

Humanitarian Coordination Lessons Learned

Report of a Review Seminar Stockholm, April 3-4 1998

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This report is dedicated to the memory of Pierce Gerety

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I. Introduction

The international Seminar on Lessons Learned on Humanitarian Coordination was jointly organised by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. It was made possible through a generous contribution of the Government of Sweden and was held in Stockholm on Friday 3 and Saturday 4 April 1998. The seminar brought together some 40 experienced humanitarian practitioners and policy makers from the donor, United Nations and NGO communities, and from regional institutions and governments in affected countries. The UN human rights, political/peacekeeping and development perspectives were also represented in order to encourage cross-fertilization among the different 'cultures' and actors involved in crisis countries.

In mid-1997, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) commissioned an independent study to identify lessons relating to the strategic coordination of humanitarian activities in the Great Lakes region of Africa in 1996-1997. The report, which was issued in March 1998ⁱ, was made available to seminar participants and provided an opportunity for discussion and debate on a number of wider questions relating to the functions, nature and direction of the humanitarian endeavour in the post Cold War world. In addition, two papers, on critiques of humanitarian action and on 'learning to learn', were specifically commissioned for the seminar. They are annexed to this report

Participants were invited in their personal capacity: they were asked to focus on:

- key issues raised in the Great Lakes report, as well as in other recent evaluation or 'lessons learned' studies, and on factors that impede and/or impact upon the fulfilment of humanitarian responsibilities;
- policy and operational implications for future international humanitarian response;
- how to increase the capacity of the international humanitarian community to adjust to lessons learned in crisis settings;
- further actions to be undertaken in order to address the issues examined.

The seminar provided an opportunity for a timely, stimulating and informal discussion. While there was a convergence of views in many areas, particularly on the analysis of the challenges faced by international and national actors in countries in crisis, the purpose was not to reach unanimous conclusions. Areas where there was a general consensus and some emerging suggestions or recommendations are identified in the paragraphs below. There were, of course, areas where a diversity of points of view were expressed, particularly on how humanitarian principles could be reconciled with politics and on the shape and direction of the humanitarian enterprise. Issues were debated in an open-minded and constructive manner. The organizers are confident that the seminar will have allowed all participants, from their own particular perspective, to chart the 'road ahead' and to refine their understanding of the challenges and constraints of operating in the ever more volatile and dangerous contexts of crises which generate massive humanitarian needs.

II. Summary of Discussions

1. Principles and Principled Engagement

Law, Principles or Pragmatism? The issue of principles, and the extent to which humanitarian agencies can maintain a principled stance in contemporary conflicts provoked a spirited discussion. Presentations on the experience gained in Afghanistan and in the Great Lakes Region served as a background. Participants debated whether the same principles applied to all actors in a conflict situation and reviewed ways in which respect for humanitarian norms could be secured particularly in situations where warfare was designed to harm civilians. There was no disagreement on the importance of principles but there were different perceptions as to *which* principles should apply in conflict settings and *how*. Several participants called for reference to international law rather than to humanitarian principles as principles were viewed as 'too soft', imprecise, and harder to implement. The Geneva Conventions, in particular, should not be abandoned, replaced or forgotten; along with human rights and refugee law, they should form the basis of action in conflict settings.

Many participants pointed to the difficulty of getting all actors in the international community to adhere to a principled approach. It was noted, for example, that international humanitarian law provides a "framework for the conduct of war", while the UN Charter and UN agency mandates had proactive objectives aimed at peace, protection of refugees, and development.

The linkages between politics - the art of the possible - and principles were seen as problematic. Most participants agreed, however, that the same humanitarian principles applied to all actors irrespective of their mandate or objective. It was noted that the Security Council often referred to humanitarian principles and supported the need for humanitarian action. Principles and politics should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Many argued that 'principled pragmatism' was both possible and desirable in conflict

settings.

It was noted that international laws were often not clear enough and did not provide enough guidance. Participants stressed the need for a clear and practical set of values and normative standards that would inform decision-making when choices were ethically difficult. The recently completed Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was cited as an excellent example of grounding humanitarian principles and action in international law.

