Forum: GA 3 - Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Providing systems of humanitarian aid/help to regions of insufficient governmental control in order to reduce refugee streams

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I. Introduction

"A person who lost his gold can find it in the gold market, and a person who lost a lover will soon forget him, but a person who lost his country, where will he find it?" writes 16-year old Hiba on a drawing picturing a crying mother trying to protect her child from a bomb. Hiba lost her father, mother, sister and her country to the carnage of the Syrian civil war that started in 2011. The war has created one of the largest humanitarian crises in recent history and has lead to millions of Syrians seeking safety and survival in other countries, including Hiba.

In any given humanitarian crisis, humanitarian aid, in the form of material and logistical assistance, should be provided to those in need. Usually this assistance is short-term help until long-term solutions by the government and other institutions replaces it. However, in countries or areas of insufficient governmental control many problems persist or resurface after short-term assistance is discontinued, because the original problem or issue that lead to the humanitarian crisis has not been addressed. Thereby the disaster itself and the failure to alleviate its short term and long term effects often leads to many leaving that area in search of a better livable future elsewhere. Therefore, it is paramount that the humanitarian aid systems, funded by foreign governments and private donors, implemented to help in these situations focus on short-term relief efforts, long-term sustainable solutions and disaster prevention.

II. Definition of Key Terms and General Information

a) Humanitarian Crisis

A critical threat to health, safety, security or well being of a community or other large group of people (usually over a wide area) through man-made crises or natural disasters.

i) Vulnerability

A humanitarian emergency arises when such an event affects vulnerable populations who are unable to withstand or recover from the negative consequences by

themselves. The term 'vulnerability' refers to a reduced capacity of individuals or groups to resist and recover from life-threatening hazards. Notably, poor populations are more likely to be vulnerable to man-made or natural disasters because they have less means to respond to any particular disaster. Within affected communities, typically vulnerable groups include children, pregnant and nursing women, ill and disabled people, migrants, and displaced people.

b) Types of crises that cause humanitarian emergencies

According to the Humanitarian Coalition[1], humanitarian crises can be grouped under the following headings:

Natural disasters:
- Geophysical (e.g. earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions)
- Hydrological (e.g. floods, avalanches)
- Climatological (e.g. droughts)
- Meteorological (e.g. storms, cyclones)
- Biological (e.g. epidemics, plagues)

Man-made emergencies:
- such as armed conflicts, place and train crashes, fires and industrial accidents

Complex emergencies:
- A combination of natural and man-made elements, meaning a complex combination of factors leads to a humanitarian crisis. Examples include food insecurity, armed conflicts, and displaced populations

Complex emergencies are typically characterized by:
- Extensive violence and loss of life
- Displacement of populations
- Widespread damage to societies and economies

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[1] The Humanitarian Coalition brings together leading aid organisations and NGOs to collaborate during humanitarian crises. Their categorization and definitions of humanitarian crises are based on and determined by their experience in this field.

- ○ The need for large scale, multi-faceted assistance
- ○ The hinderance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military resistance/constraints
- ○ Significant security risks for humanitarian relief workers in some areas

Armed conflicts, epidemics, famine, natural disasters and other major emergencies may all involve or lead to a humanitarian disaster that extends beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency. Humanitarian aid systems (elaborated upon in a section below) aim to coordinate collaborative response efforts, because regardless of the type of disaster, survivors are left in urgent need of life-saving assistance such as shelter, food, water and health care.

c) International Humanitarian Systems

Ultimately the national government or occupying power of an area or nation is responsible for coordination of relief along with supplying essential services. In many cases national governments may be able to mount their own relief operation depending on the capacity of the government and the scale of the crisis. In these situations, the level of international activity may just include donor support to the government. However, in situations where there is no recognised government authority, or in situations where the government is not acting in the best interest of its people, the United Nations system or other intervening agencies often step in to coordinate a humanitarian response. The international humanitarian system is not a formal structure; it includes a wide variety of agencies, organisation, mechanisms and process which together aim to support and protect all those affected by an emergency, disaster or crisis. The humanitarian system is a complex network that constantly adapts and evolves with different features and characteristics depending on the situation – one of its key traits must be adaptability.

d) Humanitarian Imperative and International Humanitarian Law

The essence of humanitarian aid is to alleviate the human suffering caused by disaster. This right to offer, and to receive, humanitarian assistance is known as the Humanitarian Imperative. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is the foundation of the fundamental humanitarian principles that guide this assistance. In regards to humanitarian aid and the responsible organisations, there are four main principles:

i) Humanity: the right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle, which should be enjoyed by all citizens in all countries.

ii) Impartiality: Aid should be given regardless of the race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, etc. of the recipient and without adverse distinction of any kind. Priorities given to individuals or groups should be calculated on the basis of need alone.

iii) Independance: Humanitarian aid should not be employed as a partisan or political act and it should not be used to further a religious or political standpoint. Humanitarian NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

iv) Neutrality: Humanitarian assistance should be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature

