account the ability of these factors to support recovery after an event occurs.

The process of agreeing upon a common definition of risk, and particularly the factors used to assess vulnerability, is an important exercise for the humanitarian community to undertake. For example, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) proposes that vulnerability assessments incorporate indicators of population density, infrastructure, poverty, food security, water, sanitation, and disease (as shown in Figure 1).



The broader humanitarian community must also come to some general agreement about the models and algorithms to integrate these vulnerability factors into one or more measurements of overall risk. This entire risk-assessment exercise, ranging through the identification, measurement, analysis and valuation of overall risk, is an important exercise for humanitarian actors to undertake individually and as a group.

Once compiled, risk-assessment information must be used by actors to define their individual and collective risk-management strategies. For the humanitarian sector, this includes activities such as risk-reduction measures for natural disasters, peacebuilding activities in post-conflict states, and longer-term vulnerability reduction and capacity-building measures in weak and fragile states. As with risk assessment, these risk-management strategies should be defined individually and as a group of actors in alignment with a strategic vision of the humanitarian community.

Strategic analysis and planning of this nature, resulting in the definition of a comprehensive risk-management framework, must form a major component of the activities of the humanitarian sector to ensure that the growing and increasingly complex humanitarian caseload is kept at a minimum and managed effectively.

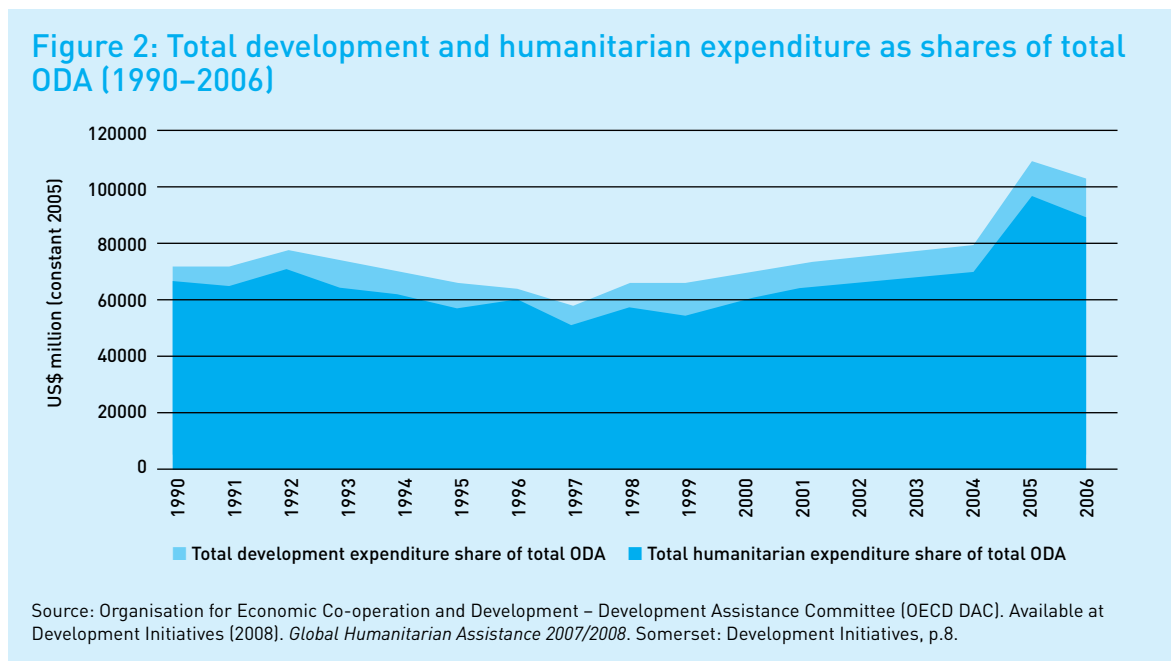
## Recommendations

- Undertake a broad consultative process at the international and national levels to define vulnerability factors and an agreed-upon methodology for measurement and reporting of these factors.
- Conduct a system-wide assessment of response capacities available at all levels: international, regional, national, and sub-national, including local humanitarian actors as well as non-traditional actors such as the private sector.
- Establish systems for the collection, monitoring, analysis and dissemination of data on vulnerability factors and response capacity.
- Facilitate a multi-stakeholder process at the international and national levels to develop models to analyse this raw data and calculate risk levels, initially at the national level with an eye to eventually having sub-national risk calculations.
- Conduct regularised development of risk-management strategy using these risk measurements on an individual actor level as well as across the humanitarian sector.
- Review and revise the resulting comprehensive risk-management frameworks on a regular basis.

## 2. Reworking the balance of spending between prevention, response and recovery

Building upon the first requirement of having a comprehensive risk framework, including an emphasis on risk management, the new business model for humanitarian assistance involves a reworking of the balance of spending between prevention, response, and recovery. The overall aim is to strengthen prevention, thus reducing risk, and allowing response and recovery preparations to be more focused. Adjusting the balance of spending towards prevention, or risk reduction, will make it more straightforward to prepare the response and recovery capacity needed for unpreventable disasters.

