

written recently have been updated in order to take into account developments under the Protocol and other instruments; nevertheless it would have been useful if the essays had been dated. In conclusion, the book in both form and content is clearly a collection of essays and not a textbook, but the material covered makes it nevertheless a useful source of knowledge and reflection.

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## HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

To learn more about problems of humanitarian aid and development in Third World countries, the *Review* recommends the following two recent works: one is a special issue of the *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* devoted to the development of humanitarian organizations in the Third World,<sup>1</sup> the other is a collective work published by the Henry Dunant Institute entitled *Third World Organizational Development*<sup>2</sup>. These two publications have practically identical themes and attempt to answer the fundamental questions posed by Mr. Maurice Aubert, Vice-President of the ICRC and President of the Henry Dunant Institute, who wrote the prefaces to these two works: "How to develop humanitarian organizations in the Third World, capable of handling on their own the consequences of conflicts and natural disasters and to become agents promoting the development of communities, the protection of human rights and the dissemination of a spirit of peace? What is the role and what are the means of action of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the development process of Third World communities and what are their relations with local organizations?"

Several experts from international, governmental and non-governmental organizations, from academic institutions and from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have attempted to reply to all these major questions.

At the outset, in the special issue of the *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Co-chairman of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, clearly presents a concise and

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<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian Organization-Building in the Third World, *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, special issue, Norwegian University Press, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *Third World Organizational Development, a comparison of NGO strategies*, by Jan Egeland and Thomas Kerbs (eds), Crystal Johnson, Suzanne Sande Mrlik and Sören Christian Prebensen, HDI Studies on Development No. 1, 1987, Henry Dunant Institute, 1987.

straightforward analysis: the gap between the rich and poor parts of the world continues to widen, the production of ever more sophisticated weapons is accelerating at a time when millions forego access to basic needs.

The combined international aid from international, national and local humanitarian organizations cannot reverse this deteriorating trend, especially in countries whose immediate concern is the very survival of their people. But, in the main, aid to countries involved in conflicts or beset by natural disasters—or subject to both at the same time—frequently places them in a dependent position which exacerbates the problems rather than solves them.

In reality, it has become increasingly important to urge communities in the various Third World countries to assume responsibility for their own development and encourage all forms of self-aid.

Effective aid cannot be grafted on “artificially” by external agents because it helps only to perpetuate under-development; it must primarily stem from the expression by communities themselves of their real needs and their desire to do everything to satisfy them.

These issues imply educating, or rather re-educating, donors; recipients have to realize their potential in full knowledge of their resources; donors and recipients—or more precisely, participating agencies and operating agencies—must pursue a healthy, co-ordinated policy.

Such are the ideas examined by *Jan Egeland*, Head of Development Research at the Henry Dunant Institute. Having reviewed the positive and negative aspects of aid from so-called Northern organizations to the Third World, the author highlights the role of national and local humanitarian organizations in these Third World countries, organizations which in fact are the “first line of defence” (p. 111). Although the work they do is unrecognized, or even held in low esteem, these organizations have played a decisive role in quite a lot of cases, for example, in the drought-stricken Sahel region. “The strength of voluntary Third-World organizations is that they not only work with, but also *represent*, the local communities in need” (p. 113). More than external organizations, indigenous organizations are directly accountable to the people they serve. They have the added advantage of being fully cognizant of the communities’ political and social background, they hearken to their grievances and understand their problems better than any other outside organization. They help communities to identify their needs and thereby act as teachers and advisers.

The reader will also discover that Kenya alone has some 1,600 national development organizations, not forgetting rural groups, human rights groups and so-called self-help groups which are smaller but very widespread.

When assessing these indigenous NGOs, the author is quite critical as regards governments in the North which, while fully recognizing the usefulness of these NGOs in identifying needs and their working flexibility, tend in practice to use local NGOs as mere channels for traditional

assistance instead of building strong organizations. These governments hide behind the difficulty of identifying humanitarian organizations in Third World countries or they feel that channelling funds to NGOs rather than governments is seen as political (p. 117). The author concludes that it will still take some time before decision-makers fully realize the usefulness of a network of active humanitarian organizations in the Third World ready to deal with conflicts, natural disasters and environmental degradation.

How therefore can one facilitate the setting up of humanitarian organizations and strengthen their activities? *Peter Macalister-Smith*, Research Fellow at the Heidelberg Max Planck Institute, puts forward a few proposals: NGOs should have access to international consultative mechanisms, they should be encouraged to form their own federations capable of representing their membership at all levels of humanitarian work, and loose associations or informal local groups should incorporate themselves as recognized organizations under national legislation.

