

PUTTING CRISIS MANAGEMENT AT THE CENTRE OF DEVELOPMENT: A NEW PARADIGM TO LINK EMERGENCY AND DEVELOPMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. REVISITING PREVIOUS CRISES	3
2.1. New conflicts, old wars	3
2.2. Complex political emergency: concept of the 1990's.....	3
2.2. The challenge of the forgotten and protracted conflict	7
2.3. The growing impact of the socio-natural and technological disasters	7
3. MANAGING CRISES: NEW CHALLENGES	8
3.1. Economic security, survival strategies and crisis management	8
3.1.1. Hunger for land as a root cause: The Great Lakes area.....	8
3.1.2. Economic insecurity and crisis inception: the case of North Mali.....	8
3.1.3. When famine becomes a weapon: the case of South Sudan	9
3.2. Victims on the move: the dynamics of displacements	9
3.3. Managing the post crisis phases	10
3.3.1. Repatriation of refugees: the returnees phenomenon.....	10
3.3.2. Demobilisation: the lost soldiers	10
3.3.3. Inmate population and liberated prisoners	11
3.4. Prevention: myth or reality	11
3.5. The crisis management cycle	11
3.5.1. Early warning systems: too much information, insufficient political utilisation	12
3.5.2. Disaster preparedness: the forgotten priority	12
3.5.3. Acquiring knowledge:	12
3.5.4. Think ahead.....	13
4. PROSPECTS ARE NOT GOOD, BUT THERE'S STILL HOPE	14
4.1. Revisiting concepts and operational semantic in humanitarian aid	14
4.2. Catastrophes in the age of global communication and information.....	14
4.3. What kind of world are we living in?	14

¹ Groupe URD is a research, evaluation and training network. www.urd.org

1. INTRODUCTION

As we progress into the 21st century and the age of globalisation, it is important to enlighten the path ahead with the historical events that shaped the previous century. Additionally, the recent international developments and related challenges should push us to think proactively and, as the title of this article suggests, put crisis management at the centre of development agendas. This paper will attempt to develop these issues.

The 20th century was marked by several traumatic events, the First and Second World Wars and the Holocaust being the most obvious, but there were also other horrifying massacres, such as the Armenian genocide and the internecine conflict in Rwanda in 1994. War technology has become increasingly sophisticated and powerful, culminating in the invention of nuclear weapons. Simultaneously, the capacity of individuals and small, well-organised groups to wreak havoc has grown in strength. The First World War, sparked off by the assassination of a King by a fanatic, marked a turning point in the way war was waged due to the widespread use of sub-machine guns and gas, and was a cataclysm both in terms of loss of human life and global economy. As colonialism and imperialism reached their peak in Africa, Asia and Latin America, World War I saw the first wave of "humanitarianism". For example, on the battleground, there were more American humanitarian workers than there were American soldiers. Another turning point occurred with the fall of the Berlin Wall and events have reportedly quickened pace since 11th September 2001. The evolution of "humanitarianism" reflects this accelerated rhythm. But can we identify any significant discontinuities? If so, to what extent do they affect people's lives? How will they affect the way in which humanitarian and development work is carried out? How can we adjust and adapt? How can we ensure that developmental and humanitarian practices are relevant when faced with changes of such magnitude? Towards the end of the 1980's, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fundamental changes that ensued, history underwent a period of discontinuity and continuity. Some renowned intellectuals, for example Francis Fukuyama, even pronounced "the death of History". The end of the Cold War represented a major development and became the reference date separating the "before" from the "after". This period not only disrupted the history of our crisis-ridden planet but also affected problems encountered in the field, such as the way in which we interpret events and how activities are conceived in order to better manage the political, diplomatic and humanitarian consequences. This is true for some incidences at least. The issue of "post-conflict rehabilitation" was at last broached and became a busy sector of activity in Cambodia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Salvador, pre-Taliban Afghanistan, etc. The challenges related to the management of a post-crisis period are still extremely complex and the debate is by no means new. General Giap, a former Vietnam War "hero", said some years after the Vietminh took control of Saigon, "We won the war, we are losing the peace". The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Union not only laid down the conditions for resolving certain crises, but also opened new doors, resulting in a specific set of conflicts in Asia and Europe, most of which were inherited from pre-existing fracture lines, for example, Nagorno-Karabach, Abkhazia, Chechnya, former Yugoslavia, Tajikistan, etc. Yet there is still a lot of energy invested in keeping war and conflicts alive. We have to ask ourselves in whose interest this is and what is the objective? Humanitarian workers now have to integrate longer time frames than those in which they previously operated. On the one hand, several regions that were once peaceful have recently plunged into disarray, including Zimbabwe, The Great Lakes and the Gulf of Guinea (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, the Ivory Coast). Development agencies have gradually become familiar with the crisis context, an approach deemed all the more necessary as the number of countries with foreseeable stable futures, was dwindling. Kenya and Indonesia have joined those countries teetering on the brink of crisis, while Uganda, despite its good standing with the IMF, once again appears to be on shaky ground. On the other hand, certain crises remain unresolved, such as in Sudan, Afghanistan and Kashmir. These protracted and often forgotten wars are still deadly and force the standard of living of large populations below the survival line.

If in the past, so-called natural disasters have been more or less overshadowed by these "brutal signs of human madness", they have not become less innocuous. Cyclones in Madagascar, earthquakes in Turkey or Salvador, droughts in Africa, floods in Asia and, on a scale unknown in recent decades, in Europe, are occurring regardless of the political environment in the area and take their toll on human life. They are increasingly becoming a major global problem. From 1991 to 1995 alone, the total global cost of such damage was estimated at US\$439bn. But are they really natural? The philosopher Voltaire wrote "The reason so many people died in the Lisbon earthquake is not the earthquake itself. It is the fact that people were settled in Lisbon". In fact, more and more people are living in the most precarious and risky areas, in search of land close to rivers and cities. The triple trends of population growth, environment degradation and urbanisation create de facto an increased vulnerability to climatic hazards." These phenomena are more and more often referred to as socio-natural disasters. Prevention, provision and preparation to these catastrophes that have not yet reached the heart of the development agenda.

This new era of globalisation has raised a challenge based on two complementary, yet contradictory approaches. The first is to ensure that humanitarian action remains independent, impartial and immune to

“political interference” in order to assist and protect all victims, and the second is to put crisis management at the centre of development agendas which are necessarily “political”. Thus, the challenge facing humanitarian actors is twofold and it will be interesting to see whether we are able to confront it.