What is the current balance of spending between these phases? The data is poor. Estimates of the total funding for humanitarian assistance vary widely from US\$5–6 billion<sup>12</sup> to US\$18 billion.<sup>13</sup> Official figures (Figure 2) show humanitarian aid at around 10% of total aid, a share that has remained constant since the early 1990s, despite growing aid volumes overall.



In looking at the data, it is clear that the figures for humanitarian aid do not adequately distinguish between funding for the three phases of activity and tend to overlook funds spent on prevention in particular. For example, there is a strong correlation between authoritarian governments and the onset of both famine and conflict. Should programmes aimed at spreading democracy appear as preventative humanitarian assistance? Similarly, programmes introducing high-yield rice strains, polio vaccinations and those involving early conflict resolution could in some circumstances be thought of as preventative humanitarian assistance.

In addition, the sums spent by private sponsors outside the official donor community are also frequently overlooked in these figures. For example, between 2001 and 2007, international remittances more than doubled to US\$336 billion annually.<sup>14</sup> Frequently the recipients of remittances use their funds for activities that would fall under the category of prevention, such as purchasing better housing, health care and education. Moreover, remittances increase significantly during times of crises, both in the lead-up and aftermath.

Notwithstanding these concerns regarding the data, spending tends to be concentrated on response rather than on prevention and longer-term recovery measures. Not only is this balance inappropriate from a strategic risk-management perspective, but also on a cost basis. There is truth in the old cliché that “prevention is better than cure” – it is currently estimated that a dollar invested in prevention saves the international community US\$4 spent on response and recovery.<sup>15</sup>

The mobilisation of the international community in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami led to one of the largest and most comprehensive international response operations in history. However, it also raised many questions. For instance, how many thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people could have been saved had an early warning system alerted coastal populations to the arrival of a surging tidal wave? And how many lives could have been spared had their dwellings been built with more resilient material? Essentially, these questions underscore the need to strike the right balance between prevention, response and recovery.<sup>16</sup>

While natural and conflict-related disasters indisputably affect every continent, they do so unevenly. Over the course of the last century, of the estimated 25 million people whose deaths can be related to hazard-related disasters, 95 percent were living in the developing world. In the coming ten years, more than 129 million people are likely to be directly affected by humanitarian crises in Central and South Asia as well as East and Southern Africa.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that those individuals and governments that are less capable of taking preventive measures will also be those to be greatest affected by humanitarian disasters, whether they be natural or conflict-related.

**Figure 3: Total amount of reported economic damages by level of development and type of disaster (2005, in US\$ billion)**

	Flood	Wind storm	Drought*	Slide	Earthquake & tsunami	Volcanic eruption	Insect infestation	Total
OECD	103.27	358.49	53.77	0.31	198.61	0.02	0.14	714.61
CEE+CIS	42.86	1.08	3.08	0.13	3.21	0.00	0.00	50.35
Developing countries	204.22	71.78	48.82	2.62	50.70	0.88	0.14	379.15
Least developed countries	14.99	4.98	0.08	0.00	2.55	0.01	0.00	22.61
Countries not classified	1.09	7.28	0.95	0.00	16.90	0.00	0.00	26.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>366.43</b>	<b>443.61</b>	<b>106.69</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>271.98</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>1192.95</b>

\* Drought-related disasters category includes extreme temperatures

Source: OFDA/CRED International Disasters Database (EM-DAT). Available at <http://www.unisdr.org/disaster-statistics/impact-economic.htm>. Accessed on 8th October 2009.

This evidence also suggests the existence of a strong connection between prevention, recovery and development. Long-term international development programmes that assist countries in lifting themselves out of poverty should also have the benefit of increasing individuals’ and governments’ resilience and their abilities to prepare for humanitarian disasters. Moreover, reducing the impact of humanitarian crises allows local governments and the international community to focus their energies on long-term development, economic growth and improving peoples’ standard of living.

Preventative measures, particularly with regards to natural disasters, are increasingly important especially given the increasing incidence of extreme weather events as a result of climate change. As shown in Box 2, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) is one institution specifically dedicated to prevention, or rather risk reduction, in the area of natural disasters.

## Box 2: Disaster Prevention and Preparedness: The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) founded by the Hyogo Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Reduction serves as the UN focal point on disaster risk reduction.

The ISDR aims at building disaster-resilient communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development, with the goal of reducing human, social, economic and environmental losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental risks.

The ISDR promotes four objectives as tools towards reaching disaster reduction for all:

- Increase public awareness to understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction globally;
- Obtain commitment from public authorities to implement disaster-reduction policies and actions;
- Stimulate interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships, including the expansion of risk-reduction networks; and
- Improve scientific knowledge about disaster reduction.

