

BOSNIA – HERZEGOVINA:

Basic Themes from A Complex Emergency

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FORWARD

The Feinstein International Famine Center is pleased to inaugurate its Practitioner in Residence Program Series with this important work by Tim Knight, who for the past five years has directed the United States Government's humanitarian response efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mr. Knight, with his lucid style, vivid examples and thoughtful analysis of the complex emergency afflicting Bosnia-Herzegovia, has made a compelling case in this paper for identifying possible emergencies early on and providing appropriate responses that take local capacities and existing support systems into account when humanitarian assistance is given. His analysis and recommendations resonate well with the work and the mission of the Famine Center.

Mr. Knight was the first participant in the Famine Center's new Practitioner in Residence program under which he spent five weeks at Tufts reflecting, writing, and interacting with staff and students. This paper is a product of his time at the Center.

The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of USAID, for which Tim Knight works, has embraced the concept of the Practitioner in Residence program and will send two more staff members to Tufts in the first six months of 1998. The Famine Center hopes to attract other agencies to participate in this program which allows practitioners to reflect and write down lessons learned and to interact with people who are involved in developing a growing discipline. The Famine Center at Tufts provides an environment for frank analysis, discussion and innovative thinking, which in turn should assist the practitioners as they move back into the field.

The Feinstein International Famine Center, housed in the School of Nutrition Science and Policy of Tufts University, is committed to preventing famine/complex emergencies and improving organizations' responses to crises. The Center is working with international and local operational agencies to build their capacity to do innovative work in a changing world. To this end, the Center provides technical assistance, training, workshops and publications aimed at the practitioner. The Center is also committed to impacting the academic world by changing the nature of interactions among academics and practitioners. The Famine Center is working with graduate students at the School of Nutrition Science and Policy and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy to advance research in pertinent fields. The Center also develops policy positions on important issues in the area of international famine prevention directed towards policy makers and the media, as appropriate. The Famine Center brings together academics and practitioners to develop new models and new approaches to complex emergencies in this time of profound transformation in the world.

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Introduction and Background

Complex emergencies are not new. But as aggressive news organizations provide graphic ‘footage’ of the human toll frequently associated with complex emergencies, increasing attention is devoted to their causes and how best to address the accompanying humanitarian crises. Increasingly, relief agencies, donor governments, and international organizations are recognizing the importance of:

- X identifying early on possible complex emergency sites;
- X developing more appropriate response activities; and
- X coordinating interventions

The breakup of the former Yugoslavia, and particularly the humanitarian disaster that Bosnia-Herzegovina became (and still is, for many), offers an excellent “case study” of a complex emergency. Several themes and conclusions may be drawn which may address the issues above and help the humanitarian assistance community prepare for, and respond to, future complex emergencies.

A friend of mine and I were in our Zagreb office, discussing the upcoming vote in Quebec regarding that province’s possible succession from Canada. One of our local employees overheard our conversation and stated “Well, it will happen there next”. What will happen, we asked. “Another war, with all the ethnic fighting” she responded. “It won’t happen in Canada; Canada’s different” we argued. Our local employee looked matter-of-factly and stated, “That’s what we used to say. ‘It can never happen here’. We thought these things only happen in Africa, to ‘primitive’ people.” When economic problems come, look what can happen. Inside, we’re all primitive.”

It is hard to imagine Canada as the next candidate for a complex emergency, as conditions there are very different from the situation confronting the former Yugoslavia before its breakup. And while there seems to be no simple formula or model to predict when a complex emergency may happen, there are many ‘warning signs’, frequently enough to allow an opportunity for intervention before conditions deteriorate.

Complex emergencies take place where states fail, often preceded by dramatic economic downswings. Overwhelming poverty, disintegration of the middle class, breakdown in the rule of law, failure to protect minority rights, and loss of property rights individually or collectively precede complex emergencies. Any spark can ignite this tinderbox. Sometimes it is a political event such as a demonstration. Or it may be a major disaster, such as a famine. But generally, the complex emergency is a result of an overall failure of a country’s economic, political, and military systems. Addressing the humanitarian needs arising from such an emergency in a vacuum, without simultaneously addressing the underlying economic, political and military issues, only puts the proverbial Band-Aid on the gaping wound.