There was much discussion on the fact that different agencies operating in the same context and under the same principles could, in good faith, apply them in very different ways. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, the ICRC and UNHCR were seen to have applied the same principles quite differently. Recent experience confirmed the need for a more 'strategic' response based on clearly defined principles and objectives. Reference was made in this context to the Strategic Framework approach being tested in Afghanistan and to efforts aimed at the development of 'Principles and Ground Rules for UN action in countries in crisis'. The purpose of both initiatives was to promote a more coherent and predictable UN approach in countries in crisis and to reduce dissonance between mandates and procedures of different components of the United Nations. The work presently underway through the Sphere Project (Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards), concerned with identifying the minimal technical standards in substantive areas through reference to international law and principles, as well as the ICRC Code of Conductⁱⁱ were cited as other useful initiatives aimed at clarifying and crystallizing 'principles'.

A number of participants suggested that the best and only realistic manner to secure commitment by all the relevant actors to a principled engagement was to negotiate and obtain consent for a principled response from the very beginning of a crisis. In the Great Lakes region, both international law and humanitarian principles had been compromised from the very beginning and this undermined the ability of all to be effective. Once conflict had broken out it was often too late to advocate for laws and principles. It was also noted that international agencies tended to react to, rather than engage in dialogue with national authorities and other relevant parties. International actors should develop agreements based on principles, setting out the duties and responsibilities of assistance agencies and relevant national and local authorities.

Principles: local ownership. Many participants stressed the importance of local ownership, including governments, NGOs and affected communities, of principles which enshrine respect for civilians. It was noted that regional actors, after the genocide in Rwanda, had concluded that they should no longer wait for action by the international community or the Security Council. This showed that the absence of support by the international community for basic principles was likely to lead to unilateral action by affected countries in the future. The UN was encouraged to engage proactively with regional actors such as IGAD or ECOWAS on the issue of mutual respect for universal principles in crisis situations.

On the issue of non-state actors and rebel movements, it was important for the UN and the international community to engage with these entities and promote respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. There may be sensitivity to engaging with such actors because of fear of providing legitimacy. However, neglecting them from the very beginning could make it difficult to engage in a principled fashion later. Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), with its negotiated Ground Rules, was cited as a good example of how to interact with non-state actors.

Principles: Non-Compliance and Disengagement. The discussion on how to address the problem of disrespect of fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law gave rise to a number of observations and recommendations. It was noted that, in general, little concrete action was taken in face of violations and that this acceptance of impunity must change. There was agreement on the importance of holding accountable all actors who ignored or violated humanitarian law. Unfortunately, however, suspension and disengagement were often the first actions considered and a number of participants expressed concern about further jeopardizing civilians in need of humanitarian assistance. The imposition of sanctions also raised difficult questions. Sanctions could work against the humanitarian imperative and there was often public pressure on agencies to act in a certain fashion. Participants agreed that feasible, practical, and credible options were needed so that the international community 'could draw the line' in a clear and principled fashion. It was suggested that when the humanitarian community was faced with

egregious violations, alternatives to sanctions should be considered. For example, the humanitarian community should consider working through influential actors, such as the media, Member States and regional entities which have the capacity to exert pressures on parties who otherwise would not respond to appeals to support the welfare of the civilian population.

Some participants queried whether the 'drawing the line' approach was enough given the complexity of contemporary crises. What was critically needed was a change in behaviour and attitude towards civilians in conflict settings. This viewpoint warned against the danger of accommodating violence and stressed the importance of negotiated cease-fires and other measures which would ensure the protection of humanitarian space.

Concern was also expressed that support was often elusive for a unified stand within the international community for difficult measures, including disengagement, when the humanitarian community decided that this was the only option. In addition to different perspectives within the humanitarian community, donors sometimes exerted extraordinary pressure on UN agencies and NGOs to continue operations or to withdraw. Unity of action both at the country and international levels, was thus an essential element for an effective and principled approach in countries in crisis.

Suggestions to Enhance Respect for Principles:

- Humanitarian agencies should invest more time and resources in training of staff including Senior Management;
- Training in humanitarian law, human rights and other relevant law must be a priority for all personnel involved in countries in crisis;
- Support for training should be reflected in the donor community's allocation of funds.
- Human rights and humanitarian principles should as far as possible be mainstreamed into strategic planning and programming;
- The humanitarian community should continue efforts to operationalize international humanitarian laws and principles, e.g. through country-specific ground rules or agreements with local authorities and other relevant parties;
- Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators, or as the case may be, lead agencies, should be provided with adequate resources, both financial and human, in order to ensure the mainstreaming of human rights and humanitarian principles; this should be reflected in their terms of reference.