Source: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). Available at <http://www.unisdr.org>. Accessed on 8th October 2009.

This focus on prevention is not to argue against response operations. Indeed, many humanitarian crises emerge without warning and in unforeseen locations. Effective national and international response capacity will always be needed, but prevention should always be preferable to response.

## Recommendations

There are a number of practical steps the international community should take to address these issues:

- Establish a clean accountancy of funds that are spent in the three categories and those that are already integrated. This process should include a comprehensive definition of prevention, response and recovery and include sources not traditionally included as humanitarian assistance.
- Undertake a full-scale review of current practice. The direct providers of humanitarian assistance should critically evaluate how they currently deliver humanitarian assistance across the three categories and look for redundancy both within their own systems and with other providers.
- Design integrated plans – both between categories and donors. At present, many relevant stakeholders are compartmentalised and focus solely on prevention, response or recovery. Firm moves should be made to remedy this situation. Countries should be encouraged to fully integrate risk-reduction practices in all aspects of society and the economy.
- The international community should identify and engage in a limited number of preventive humanitarian assistance programmes targeted at areas of high risk and vulnerability.

### 3. A big investment in national and local capacity

Good quality humanitarian response and recovery could be defined as being timely, appropriate and accountable to those affected. To tackle all these issues, an obvious solution is to invest in national and local capacity.

A timely response requires that the people, organisations, and the capacity that do the responding start as close to the emergency as possible. Inevitably that means the local community, local NGOs, and local and national government. A study done for the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition found that: *'Local people provided almost all immediate life-saving action and early emergency support, as is commonly the case in disasters'*. It went on to say, *'International action was most effective when enabling, facilitating and supporting local actors'*.<sup>18</sup>

An appropriate response requires knowledge of the social, environmental, cultural and political issues in the affected community both prior to and after the emergency. Again, this knowledge is best held by organisations who habitually work with the affected community. Often this will be local and national actors, including the community themselves. A good example of this was of the Sungi Development Foundation in Pakistan during the 2005 earthquake. In an article for the Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) they claimed that they *'maintained the quality of their work through geographical and sector-specific strategies [...] avoiding duplication and minimising relief disparities at local level'*.<sup>19</sup>

Humanitarian response also needs to be accountable to those most affected by the disaster. This is possible only if the affected community has not only a strong stake but also a clear and major role in determining the activities and outcomes that constitute response and recovery. This is more easily done when the humanitarian agency is directed by the community or, at least, closely linked to it. This, in turn, is most likely if the agency is a national or local body, which might be either governmental or non-governmental. There is, however, an important *caveat*: when the humanitarian necessity is related to violent conflict, it may be hard for local or national actors to maintain the necessary impartiality; in such circumstances, an impartial international agency is preferable, even at the expense of local accountability.

The main reason why national and local actors do not undertake the majority of humanitarian assistance efforts in all situations is that these actors often do not have the skills or resources required for these activities. However, if such skills and resources can be developed, local and national actors would be a powerful response and recovery pillar.

There are other more mundane reasons why the capacity of local and national actors matters as well. Particularly in countries with high levels of insecurity and poor governance such as Somalia, it is important to follow an acceptance strategy and this is most easily done by local and national actors. In other cases, international organisations have been excluded or hindered from working in locations such as Sudan and Myanmar.

Another and more fundamental reason for why national and local actors matter is that the current tradition of humanitarianism is sometimes seen by detractors as a "Northern" or Judaeo-Christian concept.<sup>20</sup> Actually the range of actors in humanitarianism is much more diverse than that criticism implies. A more universal concept of humanitarianism is growing as a result, based on the work of southern NGOs, religious groups and governments. There are of course situations where local organisations are not in the best position to act, precisely because of this close link to local dynamics.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) summarised the benefits of national and local ownership in their policy on early recovery (see Box 3).

### Box 3: UNDP policy on early recovery

'National ownership cannot fully materialize if national actors and institutions do not have the required capacities to lead, manage and implement the process. There is always a danger that in the urgent drive to save lives, humanitarian programmes will replace or substitute their own capacities for existing national capacities. Early recovery programmes should develop the capacities of the state and other duty-bearers to fulfill their main obligations and responsibilities towards the population. Additionally, affected populations should be seen as fundamental actors requiring capacities to drive the process of recovery and claim their rights. This includes important minority groups such as youth that have tremendous potential to act as agents of change towards peace and development'.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (2008). UNDP Policy on Early Recovery, p.11. Available at <http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/PSLG-7TXFJE?OpenDocument>. Accessed on 8th October 2009.

While some work is being done to develop national and local capacities in this area, these efforts are not at the deep and transformative scale required. Though many international organisations already have a strong focus on building the capacity of national and local actors, there is still not sufficient and comprehensive investment in this area.