2. REVISITING PREVIOUS CRISES

2.1. *New conflicts, old wars*

The preliminary phase in rethinking the relationship linking peace, war, economy and society involves a new examination of the phenomenology and epidemiology of war and crisis. We need to question our understanding of the new forms of crisis and context, where they occur and how field problems have evolved as a result, particularly in internal conflicts. Until recently, these internal conflicts were referred to as “de-structured” conflicts and our limited understanding is entirely to blame for this misconception. For example, the crises in Rwanda, Burundi, Somali, and Sierra Leon were in fact very structured. Unfortunately, we often lack the tools to decode these crises and to analyse them comprehensively. Indeed, how does one assess a situation where the civilian population is attacked not only by the military, but also other civilians themselves? This reappraisal phase is essential for mankind’s collective imperative of surviving in a sometimes savage and brutal world, and for bringing the issues of prevention, disaster-preparedness, crisis management and resolution into perspective.

In the “Post-Berlin Wall” ideology, international conflicts had almost been forgotten. Crisis-affected regions were thus reduced to a handful of areas where ethnic groups (European, African, or others) were fighting over a few valleys or plots of arable land. The new conflicts were merely based on the oldest disputes in the world where the stakes are based on access to basic resources to ensure the survival of tribes and clans. But besides land and water, there are now other resources that are essential to the global economic system: oil, uranium and diamonds. Moreover, the tendency of local conflicts to become international concerns, once the purely internal phase is over, persists. Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Angola, Uganda, and Sudan have all had, and are still suffering, internal conflicts. Permeable borders and trans-national interests engender an osmotic, synergistic movement that unites these conflicts and reinforces them. In addition, international disputes flare up regularly, and although on the whole they are contained, these instances still trouble the present context. Most analysts challenge the official debate on the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. After all, why such a deadly fight over a seemingly arid piece of sandy soil with no apparent resources? Central Africa is on the brink of imploding and all efforts at mediation fail, one after another. The intervention of Nelson Mandela, the SADEC and OAU conferences, special missions carried out by European, American, or UN envoys, all demonstrate the failure of international conflict resolution mechanisms. The American doctrine known as ‘**African solutions for African Problems**’ is also revealing its limitations. In particular, Europeans themselves, witness to events in Kosovo, are not necessarily able to determine measures that are best for Europe. The tragic events that plunged the ‘land of the fields of blackbirds’ (*Kosovo polje*) into mourning have been answered only by the pathetic posturing of a divided international community. In the midst of this exhibition of vehement gesticulation and avowed weakness, how can the humanitarian actors provide assistance to populations in distress and still be perceived as neutral and impartial (and avoid being the constant target of snipers)?

New stakes are emerging that until now had been deliberately relegated to the background. An oil field here, a diamond deposit there, the potential route of an oil pipeline, an arsenal of nuclear warheads elsewhere. These are the real stakes of the new conflicts. More than ever, there is a desperate need to better understand the dynamics of crises and the logic of the protagonists who provoke them or participate in them. To what extent will the changing nature of contexts of conflict and the questioning of the relevance of concepts influence our practices? How, for instance, can we shorten the food aid phase by substituting as rapidly as possible strategies to strengthen coping mechanisms? How can the local dynamics of the actors of national civil societies be taken into account, with their strengths (knowledge of the environment) and their weaknesses (risk of political partisanship)?

2.2. *Complex political emergency: concept of the 1990’s.*

The wars of decolonisation, conflicts resulting from the Cold War and the most recent series of ethnical conflicts delivered a final blow to an internal and external equilibrium, which was already fragile and has become increasingly precarious. Indeed, the scale of population displacements resulting from these crises has reached incredibly high magnitudes and this is true for displacements both within a country and across international boundaries. These wars leave behind mass destruction in African countries that were often already saddled with high levels of poverty. Food insecurity is currently affecting millions of people across the whole continent. In the early 1990’s, the involvement of UN-led troops, under Security Council resolutions, saw the emergence of the terminology “complex political emergencies” (CPE). The exact definition of this

recently-coined concept still remains to be clarified. However, research carried out within the framework of the Complex Political Emergency Project (COPE Project) have helped to centralise this concept around a few issues (GODHAM & HULMES; 1998; DOLAN; 1998), to which a few additional ideas have been added below.

Political: Since the end of the Cold war, the political equation has of course changed radically. The two-block system has been replaced by, on the one hand, a multi-polar world where there is “a main power”, a inner circle of “secondary powers” and a outer circle containing numerous actors each with its own political agenda. If the quest for political power remains at the centre of most of these crises, the power is seldom in the hands of a political party or even one individual but more frequently a specific group, whose identity is based on economic position or an “ethnic posture”. This new political grid of complex emergencies imposes new rules, which drastically affect the process of conflict management, for both internal and external actors. Indeed, the individual and often self-centred position of states will increasingly dictate whether or not they decide to become involved in solving problems or not, and if they decide to engage in alleviating the human suffering as a result of the crisis or not. The recent examples of Operation Turquoise in Rwanda, and Zaire in 1996, where a “no go area” was imposed on international forces under the UN, are clear indications of the new rules prevailing within the international community.

Control of resources: However political gain is often just a step towards the control of natural resources. In cases where resources are renewable, and particularly in areas where land scarcity has become a constraint, power within a community depends heavily on the ownership of available fertile agricultural territory. Other resources are non renewable, but by no means less valuable. Diamonds, oil, gas, gold, uranium, or precious metals all provide a good enough reason for certain individuals to enter into conflict. In a situation where the enforcement of law and order is weak, which often results in conflict per se, instability creates a context where taking control of resources is easiest for those in power. Land control controlled by the military, oil or diamond extraction benefiting the established elite and financing war efforts, etc. are just a few from a long list of examples.

Ethnic and historical factors: Ethnic issues have probably always existed in Africa. Yet they became political weapons in the hands of the colonial powers, moved by their mandate to “divide and rule”. A full set of ethnic theories has emerged as a result of colonial scientists’ invalid reasoning. Africa is still paying the price for their pseudo-scientific discourse. In many instances, the ethnic issue has been, and is still used to trigger either the crisis itself or severe clashes within the crisis period, and this manipulation has a very specific effect on the very way the war is conducted. In an ethnic conflict, the aim of the war is not to win assets, but to eliminate the “other”, either by obliging them to leave for good, or by destroying them. The problem is that the “ethnic trick” is by far the easiest mechanism for elaborating an “ideological set up” to justify conflict.

Regional: In a geopolitical context, largely predetermined by boundaries inherited from the colonial era and the Berlin Conference, it is not surprising that nowadays conflicts tend to break through walls and explode across national borders. Where previously rivers formed the spine of a “nation” (a term used here as an alternative to “an ethnic community living in a territory”), they became “natural obstacles” and thus true physical indicators for defining borders. In areas where pastoral groups have been travelling for centuries following the grass front, national borders separate winter and summer pastures. In addition, river courses and mineral deposits can also be “cross border phenomena”. Control of these resources becomes a rationale for internationalising an internal conflict. Recent examples in Angola, Zaire, Senegal, Liberia, and Sudan are just a few among a long list of examples.