More effective ways of dealing with breaches of humanitarian principles should be identified:

- Humanitarian agencies should develop advocacy strategies to encourage enforcement and responsibility for the legal obligations of the international community;
- Civil society organizations should be mobilized in stigmatizing violations of humanitarian and human rights law. (e.g. through NGOs as in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines);
- Donors should make funding to organisations and programmes contingent on their respect for principles and on the adoption of principle-based and coordinated approaches within the larger assistance community.

Dissemination and advocacy for humanitarian law and principles is of utmost importance:

- Agencies should ensure that practical examples of principled approaches are widely disseminated, e.g. examples of Ground Rules and Protocols reached between UN, NGOs, rebels and/or Governments;
- The UN should engage in discussions with regional organizations on how to promote principles and their application in crisis countries.

2. Partnership, Ownership and Coherence

The second day of the seminar commenced with a moment of silence in memory of the Rwandan Genocide and of the 50th Anniversary of the Genocide Convention. It was followed by a debate on how partnership, ownership and coherence could be improved within the existing international system. Participants were asked to focus on ways in which local ownership of humanitarian activities could be

enhanced, on measures to ensure donor support for coherent humanitarian strategies, and on how to reduce the disconnects between political, peace-making/building and assistance strategies in particular crisis situations.

There was strong support for the proposition that unless all concerned actors, including the Security Council, operated in accordance with the same principles it would be difficult to develop any kind of genuine partnership or coherence. In this connection it was also noted that pervasive misconceptions about human rights, and of the role of the UN and its partners in promoting respect for human rights had undermined attempts to achieve coherence and a common approach in countries in crisis.

There was strong support for the suggestion that the UN should provide moral authority and leadership. Some participants rejected the blurring of distinctions between the UN as an organization where Member States made decisions and the UN staff who implemented these. It was noted that 'the UN' should not be accused of lacking backbone when it was the responsibility of Member States to act decisively and to provide for a coherent and sustained response. However, others noted that the different parts of the UN system had the ability to obstruct coordination. The UN as an implementation mechanism had a tendency to blame Member States when "80% of the problem was internal incompetence" and the unwillingness of different entities to act as one organization.

Strong reference was made to the need to re-legitimize humanitarian action in the wake of genocide in Rwanda so that a different type of relationship could be built with affected countries. It was noted that since the international community, including the Security Council, was no better equipped today than in 1994 to deal with genocide and conflict, unilateral initiatives would probably flourish and there would be less room for broad-based coherent responses.

On the question of accountability, it was stressed that recipient Governments and beneficiaries had responsibilities and an obligation to provide a "framework of consent". They too must be held accountable as international treaties and international law created *legal obligations*. Humanitarian law applied not only to belligerent parties but also to the actions of relief agencies. The usefulness of monitoring mechanisms for both belligerents and agencies was noted. Some participants advocated fact-finding enquiries after the event. In this connection, the OAU Panel of Eminent Persons to investigate the causes of the genocide in Rwanda was presented as a possible model. It was welcomed as a timely undertaking by African nations to increase accountability and to address the issue of responsibility in an objective fashion.

Obstacles to Coordination. A number of obstacles and problems were identified as impeding coordination within the humanitarian community. It was noted that the proliferation of humanitarian actors could seriously affect coordination including the application of principles. A strong national government could control the number of humanitarian organizations and thus theoretically, facilitate coordination. It might also intentionally obstruct coordination.

Some participants argued that there were confusion, overlaps and gaps between UN mandates leading to competition and a failure to work together. This argument was rejected by others for two reasons. First, the Governing boards of agencies obviously did not intend for the mandates to be used as excuses for the agencies not to cooperate -- blaming the Executive Boards was an alibi. Second, mandate overlap was inevitable and appropriate: if mandates were too tightly defined there would almost certainly be gaps. It was noted that coordination by consensus appeared to be the most that the international community was willing to support: discussing new structures was a waste of energy. While there was still room for improvement, many participants felt that there was real progress. Agencies now strongly welcomed OCHA taking leadership decisions; donors supported OCHA and wanted it to succeed. As related by one participant, recent events in Afghanistan showed that a principled UN position vis-à-vis the Taliban and effective coordination under OCHA's leadership were possible.