Humanitarian organizations in developed countries should strengthen their links with those in developing countries, in particular at the local level. Therefore ways and means should be sought to establish a standing international body with the objective of implementing the proposals relating to the development of humanitarian NGOs (pp. 128, 129).

*Attaining such objectives would enable the poor and those who help them to establish a truly humanitarian network, to build as it were a bridge between the State and the individual.*

The individual is the primary beneficiary of humanitarian law, recalls *Michel Veuthey*, Head of the ICRC's International Organizations Division, in an article devoted to what he calls "The Humanitarian Network" (p. 133). All the bodies which go to make up this network must work towards ensuring respect for the law: the ICRC, National Societies, States party to the Geneva Conventions, other parties to conflicts, regional organizations, the United Nations system and voluntary organizations. The author endeavours to find the common denominators amongst the members of this complex network and to show the complementary nature of their objectives, chiefly the overriding need in our troubled era for concerted action. What is at stake here is nothing less than the creation of humanitarian reflexes in political life and in international relations.

The role of Third World NGOs in safeguarding human rights is examined by *Ashbjørn Eide*, Director of the Oslo Human Rights Institute. He analyses the relationships between humanitarianism and human rights and demonstrates the values common to different ideologies, cultures and civilizations as regards human rights. The values inherent in Third World communities may act as a bullwark against the excesses of technology.

Many articles in the second part deal with the policy, structures and means of action of several international non-governmental institutions geared towards humanitarian assistance and development. *Hans Høegh*, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,

and *Gunnar Hagman*, development consultant, delineate how the League's policy for National Society development evolved and came to reaffirm a fundamental principle: to strengthen the structural and operational capacity of National Societies, notably in the most vulnerable countries. This objective implies meeting priorities as regards the structure of National Societies and the services they have to render.<sup>3</sup> Responsibilities must be clearly understood: the developing Societies themselves have the principal responsibility for building up their capacity, implementing their programmes and working towards self-reliance and independence. The League, and in certain matters and circumstances the ICRC, have important obligations to support the development of National Societies, and they play vital roles in emergency assistance.

*Dr. Levi Oracion*, from the World Council of Churches, describes this organization's position within the international humanitarian system; it is entirely geared towards defending the poor in the face of social inequalities and injustice. The Churches must follow what the author calls "the logic of the poor" which implies a more equitable sharing of the world's resources and a radical change in present development strategies which favour unbridled trade and technological superiority.

*Thomas Kerbs*, from the University of California at Berkeley, assesses and compares in both the above-mentioned books the strategies adopted by several selected NGOs to develop parallel, associate organizations in Third World countries. He then goes on to examine the structures and methods of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation of Churches and trade union federations.

The common aim of these organizations is to contribute towards establishing organizations in the Third World which may be locally self-sufficient, independent in the various phases of their work, in planning, implementing programmes and decision-making.

This objective entails the development of human resources, particularly in recruiting and training local staff for long-term programmes, a judicious balance between developing infrastructures and developing activities, as well as adapting programmes to local conditions and customs. While well co-ordinated, multilateral aid is unanimously considered helpful in setting up development organizations in the Third World, bilateral aid, on account of its flexibility, is not rejected out of hand. All the more reason for it to be kept in check. NGOs must be capable of learning from each other and act together more than has been the case to date.

This pertinent analysis is very well supported by case studies. They include one by *Roland Hammer*, Deputy Head of the Co-operation and

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<sup>3</sup> *Development of National Societies as a Contribution to National Development*, document prepared by the Secretariat of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Henry Dunant Institute, Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross (Geneva, October 1986), doc. C.II/7/1.

Dissemination Division of the ICRC, on the dissemination of knowledge of basic humanitarian principles during conflict, with reference to El Salvador, and one on building humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Kenya by *Bård-Anders Andreassen* from the Michelsen Institute, Bergen (Norway).

After these various articles on humanitarian aid and development in the Third World, one would like to have found a summary of the remarks and, if not guidelines on creating humanitarian organizations in the Third World, at least an initial master plan. Undoubtedly, it is premature to devise such guidelines when the various existing organizations still differ as regards the concept of development and on whether to rely or not on money. Similarly, it is regrettable that the ticklish question of providing humanitarian aid while at the same time denouncing violations of human rights (or refraining to do so) has not been dealt with. We think that the conclusions reached in certain articles as regards intensifying the role of NGOs in the international humanitarian system and strengthening these organizations in the Third World should not obscure the responsibilities of governments and intergovernmental institutions as the main agents for development.

Despite these slight reservations, both these studies—and the value of comparative studies can never be sufficiently stressed—supply a wealth of details and comments of use to all (students and research workers, but also people in charge of humanitarian organizations) who want to have a better grasp of the problems inherent in what is popularly known as “the international humanitarian order”.

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