CERTIFICATE IN ESSENTIALS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, ASSIGNMENT 2

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ASSIGNMENT 2

1. Explain the Roles and Importance of Humanitarian Organizations engagements.

Roles

Humanitarian actors/sector refers to organisations with mandated roles and responsibilities for providing humanitarian assistance in places affected by disasters or conflict. They provide assistance in the areas of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Understanding the increasing participation of NGOs in relief and peace-building activities requires the analysis of the transformation of two main aspects of global security, the nature of contemporary civil conflicts, the so-called new wars, and the attributes of humanitarian intervention in contemporary world politics. At the end of the Cold War, the world witnessed the rising importance of the problems of so-called weak states and, in some case, their collapse.

Institutional weakness, no rule of law, and economic backwardness became the cause of “new” wars (Holsti, 1999). These wars have not the same characteristics, but some common traits distinguish all of them from traditional wars. The most important trait, frequently mentioned by scholars, is the shift from the interstate to intrastate war dimension. This distinction does not imply that effects of conflict are contained within state borders. On the contrary, conflict normally spreads from a country to neighbouring countries and region. An additional and important common feature of these wars is the active, and sometimes conditioning, presence of non-state actors. New wars are fought by a wide range of political and social groups that have different identity and alliance relations. However, conflicting parties are sometimes inclined to easily change alliance alignment (Kaldor, 1999). In many cases, states are not the aggressor, and have no role in the causes and development of conflict (Monteleone and Rossi, 2008). Lastly, in these wars, the clear distinction between civilians and combatants dramatically fades out. In many cases, civilians are deliberately chosen as target of military action, with the consequence of increasing dramatically the number of casualties.

All these conditions make the management of civil wars no longer dependent only on military means. For this reason, Doyle and Sambanis rightly observe that peacekeeping missions with extensive civilian functions, including economic reconstruction, institutional reform, and election oversight are needed in order to improve the chance of success in containing violence and achieving peace building (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000). Collaboration between civil and military actors, then, is increasingly important to manage and solve civil conflicts, as acknowledged by governments and international institutions. Briefly, the changing nature of conflict entails a parallel transformation of the tools for conflict management and humanitarian intervention.

The presence of NGOs in conflict areas started in the Cold War time. NGOs were active mainly in relief assistance, and in human rights and minorities protection. The birth of Amnesty International (AI) in 1961, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 1971, and the organization that subsequently became Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 1978 are important steps on the road towards the formation of the new culture of humanitarian intervention. Indeed, a broad array of intervention action was started by such organizations, and continues to be so at the present time. Actually, the number of NGOs in and near armed conflict zones has been increasing during the years. In 1980, there were 37 foreign relief agencies in a major Cambodian refugee camp along the Thai border. By 1995, more than 200 NGOs were present in Goma; and in 1996, 240 NGOs were active in Bosnia (Cooley and Ron, 2002). Their action priority is on human and civil rights, peace promotion, and environment and social issues. Peace Brigades International, created in 1981, is a special example of NGOs presence in peace operation areas. This organization mission is dispatching international volunteers to areas of conflict in order to protect human rights defenders under threat of violence. In general, organizations participate in humanitarian intervention as moderate actors and specialized groups of experts (Rucht, 2006). However, it is worth reminding that some groups, like War Resisters International, stand on a radical campaigning position. They believe that the system must be reformed from the roots; accuse capitalism and globalization for fomenting civil conflicts; do not accept co-operating to intergovernmental organizations actions and programs; and blame on peace missions for spreading interventionism throughout the world (Rucht, 2006).

Operational and campaigning NGOs exercise actions in peace operations by different

methods. Operational NGOs participate directly to peace operations by mobilizing human, financial and material resources; carrying out projects and programs; and offering expertise and advise.

Campaigning NGOs participate indirectly by seeking for the wider public support to operations, and also by fund-raising on a smaller scale (Willetts, 2001). A better typology of NGOs, however, is needed to aptly analyze the NGOs approach to conflict management and humanitarian intervention.

To this end, a typology is created here by merging two NGO attributes. These are (a) the NGO’s identity and principles of action, and (b) the NGO’s concept of conflict management and humanitarian intervention.