As the state unravels, “opportunities” arise for individuals to gain from the conflict. In every complex emergency, someone will gain at the expense of others, generally the poorest or most vulnerable. Ethnic tensions often arise when one group looks for “scapegoats” for their economic problems, and attempts to profit from someone else’s loss.

The former Yugoslavia was no exception. A search on the Internet produced two articles, both from the Washington Post. The first, dated 18 Sept. 71 and titled **“Yugoslavia to Get Aid From Western Donors”**, detailed a plan by Western countries to arrange approximately \$600 million in financial aid to Yugoslavia. With a trade deficit running about \$1 billion that year, the article warned that “unless Yugoslavia gets the substantial credits and refinancing of debts it wants, its rate of growth would probably have to be sharply cut back. The concern is that this could produce domestic unrest, sharpen economic rivalries between republics and invite outside interference”.

The second Washington Post article, dated 17 Dec. 1989 and titled **“Yugoslavia’s Multi-Ethnic Makeup Could Lead to Its Unraveling”**, stated that “inflation is out of control, running at an estimated 10,000 percent per year. The country’s debt is staggering, and its economy stagnating.” Further ethnic divisions, and the possible dissolution of the state (Yugoslavia), were feared.

Within two years of this article, the worst war in Europe in nearly fifty years was underway. Before it was over in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 250,000 people were dead, 200,000 wounded, and nearly 2 million people displaced or refugees. And now, at the beginning of 1998, nearly 1.6 million are still internally displaced or refugees, many in squalid conditions while literally billions of dollars are spent annually to maintain an at best fragile peace.

Many attempted to portray the conflict throughout former Yugoslavia, and particularly within Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a “religious war”. I remember watching a news talk show in America, where a spokeswoman for the Bosnian Serbs emphatically discussed the Serbs’ efforts to save the West from “radical Muslim fanatics”. She was unable to understand why the West wouldn’t applaud the Bosnian Serbs for their “preventive actions” against the “Turks”.

Before the war, one fourth to one third of the Bosnian population was the result of mixed marriages. Given such a mix, it is hard to imagine that ethnic hatreds permeated daily life. Undoubtedly, there were tensions, as there are in any society. In Bosnia, people took advantage of the existing divisions in the society, manipulating and fueling them for their own political purposes.

I became friends with a doctor at a hospital in Sarajevo. He was the son of a Bosnian Serb military officer and his Muslim wife. When the war started, his father decided to fight with the Bosnian Serbs, while his mother left to join relatives in Germany. The doctor decided to stay in Sarajevo and provide assistance to war

victims. Throughout the war, he continued to exchange letters with his father, who, positioned upon the high mountains overlooking Sarajevo, was assigned the task of shelling the city. Their letters often discussed the artillery shelling the father was directing on the city where his son lived and worked. The young doctor told me how, in his letters to his father, he often described the damage that was being inflicted and how close the shells were landing to him.

The downturn in the economy and the rise of nationalism allowed individuals a rare opportunity to achieve personal gain in an almost “state-sanctioned” atmosphere. Suddenly, for example, there was an opportunity to increase the size of your farm by displacing or worse, killing, your neighbor and seizing his land.

Our field officers were interviewing a displaced Bosnian Muslim man in one of the collective centers, a high school gymnasium where mattresses covered the floor. Entire families who had been forced from their homes and farms through “ethnic cleansing” had ended up here with whatever belongings they had managed to carry. People milled about all day; cold, sick, bored. You could always tell a collective center from the outside by the “coughing” noise that flowed from the building. People in cold, drafty, open buildings got sick and then gave their sickness to others living there. It is a cycle in collective centers that is never broken.

The Bosnian Muslim man stated that his family had lived next door to a Bosnian Serb family for generations. They had been neighbors for years, sharing everything from farm equipment to rakija, the local homemade brandy. One day, the Muslim man saw a small artillery piece on his neighbor’s farm. He thought that an army had moved through during the night and had discarded a broken weapon. The next day, the Muslim man awakened and saw the field piece pointed at his house. His neighbor emerged, and started yelling to him that he had one hour to vacate his house and take his family and all his belongings with him. An hour later, as he was leaving, the neighbor blew his house apart with the artillery piece.