In a study on local approaches and attitudes to the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>21</sup> entitled *Views from the Frontline* (VFL),<sup>22</sup> there was a clear difference in the assessment and perceptions of progress on the effectiveness of the actions within the Hyogo Framework between those at a local level (in the VFL) and those at a larger national and international level (in the 2009 Global Assessment Report – GAR).<sup>23</sup> As a result there were three core recommendations, all of which focus on the involvement of local actors, government and NGOs in policy, assessments, and the position of authority and resources.

Contrary to the spirit of these particular recommendations, practice up until now has been primarily focused on capacity-building of international institutions such as the UN. These are obvious and easy places for capacity-building as there is a sense of leveraging global change. However, as argued above, the international community must reorient its thinking and practice and regard local capacity as being the most relevant, if the hardest, to develop.

One example of successful investment in local capacity is the model used by the social enterprise, Riders for Health (see Box 4).

Governments, international organisations and NGOs are recognising that they should do more to systematically strengthen local capacity. As a result, there are a host of initiatives attempting to build local humanitarian skills and capacity around the world, including bilateral relationships between governments, between international and national NGOs, and NGOs embedding staff in government departments amongst others. While all of these efforts do contribute to the goal of increasing capacity, the efforts are not of the scale required and given the priority they deserve.



#### Box 4: Riders for Health: Supporting local capacity to deliver health services

Riders for Health manages vehicle fleets (two- and four-wheel) in support of healthcare-focused partners delivering for rural Africa. Investment in sound local infrastructure based on practical skills-transfer and development of appropriate locally-run systems has:

- Enabled development interventions to become embedded in local communities and be long-lasting;
- Contributed to reducing the likelihood of emergencies and supported post-crisis recovery; and
- Minimised costs and maximised precious resources.

Key local infrastructure supported by Riders for Health includes:

- Appropriate local-to-local training models that are replicable and scalable;
- Advocacy for investment in local capacity-building;
- Effective tools for budgeting and transparency;
- Quality controls to maintain high standards; and
- Employment of nationals in all senior leadership positions.

Source: Available at <http://www.riders.org>.

#### Recommendations

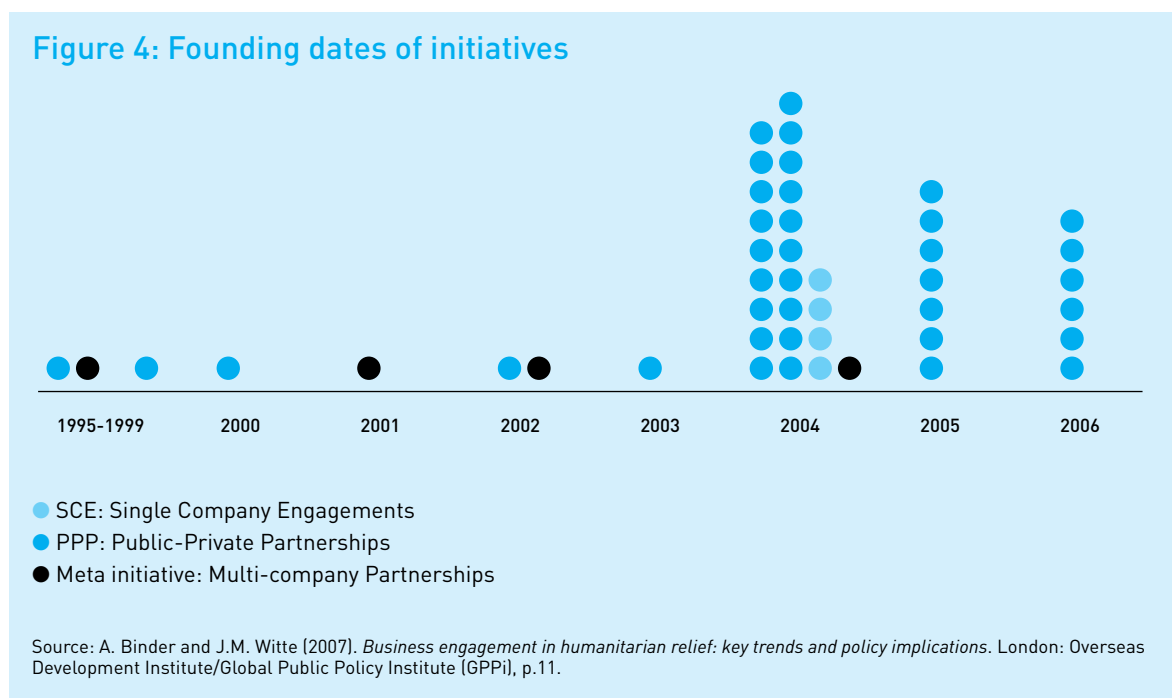
- Develop comprehensive plans for building humanitarian capacity through a multi-stakeholder collaborative process, including local and national governments, international organisations, national and international NGOs, donors, and other relevant actors such as the private sector.
- In alignment with such a comprehensive plan, conduct targeted national and local capacity-building investment activities to further develop the models and policies required to bring these activities to scale. These efforts should adhere to the following characteristics:
  - Ensure local ownership of efforts;
  - Be focused on high-risk countries;
  - Work at both the policy and practical level; and
  - Be designed with the aim of being replicable in other contexts.