Field Coordination. Different suggestions for improving coordination and coherence in the field were discussed including what some perceived as an increasing disconnect between Headquarters and the field. The Afghanistan example showed the importance of strong leadership by the UN Coordinator and the country team combined with high-level backing from Headquarters and throughout the system. The Dayton agreement provided for a much stronger framework but it had a large amount of muscle behind

it. Was this an argument for one 'head person' to manage and direct all UN political and assistance activities? Or should the UN invest the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator with more authority but limited to assistance activities? A more radical approach was also suggested: in civil war situations one integrated UN Office should be made responsible for all assistance and protection activities. Other Agencies' expertise would be incorporated into the UN Office. When the conflict ends all the agencies could return with their flags and profile. This would require a new and much stronger commitment to a unitary approach. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines was also mentioned as a possible alternative model -- an example of coordinating action around a very specific objective without creating a permanent structure for coordination.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee had enormous potential for coordination. Here too renewed commitment and minimal reform rather than radical change should be tried. The IASC's broad membership including NGOs should be able to enhance coordination and promote shared strategic visions beyond simply the United Nations. Some areas which needed to be addressed included: an ineffective division of labour between the IASC and ECHA; lack of an IASC mechanism at the field level; the distance of donors from the IASC; and the weakness of representation and coordination within the various NGO consortia.

Wider coherence in response to crisis. While the importance of partnership, coherence and ownership was not questioned, the definition of these terms seemed problematic. For some participants, these terms implied a shared vision and understanding of the crisis itself rather than shared objectives and a shared programme. It was unlikely, perhaps undesirable, for all parties - the humanitarian, the diplomat, the national authority - to share the same objectives. The need was for an alignment of interests rather than a consensus on narrow objectives. For others the focus was on the importance of partnership between different institutional cultures, identifying common principles, and reading from the same music. Coherence required **collective reflection** in the field but there was rarely time or incentives to engage in analytical work. Opinions differed on whether the Strategic Framework was the right tool for promoting this coherence amongst the many different UN actors and components in a crisis situations.

More dialogue was needed, many argued, between the humanitarian community and the Security Council and donors, between human rights and development actors, and between regional, national, local and non-state actors as well. Member states, especially Security Council members and donors needed to be strategic partners along with UN agencies and NGOs and governments. Commitments from governments and regional organizations to promoting and participating in partnership must be secured. National actors sometimes thought that a fragmented UN was to their advantage. Hence the importance of speaking with 'one voice'. The UN must also dialogue with non-state actors. One participant noted that there may not always be 'partnership' with a local authority but there will always be 'engagement' on such issues as access to and protection of civilians.

It was suggested that **partnerships between regional organizations and the UN** should be strengthened. DPKO was presently preparing guidelines for co-deployment with regional groups. OCHA was setting up a small office in Addis Ababa, jointly with the UN Department for Political Affairs, in order to increase coordination between the humanitarian community and the OAU as well as with other subregional organizations.

Despite much discussion on the relationship between **relief and development**, increased coherence between programming and resource mobilization mechanisms, particularly those of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), Round Table, and Consultative Group, was still needed. Similarly, more dialogue and communication between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions was called for. For its part, the humanitarian community simply must understand the economic dynamics of crisis situations and in particular the role, usually relatively minor, of humanitarian assistance.

Numerous participants restated that humanitarian action could not act as a substitute for "political will" to address the root causes of conflict. Improved dialogue between the humanitarian community and the Security Council would help this body's decision-making process but many felt that a more proactive role was unrealistic. The 'Somalia syndrome' meant that most western militaries, did not want to get involved. Given this reality, some participants believed that full coordination was a lost cause. Others however demanded that the UN should continue its efforts towards a principled and coherent response.

Suggestions to Enhance Coherence in Countries in Crisis:

- More dialogue between the Security Council and humanitarian agencies;
- Increased partnership between the UN and regional organizations, including on humanitarian and human rights issues;
- The IASC should resolve its ineffective division of labour with ECHA;
- An IASC mechanism at the field level should be developed;
- Better IASC-donor interaction was required, partially within the ECOSOC humanitarian segment;
- Positive incentives for coordination should be introduced, e.g. Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators should be evaluated for their successful contribution to in-country coherence and coordination;
- The potential of the Strategic Framework, as a tool for enhanced coherence in countries in crisis, should be further explored;
- UN assistance agencies should work more closely and at an earlier stage with the Bretton Woods Institutions in order to address relief-development linkages.