Complex Emergencies Are Different

Complex emergencies are different from other disasters: they target civilians. The technique is as old as history; to break an opponent’s back, attack the civilians, the community and the culture. Rape the women, murder the males, burn farms, churches/mosques/synagogues and destroy the society’s ability to feed, clothe and care for its citizens. Once the opponent collapses, he can’t fight back.

Complex emergencies are usually characterized by large numbers of displaced persons and overwhelming shelter, water, sanitation, and health needs. They exist in and are frequently a result of extreme insecurity. Complex emergencies, in numerous cases, are the result of military action, often targeted directly against the civilians. The humanitarian assistance community must address these needs in the face of opposing political and military objectives.

In this environment, humanitarian relief programs often become tools of the opposing sides. The ability to assess the situation, design an appropriate response, and implement a program are facilitated, or manipulated, by the opposing sides. In “natural disasters”, i.e. earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods, the government of the affected area generally welcomes and facilitates the work of the relief community. In complex emergencies, relief work designed to assist the innocent victims is often viewed as assisting the enemy. Administrative “approvals” may be slowed or denied; convoys of relief commodities stopped or stolen; or in the worst cases, relief workers targeted for attack.

By any rational person’s definition, Sarajevo was a city under siege. S But to admit that a European city which hosted the Olympics was under a Medieval-style military blockade would demand a world response most countries were unwilling to fulfill. o while the international community struggled with a precise definition of “siege” and whether it applied to Sarajevo, the citizens of that city were unable to come and go or move about as they pleased; endured hundreds of thousands of artillery shells and millions of rounds of small arms fire; and were cut off from all but minimum amounts of the most basic food. Daily, they stood in long lines under threat of sniper fire to collect small amounts of water from open water spigots. People collected standing rain water, took it to their homes and used it immediately, without any means to boil or treat it. Electricity and gas were totally shut off by the surrounding Serbs.

A cynical joke circulated among the residents of the city: “What’s the difference between Sarajevo and Auschwitz? In Auschwitz, they had gas”.

The humanitarian assistance community continues to struggle with effective mechanisms to provide assistance in complex emergencies. Too often, relief agencies focus on “package” solutions, either “dumping food” on a problem or providing short term, expensive assistance that when pulled out, leaves people totally on their own, often worse off than before.

Fortunately, changes in the approach to response activities are taking place. Throughout the former Yugoslavia, many NGOs and relief agencies developed excellent programs which went beyond more traditional immediate emergency assistance. It should be emphasized however, that there are no “absolute techniques” or “guaranteed solutions”, and, in fact, a healthy dose of humility is important in any relief operation. Those affected usually know more about coping mechanisms than the expatriate relief workers. But, it doesn’t seem to matter if the complex emergency is in an impoverished area of Africa or the middle of Europe. A formula, though not a straight calculation, is emerging. The most successful response activities:

- build on existing local support systems;
- involve and capitalize on recipients’ efforts;

- recognize local capacity;
- use existing markets; and
- attempt to address the underlying causes while focusing on immediate needs

Build on Existing Support Systems

The best emergency projects are targeted, quick in, decisive interventions where specific results can be seen in a very short period of time, and where the long term consequences of the program are considered and addressed. One of the most successful emergency projects in Sarajevo was designed, administered and run by a local NGO. Before the war the group provided outreach services to elderly, generally checking in on them to ensure they had company and adequate food and medicines. Many of these elderly lived in fifteen story high-rise apartment buildings, situated right on what became the war's front-line. When the fighting started, all utilities including water, electricity, and gas were cut off. The elderly apartment dwellers could not walk up and down the flights of stairs, through darkened stairwells, to collect water from open water points frequently targeted by sniper fire. Some died in their apartments. Many relief workers believed the best solution would be to move the residents from their apartments to cramped collective centers, a move most of the residents wanted to avoid.

The local NGO, working in concert with an American NGO, redesigned their program to address the new situation. On a daily basis, outreach workers now brought a hot meal, water, and basic sanitation items, while continuing to check on health and medical requirements. The organization also rehabilitated three small rooms in a basement area that allowed the high-rise residents a relatively safe opportunity to socialize with other residents. Counseling and information programs were also provided.

By building on the existing program, residents were able to remain in their own surroundings and avoid the "camp" environment of a collective center. And, perhaps as important, the local NGO was able to buttress its own program, continue to employ qualified staff, and eventually expand their operations to other parts of the city similarly affected. From a donor perspective, the funds to accomplish this were minimal, and certainly less than starting a relief program from scratch. The clients were able to remain in their own surroundings, a critical element in not only their recovery but also in any relief program.