Long-lasting phenomena: Paradoxically, duration is also one of the characteristics of complex emergencies. Indeed most of these crises are the result of a long gestation period and are often enduring phenomena. Many of them are recurring crises with alternating periods of remission and climax, including Angola, former Zaire, Uganda and The Horn. There is a long list of countries where hope of peace emerged, only to be shattered soon after. With the time duration or recurrence of these crises, the observer can identify two opposed dynamics. On the one hand, there is a profound and systematic erosion of acquired social and human capital. On the other hand, survival capacity is enhanced and there is often increased resilience. African people have proven themselves survivors.

Socio-economic conditions: The impact of any war on poor countries tends to be devastating. Not only in terms of the destruction it entails, but also due to the diversion of resource allocation from development activities to war efforts and due to the discontinuation of most international development aid programmes. The longer the conflict lasts, the greater the drain on resources. Additionally, social and human capital accumulated over generations often becomes severely depleted, if not completely destroyed by military activities. Of course the level of food security is dramatically reduced and there is often no remaining surplus to supply towns. The urban sector is deeply affected by the loss of economic activities and it becomes increasingly difficult for the urban population to access food. In many cases, a reversal of the “village to city” migration can be observed, unless the towns have been transformed into food distribution sites, thus attracting populations who have exhausted their food supplies.

Conflict with their own fuel supply: For a long time, traditional wars, decolonisation wars and civil conflicts were essentially events related to the Cold War. Thus each of the parties involved had a “godfather”. As East-West confrontation drew to a close, fuelling costly conflict was no longer an advantageous activity for these godfather figures. Yet, the fighting did not necessarily end immediately and not all warring factions were prepared to surrender when they were only a few steps away from power. Yet, they had to find alternative sources of funding, an endeavour that was facilitated by the emergence of an economy of scarcity and by the collapse of the state itself, a common occurrence during complex emergencies. It indeed leads to the rise of parallel economies based on drug trafficking, small arms trade, illegal commerce of oil and precious stones, etc. Multinational companies dealing with oil, gems, mineral extraction and timber are often largely involved since they are likely to make large profits in parts of the world where there is little law and order. The conflict is then likely to persist and the “winners” can make large profits, so that it is not in their interest to commence negotiations in a view to resolving the crisis.

Multiplicity of actors: The multiplicity of actors adds an additional level of complexity: bilateral, multilateral, civilians, military, international and local. In many instances, mandates are unclear and agencies are unpredictable and inconsistent, this being largely due to the regulations imposed on them by various donors. At the end of the day, what people see is a fleet of land-cruisers with strange logos and flags. However, in our present world of instant communication, information reaches the last village in the bush and the local armed forces are all aware that hidden agendas, and subtle and underground conflicts of influence exist.

Complex legal framework: As war is at the centre of the CPE, International Humanitarian Law applies. The main instruments are the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols I and 2 of 1977. Article 3, common to the four Conventions and Protocol 2 are especially relevant in the context of internal conflict while the four Conventions, are used as reference when dealing with international conflicts. The 1951 Geneva Refugee Law is also an important tool where part of the population has crossed international boundaries. These form the core guidelines to be used in times of war: a fixed legal framework when special regulations, state of exception or marshal law are imposed and other rights can be set aside. Yet another set of ad hoc instruments is regularly referred to, which, on the one hand, tends to channel operational direction, and on the other hand, to complicate contexts that are already complex. Among these new legal or pseudo-legal elements that lend to the complexity of the situation are UN resolutions, and in particular Chapter VII of the UN Charter, various ground rules set up locally (for South Sudan, for Liberia) and lately, UN Guiding Principles for internal displacements.

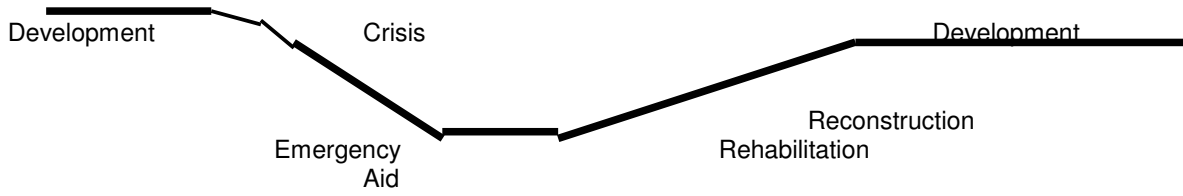
Insecurity for the aid actors: An analysis of security incidents in recent years shows that most of the incidents occurred during particularly troubled times, thus further enhancing the notion of “complex political emergencies”. Indeed, the loss of social benchmarks, increasingly politicised ethnic issues, degrading economic conditions and the need to attract attention, are conditions prone to security incidents. This is very much linked to the continuation of large scale and protracted violation of civilian populations’ rights. In the context of Complex Political Emergency, the protection of the civilian populations and the security of humanitarian workers are intricately mixed.

How do all these descriptive factors of complex emergencies relate to food security? In many of the crises included in this definition, systematic attacks on civilian populations and their means of subsistence have been recorded. But at the end of the day, what is at stake is the survival of large segments of the population in affected areas. This results in two types of scenario: massive displacements and a worsening economic and nutritional situation for the population that remains behind. Food Security is one of the key facets of Complex Political Emergencies. As seen above, the CPE can exist in many forms and is linked to a diverse range of root causes, catalysts, and dynamics. While creating a model is always a difficult, and sometimes even a risky exercise, it remains a useful exercise in order to clarify complex concepts.

The following model gives an interesting view of the possible trends, with “time” on the horizontal axis and “socio-economic indicators” on the vertical.