## 4. Fuller engagement of the private sector

Since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the private sector has shown increasing interest in supporting humanitarian assistance efforts, particularly in the response and recovery phases. Notwithstanding significant progress in this area, the potential of the private sector to support the international community in its efforts to reduce risk, respond effectively, and recover after humanitarian crises has barely been tapped.

As such, the fourth requirement of the new business model for humanitarian assistance is to build upon the success to date in pro-bono collaborations and develop deeper engagement with the private sector involving companies not only as pro-bono resource providers, but as investors and partners in long-term vulnerability-reduction and recovery efforts.

As shown in Figure 4, the Asian tsunami in 2004 was a catalytic event for the engagement of the private sector in humanitarian assistance efforts.<sup>24</sup> This trend has largely continued, with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, reporting the creation of 225 new partnerships with corporations in 2008, leveraging almost US\$650 million dollars in private-sector contributions.<sup>25</sup>



The current model of private-sector engagement in humanitarian action generally involves private-sector actors contributing their products, skills, and expertise to response operations on a pro-bono basis. Some examples include the following:

- Pharmaceutical companies have contributed their products in the aftermath of humanitarian crises for many years. Interestingly, their response has not only been event-focused, but also includes the provision of drugs for the eradication of particular diseases even outside of emergency contexts. For instance, in 1987, Merck announced it would donate its product for the treatment of river blindness to ‘all who needed it, for as long as needed’.<sup>26</sup> To date, it has donated more than 2.1 billion tablets through a programme that reaches more than 80 million people annually.

- Within four hours of the tsunami in December 2004, IBM's Crisis Response Team was arranging how to dispatch team members to the affected areas. The skills of IBM's local and international teams were used to develop and implement systems such as tracking of missing persons, registration of relief organisations, and management of logistics and ID card issuance.
- The Logistics Emergency Teams (LETs), an initiative facilitated by the World Economic Forum, is a pioneering example of a multi-company commitment to support humanitarian activities. Three of the largest global logistics and transportation firms, Agility, TNT and UPS, joined forces in the LETs to provide logistics specialists, logistics assets and transportation services to the humanitarian sector for use in response operations. Through this initiative, these three firms have deployed specialists embedded within the teams of international organisations to all of the major international humanitarian crises since 2008.

There are opportunities for such pro-bono collaborative engagements in other sectors as well, including the media (communication with affected populations), professional services (legal and consulting advice), retail (general household items), financial services (specialised recovery staff), and the like.

In an effort to catalyse such engagements across the various relevant industries, and particularly to build further multi-company commitments, the World Economic Forum launched the Humanitarian Relief Initiative in January 2006 in collaboration with UN OCHA. As shown in Box 5, one of the first activities of this cross-sectoral and cross-industry initiative was to develop a set of guiding principles for such collaboration.

#### Box 5: WEF-OCHA Guiding Principles for Public-Private Collaboration for Humanitarian Action

Through a multi-stakeholder consultative process involving international organisations, NGOs, and companies from several industries, the World Economic Forum and UN OCHA developed a set of guiding principles for collaboration between the public and private sectors for humanitarian action. These guiding principles build upon the principles encapsulated in humanitarian law as well as the standards and codes developed by the humanitarian community for their efforts. Furthermore, they build upon the lessons of both successes and failures of previous collaboration between these sectors.

Highlights of the guiding principles include the following:

- All such collaboration must be structured as partnerships which leverage the unique core competencies of both humanitarian actors and their private-sector partners;
- All collaborations must be driven by the needs of beneficiary communities and designed to ensure that their long-term recovery capacities are maintained, if not strengthened; and
- All programmes and staff involved in such collaboration must adhere to the agreed upon standards and codes of conduct defined by the humanitarian sector.

Source: Available at <http://www.org.org/partnerships>. Accessed on 8th October 2009.

Private-sector engagements may also lead to the creation of new and independent not-for-profit entities that support humanitarian action. InSTEDD (Innovative Support To Emergency Diseases and Disasters) for example is an innovation laboratory which aims to help humanitarian and public health organisations to work together more effectively in crises through the development of new, free and open-source technologies. InSTEDD was conceived by Larry Brilliant, former director of Google's philanthropic arm Google.org, and created with initial funding and support from that organisation, though it now operates independently.