Relief Should Involve and Capitalize on the Recipients' Efforts

In almost every complex emergency, people will develop support systems, often relying upon their own ingenuity and skill to respond to the circumstances which confront them. Sometimes, these systems seem to rely solely on tact and bluff.

I spoke to a Serbian woman living in the Krijina, an area of Croatia once held by the Serbs and called the "Republika of Srpska Krijina". Her husband was a Croat, and when the war broke out, he left to fight with the Croatian army while she remained to

tend the family farm. Her conditions were poor. Four years later, the Croats retook the area, driving most of the Serbs out. Against all odds, she decided to stay. She told me that one night, five Croatian soldiers showed up at her front door, demanding to know where the Serbian woman was, referring to her. She knew they would kill her, so she said she didn't know where the woman was. The soldiers asked who she was. She replied that she was a refugee and was occupying the farm and tending some chickens. She had lost all her identification in her flight. She asked if the soldiers would like her to provide them with eggs and chickens, and maybe some fresh vegetables. The soldiers bought some chickens and asked her to tell them when the woman returned. She continued to sell chickens to the soldiers, using the extra money to improve her own situation, all the while promising to let them know as soon as the woman they were looking for returned. Finally, months later, the soldiers left.

I met a family who lived in the old Olympic Village, a set of apartments near the Sarajevo airport which housed athletes during the competition. Unfortunately for them, their apartment was right on the front-line. I got to know them fairly well, and one day asked how they had managed to survive during the war. They all smiled at the same time. Their money had run out; there was no food in the markets; relief commodities were intermittent and of mixed quality. The elderly gentleman showed me in great detail how they were able to take small pieces of "relief" bread and put it under "lean-to" traps situated near their apartment window. He patiently waited until one of the ubiquitous pigeons would show up, at which point he would pull a string and catch the bird. He would then kill the pigeon, a task everyone else in the family refused to undertake. Meanwhile, his wife took great delight in describing the various recipes she had developed for preparing pigeon, accompanied by whatever relief food was available. They used book pages from the family library for fire fuel. At the end of the discussion, they all laughed. The family had nicknamed the elderly gentleman "Killer", affectionately referring to the efficient manner in which he dispatched the prey.

Relief operations should always try to build on the skills and techniques individuals have developed for their own recovery. All too often, well intended programs can end up inhibiting or cutting off existing systems and coping mechanisms, leaving people more vulnerable when the assistance funds are reduced or turned off. And funds will always be cut off. "Donor fatigue" or a new crisis in some other part of the world will mean that good programs will lack for funds and will need to be curtailed or stopped altogether.

Relief programs should always try to incorporate the views and efforts of the recipients of the assistance programs. Seed distribution programs worked well throughout Bosnia. City residents who had lost all sources of income asked if they could be provided with vegetable seed packages. This gave them a chance to grow their own food and actively participate in their own recovery. All over Sarajevo, small vegetable gardens were set up and maintained. To facilitate development and cultivation of these small "victory gardens", the NGO organized and set up small "tool libraries". Residents who

wished to maintain a small garden were allowed to borrow spades, shovels, hoes and other tools to tend their plots of land.

Many people thought that the seed program provided a greater psychological harvest than food, allowing residents only “something to do during the war” with little real production. In fact, production was so great in some areas, the NGO was able to buy back fresh vegetables from the seed recipients and then use the fresh vegetables in feeding programs directed to those (elderly and infirm) who could not provide for themselves. Everyone benefited from this program. It was later expanded to include raising chickens, allowing participants to sell eggs and the occasional grown chicken.

Not incorporating local resources can have a devastating effect, frequently stopping a well intentioned program in its tracks. Bosnia-Herzegovina was and remains a sophisticated country with an intelligent and well educated population. Their engineers had designed and built construction projects all over the world. Many organizations made the mistake of not working with the local talent as they attempted to repair water systems or redesign sanitation programs. The resentment of not being included in the design and implementation of the project resulted in subtle forms of “project sabotage”; bureaucratic delays, additional tests and/or approvals, and postponed deadlines. All served to impede the work of the NGO.