Modelling crisis dynamics

Case N°1: The theoretical model of the "Continuum"



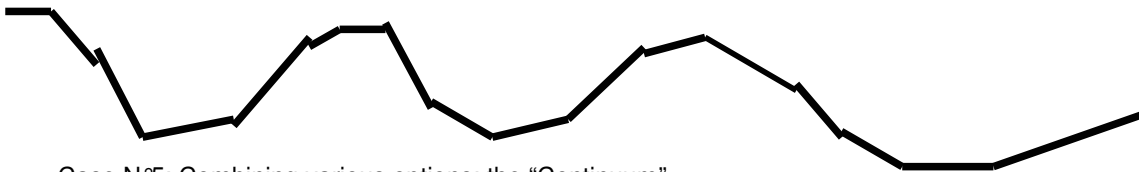
Case N°2: Long lasting crises



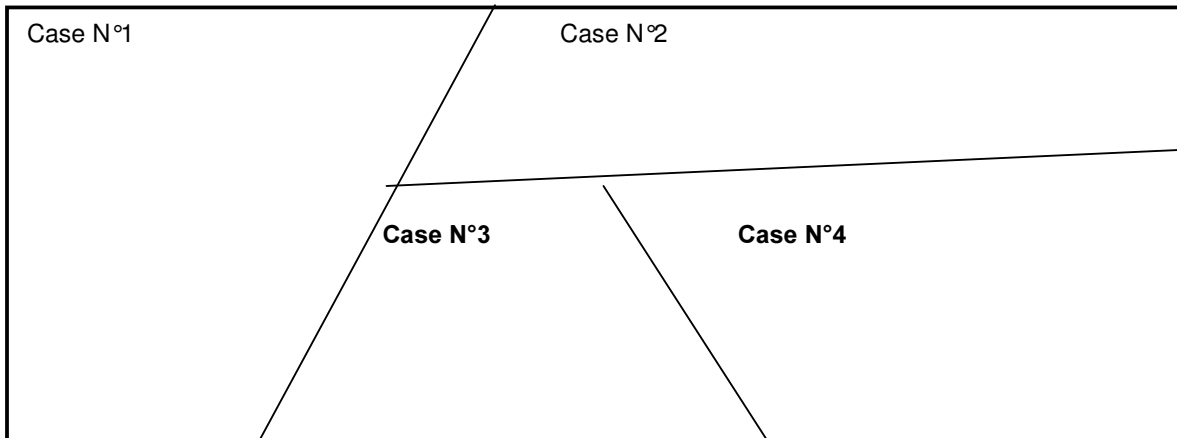
Case N°3: Crises in the process of being resolved but uncertainty prevails



Case N°4: Recurring crises



Case N°5: Combining various options: the "Continuum"



2.2. The challenge of the forgotten and protracted conflict

Worldwide, different crisis related aspects exist: on the one hand, the endless Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a permanent feature of our news broadcasts; on the other, wars that are equally persistent but frequently forgotten, such as Sudan, Colombia and, until "9/11", Afghanistan. Our attention was drawn to the latter countries by brief articles occasionally found on the inside pages of specialised newspapers and late evening television documentaries. These cases are even treated differently on the Internet, although new media channels seem to be the information weapon of the poor. Faced with the risk that these crises may easily fade away from our collective consciousness and memory, it is important to remain creative. Are the crisis management mechanisms in place effective in these kinds of contexts? Do we have relevant information systems, humanitarian practices, diplomatic agendas and funding mechanisms suited to deal with these situations? These are key challenges for humanitarian NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and United Nations systems and the international community at large, and can be divided into five main questions:

- Why, post-Cold War, do these crises tend to be long-lasting?
- What means exist that could influence the course of events and bring about an end to these dramas or at least temporarily relieve the pressure?
- When the crisis lasts for an extended period of time, the typical "emergency activities" are inevitably pushed to the limit and there is a risk that continuing could produce dramatic negative secondary effects. Are aid actors equipped conceptually and financially to deal with this?
- In this context, the protection of the civilian population and of humanitarian actors becomes rapidly two sides of the same coin. Indeed there are winners and losers in this situation and the presence of aid actors may well hinder any attempt to quietly exploit and oppress vulnerable populations.
- Donor fatigue appears on the horizon and at this point, it can require a lot of effort to obtain financing for programmes for a forgotten population, especially when the CNN effect is so effective.

It is interesting to note that comparing conflict maps for Cold War, post-Cold War and present day periods are showing interesting trends and similarities. Once the effect of the disintegration of the Soviet Union stabilises with the resolution of a certain number of conflicts, there are only limited significant changes in conflict maps. This indicates that the actors of violence have been able to find alternative financing mechanisms to replace the old fashioned Cold War godfathers: oil, diamonds, wood, drugs, to name but a few. Furthermore, the "war entrepreneurs" have developed extremely profitable underground economies that can flourish on a large scale in the absence of law and order. Bringing these crises to an end requires a high level of political commitment and will, which are both missing in conflict related contexts. Entire fringes of mankind are slowly being abandoned to their sad lot and to barbaric exploitation under the new masters of the land. Only a few humanitarian agencies try to remain involved and to draw the public's attention to these forgotten crises, as a result of real politics and cynical diplomacy.

Humanitarian action itself has to be revised in these contexts. Too often, our practices confuse factors related to the "context", the timeframe and the content of humanitarian action.

- The contextual factor mainly implies that war and conflict fall within the realm of International Humanitarian Law. This means that whatever has to be done to assist and protect civilian population and non-combatants is legitimate, so long as it respects the key humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality.
- The time factor clearly separates what should be considered as "emergency", i.e. a situation requiring rapid action, and longer timeframes as seen in protracted crises. Operations should be adapted in order to involve a greater proportion of the population, improved diagnosis should lead to more sophisticated programmes, including programmes to treat the resilience issue within the action framework, etc.
- The content of aid itself should be conceived in a different framework. The distribution of food aid over an extended period of time can severely impair the local capacity to overcome food insecurity. An alternative would be to introduce programmes designed to support the survival strategies of affected populations, etc.

2.3. The growing impact of the socio-natural and technological disasters

1997 and 1998 highlighted the existence of a newly developing period of discontinuity, separating a period when crises were essentially linked to internal conflicts (whatever their nature), from a period of large-scale natural disasters, major economic and social disasters and the risk of regional flare-ups. The floods in China and Bangladesh, the increasingly serious consequences of El Niño on fragile ecosystems in South America (underlined by the most recent MITCH hurricane), the vast forest fires in Indonesia all demonstrate, as if it

were necessary, the fragility of man's habitat. The scale of these disasters reduces us to humility. How can Western humanitarian aid cope in situations that affect dozens of millions of victims? Advances in our understanding of the greenhouse effect and climate changes do not encourage optimism. The economic crisis that is affecting Southeast Asia, Japan, Russia and, soon perhaps, South America has already called into question many of the dogma of economists and financial experts. The IMF itself was shaken. Today, its omniscience and omnipotence are at the centre of vigorous debate. Because of these ecological and economic crises, there is new competition for access to and possession of increasingly rare resources. The centre of Africa is erupting in violence while Eurasia, west of the Urals, quavers between the crumbling post-Soviet-Union economy, a devastated environment and a rising tide of fundamentalism.

For its part, the era of technological disasters, of which the explosion at Bophal and the Chernobyl meltdown were a foretaste, is still to come. The Azara nuclear plant just a few miles from Yerevan, the Capital city of Armenia, is located close to a regularly active earthquake zone. The Toulouse disaster, following the explosion of a chemical plant classified as "category Seveso", is an example which underlines the fact that these technological disasters do not only occur in "poor, tropical and corrupt countries".