Furthermore, with regards to such pro-bono collaborations, private companies would find it easier to justify increased contributions to humanitarian assistance if they could provide their stakeholders with more detailed measures of their impact and therefore address past criticisms and concerns about the quality and accountability of organisations operating in this field.

Given the nature of humanitarian assistance, and the environment and timing in which relief operations normally take place, finding the right impact and evaluation metrics will not always be as easy as for commercial endeavors. But there is a lot of work that can be done in this field. Changes are taking place in this context with the establishment of organisations such as the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) or the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP).

The arrival in the philanthropic arena of intermediaries, such as Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors or New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), providing advice to the donor community should also contribute to further improvements on governance and performance measurements. NPC works to ensure that the charities with the best results attract the most funding. They do that by 'identifying *high-return* charities for donors and designing tools for non-for-profits to measure and communicate their results effectively. Of course, some aspects of humanitarian efforts cannot easily be measured, for example in the area of protection, where counterfactuals are hard to establish.

The private sector also has a key role to play in building the resilience of communities by investing in economic development activities. This should include private actors of all sizes, ranging from small and medium enterprises to large multinationals, and should build upon the experience of the development sector in this area. The peacebuilding NGO International Alert, for example, highlights and analyses the domestic private sector's often overlooked peacebuilding potential in its publication *Local Business, Local Peace: The Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector*.<sup>27</sup> Through 20 case studies where private-sector actors have taken proactive steps to address violent conflict in places as varied as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Guatemala, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Somalia and the South Caucasus, the report, which is part of Alert's work on addressing the economic dimensions of peacebuilding, stresses that the private sector also has a role to play in building bridges between divided communities and groups, and alleviating security concerns.

## Recommendations

- Further develop pro-bono collaborations, and particularly multi-company commitments, across the various industries with skills and expertise relevant to humanitarian action needs.
- Collaborate with relevant private-sector actors to further develop tools to measure and communicate results as well as understand and evaluate performance.
- Further develop the policies and models required to facilitate and catalyse deeper private-sector engagement as investors in post-conflict and post-crisis contexts, as well as in efforts to reduce vulnerability in high-risk areas.

## 5. Linking the humanitarian with broader social and economic development issues

It is now generally recognised that the first five years after an armed conflict has ended represent both a crucial window of opportunity for recovery and a period of transition fraught with danger. Around half of all conflicts witness post-conflict relapses. A lasting peace, however, appears to depend upon social and economic recovery. This rather short window of opportunity, if it is to deliver social and economic recovery for the population, must be seized early and in a coordinated manner between humanitarian and development actors. Reams of paper have been written about the humanitarian-development gap; yet the problems remain.

One of the fundamental differences between the two domains of humanitarian action and development is their respective relationship to non-state actors. The channels through which international development assistance is commonly delivered are state-centred. They focus on established and recognised state institutions such as various government ministries or – in the case of financial assistance – on central and national banks. Governmental bodies, based on their common *modus operandi*, often have a certain predisposition – or even a legal obligation – to engage only with other governmental bodies and state institutions.

In weak, fragile or failing states, while there might still be a government in place in the capital, there may be no governmental control outside the capital, nor even the effective delivery of services by the government in both the capital and the periphery. The traditional model of development assistance through state structures has generally proven to be insufficient in these contexts.

That said, even in weak, fragile, or failing states, chaos and anarchy are not necessarily the rule. Contested forms of rudimentary political order, based on local social practices and traditional structures of communal self-organisation, often re-emerge as central structures fade. In this case, various non-state entities will claim or indeed possess a local monopoly on the use of force and delivery of social services, and control access to natural resources and remaining infrastructure and, as a result, international humanitarian and development aid.

If state structures are weak or entirely absent, engaging non-state actors will become ever more important. Humanitarian actors routinely work with non-state actors that wield control over territories or populations. While there is ample debate about whether such non-state entities or groups should be used as building blocks to restore stability and statehood or if this would increase the risk of solidifying structures that will ultimately prevent sustainable state structures from emerging, it is safe to say that institutional state-centred development actors rarely envisage such engagement.

State-building usually describes the very attempt to re-install the state monopoly, specifically concerning the use of force. In the majority of situations, this implies a re-distribution of power to the detriment of non-state groups that have filled the void of non-existent governmental control. Obviously, any such attempt will stand in outright contrast with the interests of the various armed groups present.

Due to the conflicting modalities and objectives of development and humanitarian assistance, development and post-conflict state-building efforts should be separated from humanitarian activities. That being said, it seems imperative that these distinct phases, the phasing out of humanitarian assistance and the phasing into state-building, are well coordinated. Increased attention should be devoted to a common planning framework for this transitional period between the various external actors involved.

When humanitarian actors stay on after the conflict has ended, they perform activities and apply methods for which they do often not have the relevant competence and that are not entirely suited to serve development purposes. Development actors in turn, used to longer-term planning, tend to underestimate the urgency with which economic and social development must take place in order for the country not to relapse into conflict. When these two communities think holistically about each other and work to complement each other's comparative advantages, prospects for peace and recovery are brighter.