Prior to the war, much of Sarajevo relied upon electricity to heat their homes and apartments. When the electricity stations were destroyed, most residents were without a source of heat. The main gas lines into Sarajevo were controlled by the Serbs. They would turn off the main valves, thereby cutting the pressure and depriving the city of all but a minimal amount of gas. Despite this erratic on and off “schedule”, some gas remained in the main gas lines. The Sarajevans jury-rigged illegal connections to the main gas lines, often running garden hoses, metal shafts or even stop-sign poles between the main gas lines and their homes. The only protection was a petcock, situated in the home and manually turned on and off when the gas was on. Needless to say, this network of illegal connections resulted in numerous asphyxiation deaths and explosions.

One NGO realized that gas regulators for the US market had been manufactured in Yugoslavia before it broke apart. The NGO found engineers who had worked in the production plant and developed a project where teams were sent throughout the city to repair the illegal hookups and, at a minimum, install refurbished regulators. This project resulted in a “win” for everyone: local skilled workers were employed to design and implement the program; the NGO implemented a successful project; and above all, residents in Sarajevo were able to have a safer way of obtaining gas for heat and cooking.

Recognize Local Capacity

While the war raged between Muslims and Croats in southern Bosnia, relief needs within the country overwhelmed the relief community. The approach of a Bosnian

winter on people confined to apartments without gas or electricity for heat placed many at severe risk. Winter in Bosnia was cold, and though many visitors claimed that it wasn't any worse than a typical American New England winter, there was a difference; one never had a chance to warm up. Without electricity or gas, apartments stayed cold all day and all night. The cold never left you, and for the elderly and most vulnerable, winter became a life-threatening situation.

Everyone had their own system, and it was important to develop one early and stick to it. After a night of sleeping in heavy socks, sweat pants, sweat shirts, and a wool sweater, tucked under several blankets, you would get up and see if the electricity or gas had come on. If it were on, you tried to heat some water for a quick spit bath. Most of the time, there was no way to heat water. So you prepared for the day by bathing in freezing cold, standing water. Often, after an excruciating cold water "shampoo and rinse", your hair would freeze before you could dry it.

Mostar is a small city in Bosnia, situated along the beautiful Neretva river. During the early part of the war, the Serbs shelled the inhabitants from the surrounding high ground. By 1993, the Croats and Muslims began to fight, and the river served as a dividing line between the two ethnic groups. Life for the nearly 55,000 Muslims on the east side of the city was miserable. People lived in basements to avoid the heavy shelling and sniper fire. All utilities were cut off. The entire Muslim population received emergency assistance. Electricity and heat were non-existent. Moving relief commodities from the Croatian coast, through Bosnian Croat military checkpoints, was always difficult. Convoys were frequently delayed and often stopped or turned back. Men's shoes were considered "war materiel" and denied clearance.

Before the war, there was a factory in Mostar that manufactured and supplied aircraft parts to the world's major aircraft manufacturers. One NGO developed a very clever idea. They brought thin sheet metal into the aircraft parts plant, and using local engineers and labor, designed and manufactured a small wood-burning stove suitable for cooking food and heating an apartment. The stoves were then donated to needy families, thus giving people an opportunity to heat their homes and prepare donated food thus participating in their own recovery efforts (as opposed to a "wet feeding", collective environment). The payment for workers also injected money into the economy. And perhaps most significantly, transportation costs and delivery hassles were reduced as only raw material, i.e. sheet metal, was brought up from the coast. Soon, locally made stoves were being produced all over Bosnia using local engineers, local labor and converted factories. The lesson was pretty simple; local talent and manufacturing capacity can frequently be used to address relief problems. In a sophisticated country like Bosnia, this opportunity should never be lost. One should always look for opportunities to use local capabilities.

When I first traveled around Bosnia, I was struck by the number of old washing machines in the rivers. I soon realized that most of them were "fixed" in place, purposely situated in the middle of rivers, not, as I first suspected, tossed as trash in the streams. I

asked a local engineer about this. He told me that when an electrical motor is reversed, it becomes a generator. The residents of towns, cut off from electricity, would sneak out during the night, and configure a washing machine in the river so that the river's current would turn the clothes drum in the opposite direction. A wire was then run from the machine to a house, producing just enough electricity for a small reading lamp or radio.