Environmental emergencies are also on the rise, although they remain less visible. The increasing chemical pollution of a large quantity of underground water in Bangladesh will affect millions. As a result of accidents involving oil tankers, the problem of oil slicks currently affects most coastal ecosystems in Europe, Africa and America.

Conflicts are often compounded by natural disasters, which themselves regularly occur in unstable agro-ecosystems and economies. This factor adds another level of complexity. What is the best way to approach the complex and increasingly interwoven nature of the new and varied types of disaster conundrum?

These disasters are in most instances directly linked to human activities and, in the near future, we will have to prepare for such eventualities. To follow, I shall examine some of the few areas where preventative action could have a real impact and an effective meaning.

3. MANAGING CRISES: NEW CHALLENGES

3.1. Economic security, survival strategies and crisis management

In presenting a few examples, I shall attempt to illustrate how the relation between crisis dynamics, economic and food security and humanitarian practices can be broken down.

3.1.1. Hunger for land as a root cause: The Great Lakes area

As DOLAN rightly explained (DOLAN op.cit), trying to identify a root cause is a risky endeavour. The multiplicity of possible causes and the complexity of the causality relations and, quite simply, the multi-layered historical roots of the various phenomena are all obvious obstacles in this search. Notwithstanding the complex continuum between what is a cause, what is an effect, plus feedback from a situation, which could then lead to another series of causes and effects, it remains an interesting exercise. For a long time, the debate about the "ethnic explanation" of the Rwanda and Burundi crises dominated any other attempt to look for other possible root causes. Yet the analysis of the changes in the patterns of economy in general, and the micro-economy and the agro-ecosystems in particular, that have affected the Great Lake highlands from the 1950's and in 1999, introduces another level of explanation. On the one hand, discussion over land availability and population pressure overlooked the fact that highest land productivity was attained in some of the most populated areas, such as Bujumbura Rural in Burundi or Byumba in Rwanda, thanks to the initiatives of small farmers. In addition, there is a strong element of contradiction in the well-known relationship between high population density and deforestation found in these areas. The small farmers were reforesting of their own initiative. Added value was created which soon became a source of conflict. Indeed the property transfer that accompanied the various phases of the crisis was in fact a transfer of added value. The analysis of land allocation in Gikongoro prefecture provides a telling example. Most extensively managed and Tutsi-owned pastures were transformed into intensively-managed agricultural fields after the 1959 Hutu revolution and the following savage episodes in 1961 and 1971, resulting in an additional exodus of the Tutsis. Yet the Tutsi group remained committed to finding land. The Hunde-Mande war in Massissi was reactivated by the 1994 flow of refugees into Zaire. The conflict over resources reached new levels after the 1996 Baynamulengue war and the new monopoly of land by Tutsi-led herds.

3.1.2. Economic insecurity and crisis inception: the case of North Mali

The problem of food insecurity is probably as old as the precariousness of the life in the desert and Sahel regions themselves. Yet various natural and man-made factors can aggravate this instability. In an area where the management of scarce natural resources, such as water, pastures and trees, requires balanced inter-community negotiation, failure to attain a certain equilibrium can be both a cause or an indicator of a developing crisis. Yet so far, a rupture in this power struggle between man and nature can often be identified relatively early, even when the crisis is still in its early stages. Observable consequences can therefore be used as early indications that a crisis is in the making. North Mali is a good example. Indeed the root cause of the so-called Touared crisis is to be found in the overall degradation of the economic situation, including the food security component, in the 1980's, following the largely incomplete recovery from the 1974-75 droughts and a repeat episode of this cycle in 1979-80. The united front of the People of Azawouat was not "ethnically" formatted but was rather a bitter remonstrance by all the people from the North against the Central government. With the food security situation worsening by the day, it became easy for Bamako to transform "access to land" and "access to food" problems into an ethnic bloodshed in a few towns of the North. The Touared crisis was born. It lasted ten years and is still far from over since poverty and food insecurity remain the fate of most people in the concerned areas, despite various kinds of programmes from the UN, bilateral agencies and NGOs.

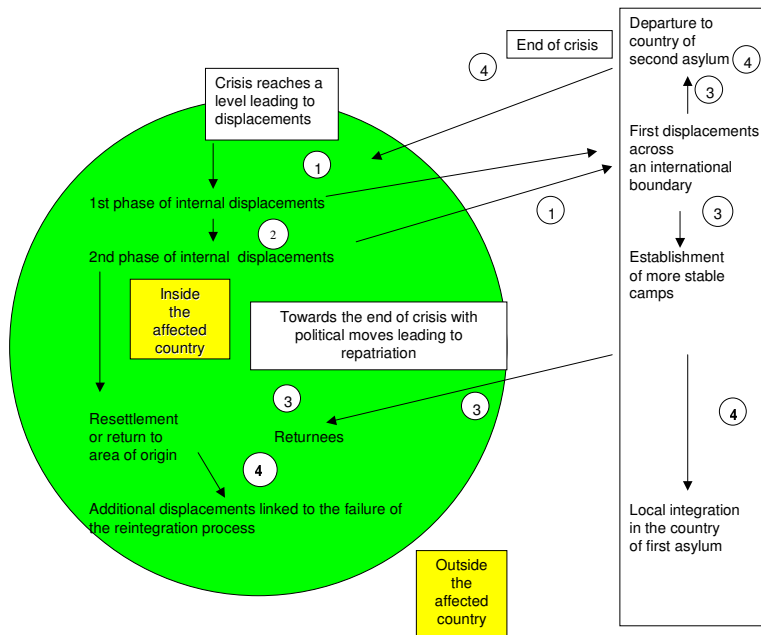
3.1.3. When famine becomes a weapon: the case of South Sudan