3. Learning

Not surprisingly, given its focus, the Seminar witnessed repeated discussion of how, when, why, and who should learn. A presentation on 'learning to learn' highlighted three hindrances to learning within the humanitarian community:

- a failure to be open-minded i.e. UN people/agencies come with fixed perceptions;
- a poor ability or attitude towards hearing criticisms that come from the local actors; and
- an inadequate involvement of local actors in the conceptualization and creation of solutions.

These findings were seconded by some of the participants, one noting that the Study on Strategic Humanitarian Coordination in the Great Lakes was the first time he had ever witnessed the UN being criticised in an internal study. Another noted that the IASC's initial response to the study was dismissive and questioned whether Agencies would follow-up on its recommendations. Others stated that the UN was quite ready to examine itself and learn from past experience; indeed the IASC had officially welcomed the study. It would certainly assist in increasing consciousness of the issues examined.

Participants were asked to focus on *learning* as a means to inform policy and improve performance, and in that context to consider the following three questions:

- How to better use existing knowledge (e.g. reports, persons and institutional experience)
- What joint-learning initiatives are desirable?
- Should there be more 'independent studies'?

Understanding the context. The critical need to understand the context of a crisis was underlined by many speakers: the need to understand the political, military, economic, and cultural dynamics of a crisis as well as, for instance, the inadvertent negative impacts of humanitarian assistance or its implications for military strategy. Complex situations could not be reduced to simple answers in order to respond to symptoms at the expense of root causes. Yet the quality of political-economic analysis was often poor so it was not surprising that it was very hard for an expatriate to understand 'what was going on'. For instance, local coping mechanisms usually existed but the time pressures experienced by relief workers meant that they were rarely able to identify and capitalize on them. Part of the learning agenda should be to develop more holistic approaches to crisis response e.g. ensuring that planning for transition, and relief-development linkages corresponded more accurately to the reality on the ground. More attention should be given to identifying opportunities for peace and promoting effective solutions.

International organizations should search for local organizations and experts to better understand the dynamics of the society in crisis otherwise there was a danger that humanitarian action unwittingly could prolong war, undermine local capacities, etc. Unfortunately, there was sometimes reluctance of expatriate staff to accept local opinions cultures and solutions.

Use of existing knowledge. There was a great reservoir of experience and knowledge in the UN and the humanitarian community. These resources should be put into training and dissemination. On the use of studies and reports, it was felt that the process of dialogue in coming up with a final report was more important than the actual dissemination of the report itself. In fact dissemination was overrated as many UN and Agency people staff did not have time to read. Reports sent to Governments rarely went to the appropriate person. In one person's experience, reports marked 'confidential' were often the most widely read reports and the most rapidly implemented! Another participant wondered whether political officers actually took seriously the reports in which there were calls for changes in the political action of Member States.

Studies and training. Despite the comments above, many of the participants stressed the importance of studies. Topics suggested included: comprehensive studies on crises to establish causes and possible solutions, and studies on longer term issues such as globalization and its impact on vulnerability, root causes and the politics of rights in the global context. It was suggested that studies should focus less on the implementation of humanitarian assistance and more on the responsibility of states, looking particularly at respect for international humanitarian law. Both external and independent as well as internal evaluations were considered necessary.

Training was seen as very important for humanitarian and other international staff as well as for partners and actors with whom the humanitarian community must engage. Without ongoing training, professionalism was threatened. For instance, there was much discussion of human rights mainstreaming. But human rights was a specialized field that one does not instinctively know or understand. Furthermore human rights issues could be very sensitive with respect to local cultures, if they were not professionally managed. Along the same lines, relief workers were expected to become development experts and then democracy activists. These areas were not interchangeable. Training was essential in all these areas. Training should not be seen as an end in itself, but must be accompanied by system-wide commitment. Such a commitment required, for instance, providing the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator with authority and respect and demanding accountability from the country team.

Several suggestions were made:

- UNDP and OCHA should work together to tap their collective experiences.
- Field staff should be provided with documents and examples of best practices in other contexts.
- UN should undertake training at the system-wide level to anticipate contingencies, e.g. run exercises to prepare for what would happen if, for instance, genocide or similar mass atrocities were to happen again.
- Hold a conference to construct an agenda for a more full participation of civil society in peace-building initiatives.

Finally, most participants reconfirmed the utility and importance of independent studies by OCHA and UN agencies but also by regional organizations such as the OAU and others. Adequate resources were essential both for the studies themselves and for follow-up action.