Markets Always Exist: If Possible, Use Them

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina drove prices for scarce and cut-off commodities such as sugar, coffee, and cigarettes to outrageous levels. As the value of the local currency fell, people were forced to buy and trade commodities that would hold value. Holding cash meant losing value; holding commodities could increase your "wealth". At one point, coffee sold for over two hundred dollars a kilo. On a trip to Tuzla, our field officers reported seeing one man light a cigarette, then pass it along to a line of "consumers" who each paid one German Mark for a "drag" off the cigarette. As many as ten people stood in line and paid for the chance to smoke the single cigarette.

Gorazde was one of the three "eastern enclaves" in Bosnia, Muslim areas completely cut off and surrounded by the Bosnian Serbs. Relief convoys were carefully examined by the Serbs to ensure only the most basic relief commodities were provided to the 45,000 besieged inhabitants. Frequently, the Serbs denied the passage of any items, purposely ensuring only a minimum of assistance was delivered.

We arrived in Gorazde after a difficult land trip transiting the Bosnian Serb held areas. As we drove through the town, I was surprised to see the number of "window boxes" growing what I thought were vegetables. On closer inspection, I realized people were all growing the same thing: tobacco. The residents of Gorazde would grow the tobacco in their homes, wrap the dried leaves in pages from books, and sell the "cigarettes" for a few extra German Marks. Though the roads into Gorazde were all carefully guarded, the "lines" surrounding the city were fairly porous. Residents would sneak across the lines and trade their home-made cigarettes for other needed items.

Market solutions can be found almost anywhere. In the mid 1980s, during the height of the apartheid era in South Africa, I was reviewing the work of a local NGO. The head of this organization was trying to address the chronic shortage of medicines, clothes and school materials in impoverished Black areas. She was also trying to get money for small hand pumps for water wells. She took me to one of her "neighborhoods" and introduced me to her "clients", the intended recipients of the aid. Many were sewing, making baby clothes and children's school uniforms. One group of women was weaving wire through nail patterns positioned on long picnic table sized boards. When I asked what they were doing, she answered that they were winding the wire through the nails and producing security fencing. She then sold the fencing to the whites in the surrounding suburbs, profiting on their paranoia. The proceeds of the sale were used to purchase well casings and hand pumps, as well as additional materials. By selling the items produced by

the clients on the market, greater sums were generated, allowing her to procure additional relief commodities. And the beneficiaries participated in their own relief program.

This anecdote indicates how much impact one person can have in a humanitarian relief operation. It also illustrates another important point that is emerging in the humanitarian assistance programs; relief work, especially in complex emergencies, is business. Huge numbers of people at risk, overwhelming needs, tremendous logistical obstacles, all tax donor and NGO resources. Funds to address these problems are not without limits. Donors want to see sound proposals clearly identifying the number of people to be assisted, resources required, anticipated expenditures, and expected results. Donors will be generous when they know responsible organizations with credible programs are using the limited funds available to assist the greatest number of people.

When programs build on local resources and techniques, draw upon local skills and resources, and involve recipients in their own recovery, donors frequently find them even more attractive. Humanitarian assistance programs should be a collaborative effort, incorporating the views and interests of the donor, the NGO and above all, the intended beneficiaries in the design and implementation.

Leveraging other funds and resources can result in adding additional value to a program. When a single program can reach two objectives through minor modification, it should be considered. For example, USAID/OFDA's mandate directs its work toward immediate response activities. It generally does not focus on long term problems. One medical NGO asked us to consider a tuberculosis treatment and monitoring program in Kosovo, where the disease is, and has been, endemic among the ethnic Albanian population. Though this was outside of our mandate, the NGO did want to reach a population which also needed basic hygiene kits, detergents, soap, and basic food commodities. By combining the two programs, funds were made available and the economies of scope achieved allowed both program objectives to be reached at less cost than if they were run separately. The assistance recipients were able to get a package of aid that greatly improved their situation.

Attempt to Address Underlying Causes While Addressing Immediate Needs

Ten years ago, disaster assistance was considered a minor aberration, interrupting a country's overall development process. When asked to graphically depict a country's development "process", most development experts described a linear "development continuum", with immediate relief assistance occupying a small area at one end of the continuum and a fully developed country with Western style macro-economic programs at the other end. Development work, so the argument went, could continue in spite of the troubling disasters that occasionally took place in a country.