For many years, food aid was on trial. At one stage, another key feature of complex emergencies became more obvious: famine was increasingly being used as a weapon, as illustrated by the well-known case of South Sudan. Food insecurity has become on the whole the norm rather than the exception in the large Nilotic depression composed of the watersheds of the Bar El Jebel, Bar el Gazhal and the Sobat river. It is no surprise that the people living there have naturally adopted the most "buffered" agrarian system: pastoralism. Similarly, it is no wonder that for the Dinka and the Nuer of South Sudan, life, death, wedding, birth and livestock are so symbolically, as well as intricately linked to their daily lives. In this context, agriculture is highly opportunistic and wild food gathering, hunting and, above all fishing, complement the daily ration of milk, blood and meat. In addition, a sophisticated system of family, clan and tribe relationships create a security net on which all those linked to it can depend, on condition that they are symbolically related to the network, this being achieved by regular donation. This social net, often the most crucial element of these pastoral tribes, has often been totally overlooked, if not wrongly interpreted by aid agencies. It has unfortunately also been manipulated by feuding parties who discovered an easy mechanism for draining resources. In the mid-80's, war was waged in South Sudan by the Northern army following classical manoeuvres. During the dry season, tanks and armoured vehicles were active along the main roads and tracks. With the rainy season and the arrival of the floods all over the Nilotic low lands, the army withdrew its troops and left the initiative to the Air Forces. But as the mainly pastoral economy relied predominantly on herds, fish and wild food, these belligerent efforts had less effect than drought or locust infestation. But in the early 1990's, with the alliance between certain southern communities and the Karthoum Authorities, warfare methods changed. After all, who knows better how to eliminate a Nilotic group from the Toic than another Nilotic group? It is from this period that date the first large-scale herd massacres, as seen in Kongor or Madiet. With the destruction of herds, the central pillar of food security, opportunistic agriculture or increased fishing does not suffice. Food aid became necessary, but its control by the local fighting groups became another obvious objective of the war. Man-initiated famine and related population displacement towards the food aid distribution sites became a daily feature of the war in South Sudan.

But in order to survive on local resources alone, a low population density is required, roughly 20-50 inhabitants per km². With the promise of food aid and pressure from the local armed forces, people have regrouped sometimes in tens of thousands in one location. If for various political, climatic or technological reasons the air drops do not take place for a few days, the local Lu-Lu nuts and wild grains are swiftly consumed while the last birds and fishes go in the pot. The local carrying capacity of the agro-ecosystem cannot cope with a long drawn out presence of such a massive population. If there are additional delays, hunger is on the horizon. A few more days, and the death rate rises. Aid initiated famine.

3.2. Victims on the move: the dynamics of displacements

One of the most striking features of almost all complex political emergencies is the fact that they often result from, are determined by or are aggravated by large-scale population displacements. This of course has devastating repercussions on food security for both the displaced people, be they refugees or Internally Displaced People (IDP), and the surrounding populations. Here again, a model can guide reflection and analysis: the model of the dynamics of displacements.



The dynamics of displacements

Stage 1 represents IDPs or refugees in the early stages of displacement. As they are still in a very precarious and unstable situation, they have not yet been able to identify suitable survival strategies and are thus often very vulnerable. Uprooted persons in stage 2 (either refugees or IDP) have already learned that the crisis will last for a long time. Protracted conflict results in well-established refugee/IDP camps, or refugees/IDPs, which are relatively integrated within the local population. Stage 3 (repatriation/resettlement) is often a precarious situation where social links have to be re-established and food and economic security recreated from the start. At this stage, both the process of healing wounds inherited from the conflict and the recapitalisation of economic entities have to be initiated. Stage 4 should see sustained reconciliation and the viable economic reintegration of returnees, IDPs, demobilised soldiers within the society’s mainstream.

3.3. Managing the post crisis phases

Most post-CPE phases are comprised of several elements, including repatriation of returnees, demobilisation of former fighters, mine clearance and liberation of prisoners. All these elements are often included in the political package and the impact on society is a burden for all. In addition, these objectives are political targets for any future electoral process, which is also often included in the peace package. Yet these various phenomena often weigh heavily on the economic situation at large and food security in particular.

3.3.1. Repatriation of refugees: the returnees phenomenon

As peace is established, repatriation becomes a viable option. Refugees from Cambodia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Namibia started to return home in hundreds of thousands in the early 1990’s. However, repatriation is not always a possibility for everyone. A new sector of population became the focus of international interest: the returnees. Depending on the context, they are either welcomed or seen as potential traitors to be kept under control. Repatriation of those who sometimes spend more than a decade in camps and their reintegration in the social fabric of their country of origin is not an easy process. More than often, the society they return to has changed extensively due years of conflict. Behind its success or failure often lies the chance for reconciliation.

3.3.2. Demobilisation: the lost soldiers

At the end of an armed conflict, creating a future for those who have been on the move in military fatigue for a long time is one of the most challenging aspects of the peace process. Hundred of thousands of armed men, some of whom have held a gun in their hands for over a decade, have to be demobilised. For those who are used to being fed and taken care of because they were part of armed forces, or alternatively,

accustomed to finding their own means of survival by ransoming civilian population (voluntary war tax!), post war devastated economies can offer only low levels of intensive production. Yet failure to integrate them into the socio-economic mainstream could create tensions, if not even jeopardise the peace process. Rampant banditry is often associated with unsuccessful demobilisation schemes and the inability to reintegrate former fighters into a productive social structure. This is less common in contexts such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, or Serbia where the army has been very organised, the discipline draconian and the success of the demobilisation programme seen as a political priority. In other contexts, where ex-fighters have been under a loose and permissive military order and regularly involved in predatory activities, the process is more complicated by far. Yet for peace to prevail, ex-combatants have to be treated like any other citizen under public national law and penal laws. But who will disarm them?

3.3.3. Inmate population and liberated prisoners

This commentary should also apply to prisoners jailed for a conflict-related reason, who have been released under the peace agreement, sometimes after years of imprisonment.

War prisoners, jailed resistance fighters or imprisoned political opponents have sometimes not seen the light of day, nor received news from their families for years. Their relatives might even consider them dead as they often lose contact with their families during their time in custody (unless the ICRC has been able to access them, register them and facilitate the exchange of family messages). Many have been tortured. Most have been under stressful physical and psychological conditions. Yet this category of people is rarely seen as a priority, unless famous personalities such as Mandela, are involved. Their return to a productive lifestyle is often very difficult and years after their liberation, many of them are still living in precarious situations.

In Rwanda, the high number of inmates still behind walls weighs heavily on national reserves: they have to be fed, although for years the jail system has been supported by the international community. This sizeable population is also absent from the *rugô*, during the tough agricultural work when activities in the crop calendar are at their peak.

3.4. Prevention: myth or reality

An entire library would probably be needed to contain all the books addressing the issue of prevention, a theme which is currently topical, and not without reason. After all, the history of our own societies is a history of crises and conflicts, which result from society's incapacity to solve problems in a non-violent way. Policies which are self-centred or which protect the interests of small elites have throughout time been the cause of violence, while the crisis itself could have been solved by negotiation and sharing of resources. If the farmers of north-eastern Brazil, after so many years of non-violent struggle to obtain land rights — rights for which dozens of them lost their lives to the Uzis and Kalashnikovs belonging to the guards of the latifundia — decide that their only remaining option is to take up arms, should we go in advocating conflict prevention? We have also had to relativise the "development - peace" relationship, so dear to the United Nations. Although, for example, promoting the management of rare resources and the protection of fragile ecosystems in development strategies will indubitably have a profound impact on the communities that inhabit the valley in question, this does not necessarily mean that it will lead to an environment conducive to peace. On the other hand, it will entail a cost to society, and no doubt also to the State and therefore will necessarily go against the prevailing rule of free circulation of capital and of comparative advantage that dominates the ultra-liberal approach. Nevertheless, reflection on crisis prevention and, much more generally, on the nature of crises itself, must be based on a better understanding of the links (whether they exist or not, and whether they are direct or indirect) between a crisis arising from access to resources and a crisis linked to human society as a whole. This applies to most strategies of intervention before the crisis, during the crisis, especially if it endures, and at the end of the conflict.