It is important to remember that not all these humanitarian principles are common to all agencies included in the 'humanitarian system'. (for example,) Humanity, Impartiality and Independence are upheld by over 500 agencies that have signed **The Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct**. Neutrality is adopted less widely than the other principles (many organisations have strong affiliations to a certain religion or government). Neutrality is included as part of the mandate for all UN agencies, the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres – MSF)

e) Women[2] in Crisis Situations

Humanitarian crisis – weather man-made or natural – always hit women and girls the hardest. In times of upheaval and strife, pregnancy-related deaths and sexual violence soar. Reproductive health services – including prenatal care, assisted delivery, and emergency obstetric care – often become unavailable and young people become more vulnerable to HIV infection and sexual exploitation. Additionally, many lose access to family planning services and health care, exposing them to unwanted and unplanned pregnancy in high-risk conditions.

Currently, Women and children account for more than 75% of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disasters. If we can guarantee the rights and needs of these populations less of them will be forced to leave their home on account of humanitarian crises.

f) Environmental and ecological impacts

Both man-made and natural disasters create environmental and ecological damage in the affected regions further impacting those who live there. Additionally, the aftermath of natural disasters can damage, destroy or make inaccessible existing natural resources leaving the region prone to future challenges. For example, when a forest fire ravages a large area, that region may be susceptible to air pollution, dust clouds and the release of carcinogenic gases.

Additionally, climate change is causing and will increasingly cause humanitarian crises all over the world. However, climate change will disproportionately negatively

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[2] The **United Nations Population Fund** (UNFPA) states it "is the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled". Their work involves the improvement of reproductive health, including the creation of national strategies and protocols, and making birth control available by providing supplies and services. The organisation has recently been known for its worldwide campaign against child marriage, obstetric fistula and female genital mutilation.

affect people in countries with fewer economic and material resources, and organizational stability. For example in Climentoro, in the western highlands of Guatemala, climate change is increasingly wiping out the limited food crops and resources available. In the area, the question is no longer whether someone will leave but when. Edwin Castellanos, a climate scientist at the Universidad del Valle states: "extreme poverty may be the primary reason people leave, but climate change is intensifying all the existing factors". Extended periods of heat and dryness, known as canículas, have increased in four of the last seven years, across the country. These areas are now locked in a downward spiral: communities increasingly do not have enough people to work the fields and therefore only produce meager amounts of food, leading to a steady increase in people migrating north.

III. Major Parties Involved

a) UNICEF:

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, was created by the United Nations General Assembly to provide emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in the aftermath of World War 2. In 1950, UNICEF's directives were extended to encompass the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries. Then in 1953 the Fund became a permanent part of the United Nations System. UNICEF relies on contributions from governments and private donors. UNICEF's total income for 2015 was US $5,009,557,471 (an estimated 92% of which is redistributed to fulfill their mandate). Their supply division is based in Copenhagen, Denmark and serves as the primary point of distribution for such essential items as vaccines, antiretroviral medicines for children and mothers with HIV, nutritional supplements, emergency shelters, family reunification, and educational supplies

b) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is a humanitarian institution based in Geneva, Switzerland. Signatories of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols have given the ICRC a mandate to protect victims of international and internal armed conflicts; such victims include the wounded, prisoners, refugees, civilians and other non-combatants. Their official mission states that: "The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral, and independent organisation whose independently humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance". Additionally, the organisation conducts and coordinates international relief and works to promote and strengthen international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

c) Global Protection Cluster (GPC)

GPC is an international organisation that coordinates and provides global level inter-agency policy advice and guidance on the implementation of the cluster approach[3]. Additionally, they are an organisation that supports responses in non-refugee humanitarian action. They also help set standards and policies relating to protection in complex and natural disaster humanitarian emergencies – in particular with regard to the protection of internally displaced persons. Within the overall humanitarian response architecture, the GPC aims to improve the predictability, leadership, effectiveness and accountability of response to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian action.

d) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – the UN Refugee Agency

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is mandated to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, as well as assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. Additionally, UNHCR is the *Global Cluster Lead Agency* for Protection: in this capacity UNHCR has the responsibility to lead and coordinate other UN agencies,

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[3] See Cluster Approach section in Possible Solutions below for definition of term.

inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations participating in the Global Protection Cluster.

e) Humanitarian Coalition

The HC brings together leading aid organisations to provide Canadians with simple and effective ways to help when international humanitarian crises occurs. Its agencies collaborate to raise funds, partner with governments and mobilize media to raise awareness, as well as businesses and individual Canadians to contribute. Similar organisations could be set up in member nations around the world to compile funds and humanitarian aid.

f) USA

Recently, President Trump announced plans to cut off aid from three countries in Central America[4] – Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, because they allegedly failed to address the issue of migration. Critics of the cuts point out that this cut will target programs aimed at preventing violence, curbing extreme poverty and hunger, and strengthening the justice system – the very problems residents of those countries give for leaving home and pursuing a more stable future elsewhere, and for many that place is the US. Under closer inspection, the funds were helping the regions they supported, the actual issue is the funds are simply not enough. Therefore, cutting the funds will only push more people to leave their homes.