Many now question this explanation. Some suggest the "development continuum" is more like a "circle" where different variables impact simultaneously upon a country's development, often stalling or abruptly halting larger development programs. Without

addressing underlying “disaster events”, a country’s development programs may never succeed, or what successes had been achieved, reversed. Relief and development practitioners are starting to realize the inextricable link between disasters and development, and between development and disasters.

Acknowledging a closer link between relief assistance and development provides an opportunity to address underlying development problems through emergency assistance. Opportunities exist to use immediate assistance to rectify or ameliorate larger development problems, though when lives are at risk, it is incumbent to address the most immediate needs right away.

There were always two big problems in Bosnia. The *second* problem was the war; the *first* problem was the economy. The war interrupted initial efforts by the government to privatize the economy. And after the Dayton Agreement, government officials were anxious to de-mobilize soldiers, often back to labor intensive, subsidized jobs in state owned factories. One such factory was in Zenica, where the steel mills employed 28,000 people in heavily subsidized steel production. USAID officials continually emphasized the need to grow the economy based on the development of small businesses, employing five or six individuals. Government officials wanted to recreate a bad situation.

Relief programs offered an opportunity to enhance the private sector and increase the number of small businesses. Lack of shelter was an enormous problem, and still is, for literally hundreds of thousands in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In designing a shelter rehabilitation project, it was determined that grants for the Emergency Shelter Repair Program be given to NGOs. The NGOs were then required to hire local contractors to carry out the work. The project was a tremendous success, employing thousands, who rehabilitated over 2500 houses and allowed families to return to the homes they could prove they owned prior to the war. The “seed” money provided by the NGOs allowed many individuals to start small construction companies, employ local labor, and then bid on other reconstruction and rehabilitation jobs, building their business base. Through disaster relief funds, small businesses, the driving force of economic development, were established all over Bosnia.

One man realized that wood for framing materials and flooring would be required. He started a small mill, sawing local pine trees to produce the milled pieces for roof rafters and beams which were then sold to the construction firms. As the project continued, he required more and more money for saw blades. At first, we thought this was extravagant, and perhaps a less than subtle attempt to make additional money. We later found out that there was so much shrapnel in the trees from the constant shelling, that the metal fragments in the wood were ruining the blades. Before milling, each tree had to be carefully examined for shrapnel.

Throughout the war, Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo, the city’s main hospital, had been the frequent target of artillery shelling. The main entrance and several adjoining rooms had been significantly damaged. The hospital authorities asked if we could fund a

project to rebuild the area. We agreed, but with the help of one of the medical NGOs, decided to take the project one step further. Knowing that before the war, *triage* was not widely practiced in Bosnia, the NGO worked with a local private construction company to rebuild the entrance but make it more like an “emergency ward”, similar to an American or Western European emergency ward. Along with the reconstruction work, the NGO brought on board a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doctor who trained local Bosnian doctors in triage and better methodologies of assessing injuries and administering medical assistance. The program was a tremendous success. Later, a follow-on component was funded that allowed the Bosnian doctor to train his counterparts in hospitals in other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Again, emergency assistance was utilized in a manner to address more systemic problems.

Conclusions

Every relief operation is different, and complex emergencies offer unique challenges. There are no guaranteed methodologies. No one has all the answers or the right solutions. But solid people with excellent credentials are now working on what appears to be a growing discipline. Basic themes and common elements of successful projects in this unique emergency assistance environment are emerging and should be analyzed, discussed, and, where possible, replicated. The importance of this can not be overstated.

I remember watching CNN one time from Sarajevo. Several stories ran about the conditions of British cattle while being transported to slaughter houses. Angry demonstrators were objecting to the deplorable manner in which the animals were treated prior to being slaughtered for market. Meanwhile, just a few hours away from London, people in a city which had hosted the Olympic games were similarly being slaughtered and enduring abysmal conditions. No mention was made on the newscast of the ongoing war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. No angry demonstrators were protesting the living conditions of this war-ravaged country in the middle of Europe.

An ongoing and enthusiastic discussion on complex emergencies is essential. Every opportunity to discuss potential problems, refine and improve response techniques, and coordinate activities should be encouraged. Complex emergencies are not going away; the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not an aberration. There will be more.