3.5. The crisis management cycle

The issue of food security in complex emergency should in fact be tackled from a much more encompassing approach than just food aid and agricultural recovery. It requires a proactive approach based on five different angles, corresponding to five important elements of the crisis response management cycle: analysis of causes, prevention, early warning, mitigation, emergency operation, post crisis strategy and global response evaluation.

3.5.1. Early warning systems: too much information, insufficient political utilisation

Early warning systems related to “natural disasters” have existed now for many years and are becoming more sophisticated. The most reliable information systems that currently exist are those targeting specifically climatic disasters (droughts, floods, etc.), and those focussing on locust infestations. Early warning signals related to social upheavals, internal conflicts or international wars also exist. They have in fact been the basis of intelligence and diplomatic activities for many centuries. However, most of the early warnings issued over the last decades have not been taken seriously or not prompted any response from the international community. In many instances, the issue is totally neglected. More sadly still, some warnings are ignored intentionally. Reports on the developing famine in Ethiopia were available and circulated several months before the situation turned into the most well known famine of the 1980's. The WFP/FAO held a donor conference on Ethiopia, yet a response was only provoked when BBC footage showed the developing horrors at Christmas 1994. When early warnings related to ethnic or social crisis are issued, either the international community takes no notice, for example Rwanda in early 1990's a few years before the genocide actually took place, or inappropriate measures are taken. The logical consequence of an early warning, which is a rapid response, has in most instances not materialised. However, relatively simple cost-effective measures could have been taken in terms of setting aside local seeds, and increasing local, national or regional areas under seed production. More importantly, strategies for in situ protective measures of the bio-diversity could have been implemented in a certain number of cases. In fact, most of these measures should become fully-fledged parts of any agricultural strategy aimed at promoting sustainable development. Available information systems relating to disaster situations are plentiful, yet they are not used properly, i.e. they are rarely heeded. Most of the information required is available, but often, political priorities prevent them being properly implemented. There is room for improvement, at least in the way pre-crisis information is collected and used before the disaster strikes.

3.5.2. Disaster preparedness: the forgotten priority

The problem with preparedness measures is that they symbolise an investment which will only pay off if, and when, the disaster actually strikes. This explains why neither local authorities nor donors are very keen to finance them. Unfortunately, when disaster strikes, it is often too late. Then costs run high, the appropriateness of the response is often limited and suffering reaches peaks that could have been avoided. There is however a lot of confusion behind the term “preparedness”. It is often understood only from a logistical angle. Pre-stocking of goods (and, in relation to this paper, seeds) and means of transportation are of course important. However, preparedness is more a state of mind than a physical means. With this overall acceptance of the concept, preparedness has to do with a few key strategic factors which include, but are not limited to the following ideas.

3.5.3. Acquiring knowledge:

In many man-made disasters, there is often a total absence of Agriculture, Health or Planning Ministries to deal with and no technical decision makers available for discussion on relief and recovery. It could be that the population, its local organisations and local NGOs provide the only source of information enabling humanitarian actors to draw up an appropriate strategy for the reconstitution of a semblance of services. This in-depth information also has its limitations, as it is generally site-specific with a limited global view and limited knowledge of the world seed system. When combined with humanitarian actors' limited knowledge of the system, this can lead to a very biased assessment. There is no region on earth which has not been studied, especially disaster-prone areas. How can this information be collected, compiled and made available before the crisis so that, when it occurs, useful information is immediately accessible? Information systems connected to the Internet are one of the most recent assets to the international community. Increasingly, people's groups, NGOs and local institutions can connect on the Internet and look for information that might be useful, although in the context of CPE, the destruction of the telecommunication and energy distribution system can render these sources of information unavailable. Structures like FAO/GIEWS or specialised centres ensure that this information is available in a “ready to use” form. In addition, trusted and tested solutions often do exist. What counts is the availability of the information about them..