IV. Possible Solutions

a) Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Inevitably, even as humanitarian interventions become a much more frequent form of assistance, inconsistencies and gaps in response still occur. One such example is the Indian Ocean tsunami that occured in 2004. A massive earthquake off the west

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[4] Read more about this issue at:
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/world/americas/trump-funding-central-america.html

coast of Northern Sumatra in December led to a series of tsunamis causing over 227,000 people to lose their lives and displacing 1.7 million across 14 countries. A massive global response produced an estimated US $13.5 billion in international aid. Evaluations of the response from international aid organisations, private actors and governments found numerous examples of poor coordination that resulted in less effective assistance for those in need. Three issues in particular stood out:

1. The huge number of agencies involved made coordination more expensive and less effective.
2. Generous funding (especially private) reduced agencies' need to coordinate.
3. The perceived need for quick, tangible, agency specific results fuelled competition for visibility, 'beneficiaries' and projects.

The scale of coordination needed in terms of actors on the ground, combined with lack on continuity, skills and experience among key coordinating staff, and limited funding for the actual coordinational aspects contributed to these gaps. In addition, NGO representation in coordination bodies was low and self-initiated coordination between NGOs was also poor. While the military also played a key role in disaster relief, field coordination between military and humanitarian actors was weak, due to little joint planning and training between these two keys groups.

As this example demonstrates, coordination is essential: a coherent, cooperative response will maximise its impact. There is no rigid model or process regarding coordination of humanitarian action, since the process should reflect the nature and impact of the crisis, the capacities of the stakeholders involved and the political interests of key international and national players.

There are examples in which the intervention of humanitarian agencies operating under a common framework, when there is no recognised government of authority, is carried out well. Humanitarian response in Somalia was supported by the Addis

Declaration in 1993 which created the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB) with the aim of facilitating the development of a common approach to the allocation of resources available for Somalia. The SACB consists of donors, UN agencies, NGOs as well as multilateral and regional institutions and organisations.

b) Cluster Approach

Clusters, first implemented in the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action (water, health, logistics, etc.). They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination. The aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian crises, as well as provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response. On a national level, this approach aims to strengthen the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organisations.

c) Drones: the next frontier of humanitarian aid

Drones have immense potential for assisting the work of humanitarian organisations. In the past few years, drones have already proven to be lifelines in a wide variety of situations: be it mapping hard to reach areas, delivering supplies in dangerous settings like fires or conflict zones, or assessing damage after a natural disaster.

For example when more than 8.8 million acres were burned by wildfires in the US this past summer, drones or unarmed air vehicles (UAVs) of different sizes were being used to detect, contain, and extinguish fires. They were able to do so faster than firefighting crews and conventional aircrafts. Not only are drones more cost efficient, they don't put the lives of pilots at risk, and they're able to be equipped with infrared cameras that cut through smoke, as well as sensors that can detect wind and weather

patterns that cause wildfires to spread. Consequently, drones will play an increasing role in modernising and improving humanitarian aid in the coming decades.

d) Disaster Preparedness Measures

This method is crucial in building both national and international capacity to prevent, respond to and recover from humanitarian emergencies. Keeping in mind that implementing measures to ensure disaster preparedness is reserved for those who are financially able to implement them, they can be instrumental in reducing the vulnerability of a given population. These measures can be split into two categories:

1. Material preparedness: building to code, avoiding building in hazardous areas, strengthening homes, preparing emergency kits, etc.
2. Behavioral preparedness: training early warning systems, disaster insurance, etc.

Ideally, governments of countries with repeated emergencies would create special departments for coordinating various relief efforts, for example emergency nutrition preparedness and response. In 2000, with support of the UNICEF and the World Food Program, an Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit (ENCU) was established in Ethiopia as part of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) to prevent severe food shortages and hunger on account of natural disasters. The ENCU continues today to lead and coordinate emergency nutrition response throughout the country and can be used as a working example for other governments.

V. Conclusion

The effectiveness of humanitarian aid systems are inherently linked to the number of people seeking refugee status in other countries. When humanitarian crises are successfully alleviated, fewer people have cause to leave. Learning from past mistakes when implementing humanitarian systems and clusters, the global community

can foster an efficient response to help those in need. For cooperation efforts to be effective, both short term and sustainable long term solutions need to be implemented.

It may seem easy to turn a blind eye to a crises that does not immediately affect one's own country. However, each individual part of the global community has the moral obligation under the UN charter to help. In addition, each country has a responsibility to ensure a humanitarian crisis in a different place does not becomes a burden on their own country and people. Humanitarian aid can be implemented as strategic foreign assistance, stabilizing vulnerable communities and strengthening national security.

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