Critiques of Humanitarianism and Humanitarian Action

Discussion Paper Prepared for OCHA by Cindy Collins

Humanitarianism has come under fire due to the failures and unintended consequences of humanitarian action. The media delivers images of these failures to the global public, particularly from the Great Lakes region. And the public has responded by diminishing its financial and political support to "do something" when new images of tragedy are aired. Nick Stockton of Oxfam refers to this response as a decline in the "constituency of compassion" and considers it the most important crisis confronting the international humanitarian system. Two other crises compete for primacy on reform agendas. How do we overcome the difficulties in obtaining and sustaining consent to access vulnerable groups, and how do we prevent the use of relief inputs for war aims? Old humanitarian principles and practices are being

taken advantage of and are confounded by relatively new phenomena: the blatant violations of international humanitarian law, the direct targeting of noncombatants and relief personnel, and the incorporation of humanitarian resources into war economies and strategies.

The solution to these crises seems obvious to some. If we improve how humanitarian action is conducted -- that is, make the existing system more efficient and effective -- then the system will regain the trust of donors and recipients, and international indifference will be overruled by universal compassion and operational excellence. Others argue, however, that solutions also require the conceptual stretching of what is deemed to be humanitarian. It is implied that certain activities are more humanitarian in the long-term and should not be undermined by the provision of immediate relief. Some argue, for example, that it is more humanitarian to link the provision of food relief to development-related projects or to condition the provision of humanitarian aid on belligerents' adherence to political agreements. In this sense, humanitarianism becomes a concept inside of and subservient to development and political agendas. It becomes a tool for achieving a variety of objectives beyond the immediate relief of human suffering.

Many current debates are rooted in these disagreements concerning the short- versus longer-term objectives and the range of activities to be included in a "humanitarian" agenda. On the one hand are the Classical Humanitarians, who argue that the provision of emergency relief and protection, performed in a politically neutral and impartial manner, is a valid endeavour in its own right. On the other hand are those who support what is labelled here as the Relief-to-Development-and-Democracy Approach ("RDD Approach"). The RDD Approach is comprised of multiple objectives, including but not limited to relief, development, rehabilitation, democratic processes and "civil society" building. Whereas the work of Classical Humanitarianism is deemed complete once immediate human vulnerability has diminished, the RDD Approach requires the strengthening of economic, social and political systems for mission satisfaction. In its harshest tone, the RDD Approach suggests that Classical Humanitarianism is debilitating in that its singular attention to sustaining lives, rather than livelihoods, creates a protracted dependency on external- rather than self-help. It should be noted that this latter charge is deemed unsupportable by Classical Humanitarians. Given the small amount of relief provided, especially when Consolidated Appeals are not met and the duration of relief assistance is so tentative, no rational human being depends upon emergency aid to the abandonment of other "natural" coping strategies.

Those who support Classical Humanitarianism and those who champion the RDD Approach are involved in critical appraisal of the other while simultaneously acknowledging their own contribution to past humanitarian failures. Conferences abound in which these two schools of humanitarian agendas meet separately and jointly to identify lessons from the past and correct strategic and operational problems. In addition to the critiques that flow from within and between these two dominant humanitarian agendas are the critiques coming from outside the existing humanitarian system. These outside voices can be classified broadly as "Ownership Agendas" and "Aggressive Solidarity."

Ownership Agendas demand that states be made responsible for providing protection and sustenance to their own populations. These agendas argue that the strategies and physical presence of the international humanitarian community interfere with sovereign rights and responsibilities. Although Classical Humanitarianism and the RDD Approach agree that ultimate responsibility for providing relief and protection resides with the host government, those who support Ownership Agendas refuse to compromise on this point when it moves from theory to practice.

The primary position of Aggressive Solidarity is identification with and a commitment to a perceived aggrieved party in a conflict. The protection of human rights and the push for fair political representation are two common bases of solidarity. The solution to the crisis, therefore, demands that all third-party humanitarian actors speak with one voice and behave according to one strategic plan or vision. In the case of solidarity based on human rights, for example, all acts of third-party intervenors would be conditioned upon belligerents' adherence to human rights principles and practices.

Criticisms toward the existing humanitarian system, from those working within the system to reform it, and those criticizing and challenging the system from the outside, are outlined below.

Classical Humanitarianism