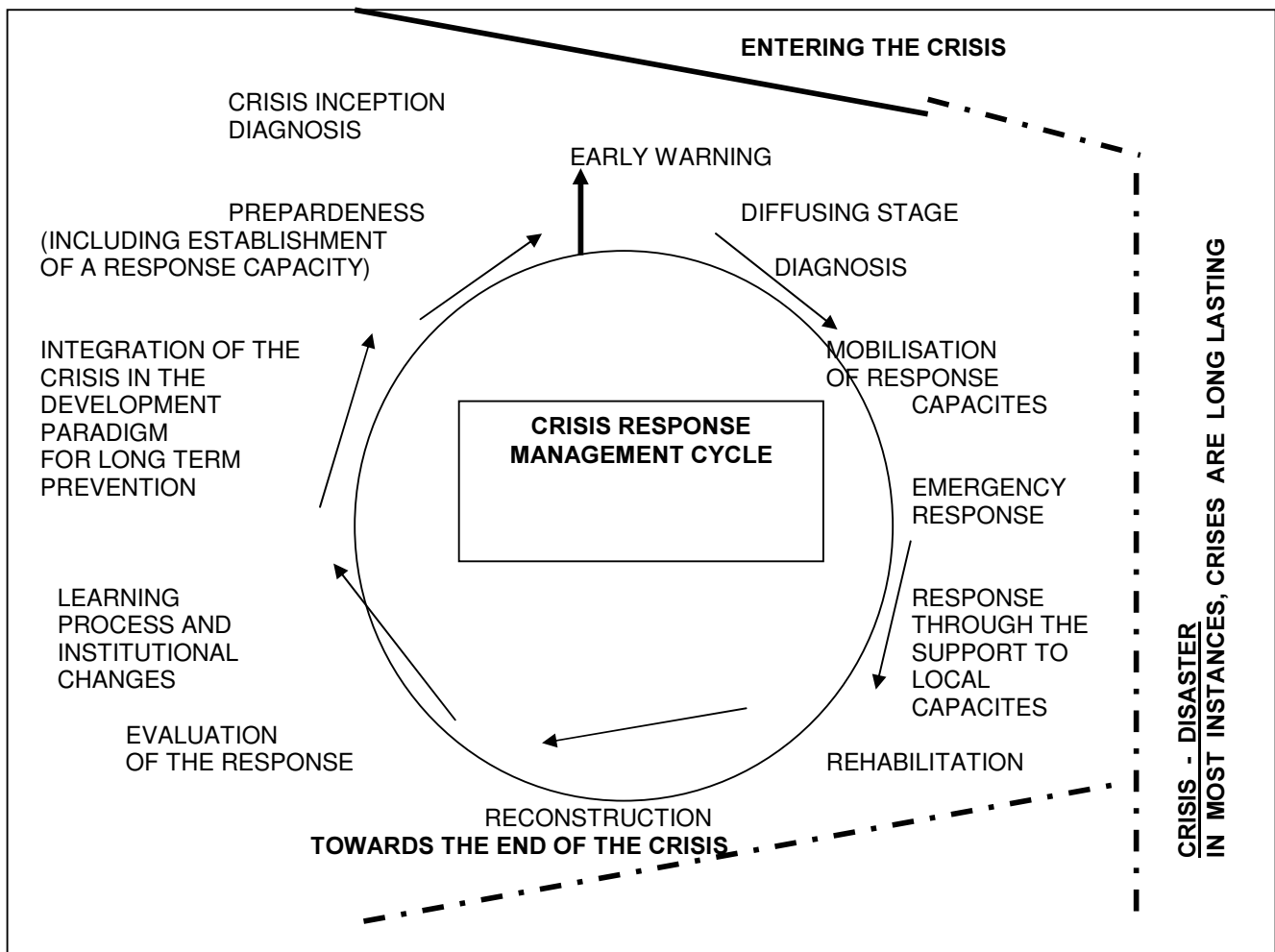
3.5.4. Think ahead

By thinking proactively, many steps can be achieved long before the emergency, such as:

- proper understanding of the nature of the disaster and of its characteristics;
- thorough analysis of the system that prevailed before the disaster took place, including production processes (in terms of timing, requirements, relations with other sectors, etc.);
- in depth assessment of the way the disaster has affected life in the rural areas, including the agricultural cycles;
- identification and appraisal of the adaptive mechanisms and survival strategies put in place by the affected populations.

This advanced and proactive thinking has, as reference, a crisis response management cycle:

Crisis response management cycle



Yet inherent to this holistic approach, there is a danger of confusion and that the specificity of certain contexts, phases, actions and mandates will not be recognised. Humanitarian action responds to very specific needs and criteria, which do not necessarily have to restrict development work or preparedness activity. The issue is not to isolate, but to understand and respect the needs for specific approaches in the different phases, and also to underline the fact that there might be a useful yet artificial exercise in identifying categorically the different parts of the cycle. After all, for the population affected by these crises, our “desegregation “ of the aid sector is a “white man’s story”....

4. PROSPECTS ARE NOT GOOD, BUT THERE'S STILL HOPE

4.1. Revisiting concepts and operational semantic in humanitarian aid

A large part of the debate on the emergency to development continuum is based on a semantic confusion.

Emergency relates to a time frame, humanitarian relates to a context, and food aid, health, water and sanitation are just programme constants. Thus in an emergency for instance, objectives have to be achieved quickly. To open a dam in order to prevent it bursting and consequently flooding is an emergency, not a humanitarian action. Anti-locust treatment can be urgently needed, but this operation should not be called a "humanitarian programme". In a protracted conflict, to support farms with seeds and tools is not a development action, but a true humanitarian action aimed at supporting people's survival strategies. Food aid programmes can find their place in a development programme as part of a "food for work" operation. Traumatic surgery can take place behind the frontline as part of developmental action in areas where street accidents are frequent.

Finally, the presence, or absence, of a relationship between emergency and development exists largely in our minds. Sadly, nevertheless, they are constantly referred to in the form of administrative constraints imposed by donors. There is still a lot of lobbying to do

4.2. Catastrophes in the age of global communication and information

For better or for worse, there is no place on earth left untouched by the world of communication and information. Information is transferred and available "in real time" through rapid and worldwide information systems. It results in a worrying phenomenon: the tyranny of urgency. "Do not think, act!" "Do not consult, save!" "Do not learn, move quickly on to the next disaster." The so-called "CNN effect" triggers global sympathy as people flick through television channels. And so humanitarian business is kept alive and active.

The continuing globalisation of networks pertaining to the actors of violence, from terrorism to organised crime, is also one of the key features of present times, and will probably develop further in times to come. This will pose a dramatic threat to the security of states and persons. Portable Sat-phon and light multi-standard Internet connection systems will infiltrate the net. Networks advocating violence will mushroom throughout the virtual world. Yet, these communication channels will save lives: they will enable more individuals to seek help from even remote areas like the desert. The "world village" is fortunately not inhabited by "villains" alone. The globalisation of the networks of "coalitions of the concerned" is also an opportunity, as it enables values such as solidarity and generosity to become reinforced. And indeed from these new systems have arisen a series of mechanisms through which charity expresses itself. Fundraising is now done via the global net and tremendous amounts of money are thus mobilised for the sake of the "needy".

Understanding complexity remains a challenge in world where we are over-exposed to information and have no time to digest it. "Information kills information", a well-known journalist said. Are we equipped to deal with this contradiction?

4.3. What kind of world are we living in?

The post-11th September after-shocks have not all surfaced yet. The war in Afghanistan has not fulfilled the promise to eliminate the al-Qaida network. On the contrary, American strategy in this sector has failed dramatically and unfortunately this is nothing to be surprised about. Fundamentalism and terrorism find fertile grounds in poverty, despair and lack of perspectives. If it is unlikely that we will see Samuel Huttchison's "war of civilisations", confrontations will run high between the limited enclave of the "have" and the immense world of the "have not". And, if we do nothing to limit the incremental growth of poverty and inequality, there is no reason for it to happen otherwise. There are many challenges and the need for proactive measures is pressing. How can we reverse the predominating mindset and undertake a profound paradigmatic shift. Crises are not really unexpected processes, and nor should they be considered anecdotal and limited in time. They are part of human history. Can they be resolved by peaceful means? Yes, in most instances, but occasionally not, especially if "powerful winners" have a lot to gain in prolonging the crisis and too much to lose in an eventual settlement. Even the very concept of rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction is misleading. The situation after a crisis, especially if very traumatic, contingent, will never revert back as it was before the crisis. In certain contexts, the war has lasted so long that even the concept of peace is foreign. In this case what does "a return to normality" actually mean?

“Our children do not inherit Earth from us. We are borrowing it from them”. This famous saying clearly indicates where the responsibility for managing these risks and catastrophes lies. It lies within us, and within our capacity to incorporate disaster and crisis management in our development thinking, development strategies and operations.

We are indeed confronted by many crucial challenges, where our imagination will be pushed to its limits, as horror was pushed to its limits over the past century. There is no place for complacency and leniency. **In a troubled world, we must remain alert.**

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