Both the humanitarian and the development sector have come a long way to bring together their respective activities; they are changing their modus operandi to take into account each others' comparative advantage. Donor governments must recognise this too and somewhat relax their strict separation of humanitarian and development budget lines.

However, in reality humanitarian decision-making is routinely made under time pressure and, due to the circumstances, is all too often based on rather unreliable data. The decision-tree that leads from the problem analysis to actual delivery of humanitarian services gets regularly sidetracked and decisions are made on rather scant evidence, particularly regarding wider issues of the social and economic context.

This new humanitarian business model must take into account the broader context within which it operates, especially the social and economic dynamics at work: humanitarian actors must better understand social and economic drivers of the conflict and design their operations accordingly. The political economy in a conflict setting is highly complex and understanding it takes specific skills and time, both of which humanitarian actors frequently lack.

## Recommendations

- The humanitarian response to a crisis should be conceived based on context analysis and needs assessments. Inclusion of appropriate economic, social, and political context analyses determines whether the response is relevant and adequate.
- In recent years, observers have insisted that humanitarian actors perform a due diligence effort before embarking on their humanitarian activities. The “do no harm” approach applied to economic and social factors should be an in-built effort in the design of humanitarian operations. Only through applying due diligence can humanitarians avoid playing a counterproductive role and, unwittingly, hamper or delay recovery.
- Sustainability must now become a fundamental feature of humanitarian action. Humanitarians must strive to protect livelihoods as well as feed hungry people. This marks a shift in terms of approach and approximates a development long-term approach. Undoubtedly, such an approach is more labour intensive, less visible and less susceptible for (humanitarian) donor attention. Yet, it is an essential prerequisite for sustainability.

## 6. Regional and international readiness to address cross-border humanitarian issues

There are two ways in which to view the place of cross-border issues on the new humanitarian agenda. On the one hand, some humanitarian disasters, whether natural or human-made, raise complex cross-border issues because their causes or consequences overflow national frontiers. Enhancing the ability to address these is integral to the new humanitarian business model.

On the other hand, one of the core problems that the humanitarian imperative addresses is that states lack the capacity to address the challenges they face. They are not in a position to develop an effective capacity for prevention, response and recovery unless they receive external assistance. It is important to acknowledge the role of the traditional development donors and of the major international organisations in providing this external assistance, but more emphasis should also be placed on the regional organisations – such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of American States (OAS) and others – and on making it possible for them to play a role in addressing cross-border issues.

Examples abound of how humanitarian tragedies and responses cross national frontiers and of how important it can be to think through the ramifications of cross-border issues. Mass flight of refugees from war – such as of the Kurds from northern Iraq into the Turkish border regions in 1991 – is one straightforward example. The global total of refugees today is in the region of 14–16 million depending on sources and definitions,<sup>28</sup> while there are approximately 26 million internally displaced people in the world today (see Box 6).<sup>29</sup>

### Box 6

'The steady decline in refugee numbers witnessed since 2002 was reversed in 2006 when numbers started going up again. By the end of 2006, there were an estimated 9.9 million refugees. One year later, the global figure of refugees stood at 11.4 million, including 1.7 million people considered by UNHCR to be in a refugee-like situation'.

Source: UNHCR, 2007 *global trends: Refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons*, p.6. Available at [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4852366f2&query=2007 global trends](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4852366f2&query=2007%20global%20trends). Accessed on 8th October 2009.

The care of refugees from across the border can place weak states under exceptional stress. A notable example today is that of the Darfurian refugees in Chad; they have become the unwitting triggers of local conflict in the country that hosts them and transmitters of conflict across the border from Sudan.

But the most dramatic and painful example is surely that of the refugees who fled Rwanda in the aftermath of genocide in 1994, some of them *genocidaires* fleeing justice, and others ordinary people fearful of the advance to power of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Refugees crossed the border with then-Zaire, with the militia and ex-soldiers allowed to hold onto their weapons, and the consequence of their arrival has been 15 years of persistent violent conflict, large-scale killings of civilians, endemic insecurity, extreme abuse of human rights, external military intervention, and rule and exploitation by rival militia forces. The Mobutu dictatorship in Zaire in the mid-1990s had neither the capacity nor the will to do anything about the plight of ordinary people in the eastern part of the country; though the current

government of the Democratic Republic of Congo proclaims its will for improvement, its capacity remains very limited.

A more positive and even inspiring example of how cross-border issues can play out comes from south-eastern Europe in August 1999, when Istanbul was heavily damaged by an earthquake. The Greek government, which, after a crisis with Turkey in the early part of the year was just starting to explore prospects for improved relations, was quick to provide humanitarian assistance to Turkey. This was widely noted and approved by the Turkish press. The following month, Athens was less severely damaged by an earthquake and the Turkish government reciprocated the aid it had previously received. The so-called “earthquake diplomacy” helped shape public support for warmer relations across the next few years, which included Greek support for Turkey’s application to join the EU.

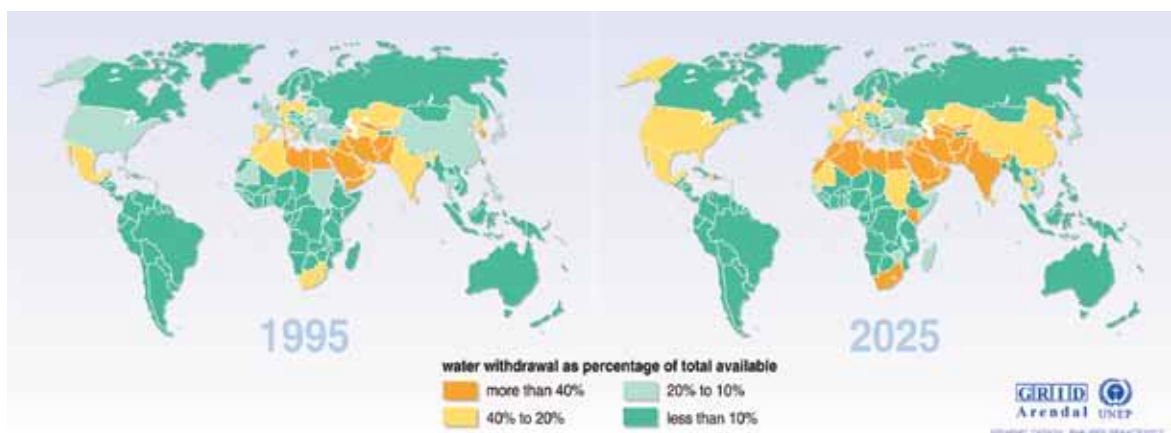
Whether stemming from natural or human causes, the humanitarian challenge can take the form of sudden shocks or slow onset pressure. There are, in summary form, four categories of challenge:

	Natural causes	Human causes
Sudden shock	flood, earthquake, tsunami	war, invasion, ethnic cleansing, riots
Slow onset	drought, changing typhoon patterns, changing monsoon timing	migration away from danger/scarcity

Regional cooperation on cross-border issues needs to address all four of these categories. There are places where any or all these categories may have their impact. For example, the risk of all four exists in some major transnational river basins, such as the Niger in West Africa, the Nile, or the Ganges-Brahmaputra river system in South Asia. In these cases, risk management is in essence a matter of regional cooperation. For example, much of the flooding risk in northeast India and part of the risk faced by Bangladesh (only part because it also faces flooding due to cyclones) can be addressed only by action upstream in Nepal.

There is, contrary to many people’s assumptions, very little history of “water wars” between states and rather a good record of cooperation to manage shared resources. Whether that experience can be projected forward may well be put to the test as water levels decline overall and are subject to surge and shortage because of increased climate variability, as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Freshwater Stress**



Source: UNEP/GRID-Arendal (2002). Freshwater Stress 1995 and 2025. UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library. Available at <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/freshwater-stress-1995-and-2025>. Accessed on 7th October 2009.



The frameworks for cooperation exist in each of the three cases mentioned above. However, they are in a rudimentary state of development in the case of the Nile, with extremely heated politics all round; in a deeply underdeveloped condition in the case of the Niger within a positive framework of regional political cooperation in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and are completely undeveloped in the case of the Ganges-Brahmaputra.

Experience warns us not to assume that the humanitarian imperative will always trump political self-interest. Thus, while it may sometimes be appropriate for one country in a sub-region to take the lead in developing capacity for handling these issues because it has the best starting point, the importance of not stirring political jealousies and exacerbating rivalry might make regional capacity-building the better way forward, even if slower. While the framework of cooperation needs to be regional, the substance of cooperation is the same as in the new humanitarian agenda as a whole – the five points of risk analysis, increased emphasis on prevention and recovery, investment in capacity, engaging the private sector and the link to the broader development agenda.

## Recommendations

- Where established regional and sub-regional organisations have functioning secretariats – e.g., OSCE, AU, ECOWAS, ASEAN – it is both worthwhile and feasible for them to establish specialist units to lead implementation of this five-point agenda.
- There is also a case for the establishment of specialised capacities such as the Nile Basin Initiative. A similar agency might be established jointly by India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The function of these agencies is to assure readiness. That means, starting from the risk assessment and identifying actors able and available to join in regional humanitarian efforts, being able to mobilise resources quickly as need arises – financial resources from international funds and bilateral donors, and human resources primarily from the region but, where there are deficiencies in capacity, also from further afield.
- These efforts as a whole should be coordinated by UN OCHA for optimum effect and efficiency.

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