According to Stoddard (2003), three types of NGOs are distinguished by referring to the identity attributes: (1) the Wilsonian type organization (so named after the American President Woodrow Wilson’s ideas), which accepts the principles of cooperation and multilateralism as practiced by governments and international institutions (CARE is example of this type); (2) the Dunantist type organization (so named after the social activist Henry Dunant), which adheres to the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence (MSF, and AI are example of this type); (3) the faith-based type organization, which acts in harmony with religious principles (Christian Aid, and Islamic Relief are example of this type). By distinguishing NGOs also along with the second attribute, the conflict resolution approach, including willingness to work with local partners and/or international institutions, the following comprehensive type list is created and applied here below to the analysis of NGOs roles in peace and humanitarian operations:

1. the pragmatist Wilsonian NGOs. These organizations are ready to participate even in highly-politicized missions;

2. the principle-centered Dunantist NGOs. These organizations participate in peace operations only on condition that conflict management will respect the basic principles of humanitarianism;

3. the solidarist NGOs. Focused on the root causes of conflict as the main problem to solve, these organizations like Oxfam accept to participate in peace operations on condition that military and civilian intervention takes care of the root causes of conflict;

4. the faith-based NGOs. These organizations participate in peace operations responding to charity and compassion values. The range of NGOs approaches to peace operations matches, to some extent, to the range of conflicts and different forms of intervention required to manage humanitarian problems. It is worth reminding here also that, as Clarks remarks, “The economic, informational and intellectual resources of NGOs have garnered them enough expertise and influence to assume authority in matters that, traditionally, have been solely within the purview of state administration and responsibility” (1995: 507-508).

By all means, humanitarian intervention is one of these matters that concern NGOs but in different ways, i.e. in accordance with the identity and approach preferences of the NGO’s type here above listed. For this reason, scholars (see, for example, Donini, 2006) put on the table the issue of setting out a body of shared rules on the participation and conduct of NGOs in peace operations. On this regard, the task of this chapter is now to single out the NGOs’ proper roles in peace operations in order to lay down the ground for rules. By taking stock of the existing knowledge on NGOs as peace operations and humanitarian intervention actors, three specific roles are singled out. The knowledge-provider role pertains to the NGOs contribution to diffusing information and common practices on humanitarian actions.

The peace-facilitator role refers to the NGOs support of UN and international organization peace missions. The voice-articulator role applies to NGOs commitment to amplify the local actors’ expectations on social, political, and practical needs.

The importance of humanitarian organizations engagements

* Humanitarian aid brings relief in times of need

Every year hundreds of millions of people suffer as a result of natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other crises. Humanitarian aid is provided based on need, with the goal of saving human lives, relieving human suffering and maintaining human dignity during and after a crisis such as the Ebola outbreak. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is the single largest, and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered back in 1976 by Peter Piot, a 27-year-old Belgian scientist. The priceless efforts of humanitarian organizations put an end to the virus transmission in Guinea on 29 December 2015, in Liberia on 14 January 2016 and in Sierra Leone on 17 March 2016. Saving many lives in the process.

• Humanitarian organizations provide the key to sustainable development

Education is an essential recipe for achieving sustainable development at vulnerable locations, and every child has a right to basic education. Harambee offers an interesting view of education. Saying that it consists of three main agents: teachers must be dedicated and well-trained and parents should be acting as the head of the family and the basic cell of society and children, with their ability to dream big and their thirst for knowledge. By focusing on education and family, they build sustainable, long-term growth instead of providing a temporary fix to problems.

• Humanitarian aid affects those who need help most

Children born in poverty, or regions where potentially lethal diseases spread like wildfire need protection the most. It’s up to us to protect them from harm. Earlier, we compiled a list of 42 compassionate organizations dedicated to helping children in need. These organizations help them escape from poverty, protect them against diseases, safeguard their rights or provide safety in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

• Humanitarian aid reaches even the most uncommon destinations

Unusual destinations are often forgotten by the public, but not by humanitarians. Take Nicaragua for example; this African country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters both in the frequency of events as in the variety of sources that cause them. For a small country, it faces exceptional dangers: hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides and floods, all have affected Nicaragua in previous years. Compassionate organizations such as ANF make sure that this country isn’t forgotten, and provides emergency aid and help with reconstruction.

• It’s proven to have an impact

The Guardian recently published an article about the current developments in South Sudan, after the country descended into renewed violence last July. A safe haven for as many as 270,000 of South Sudan's refugees was established in Uganda. In an area that was once a dusty patch of scrub near a tiny village, now fits a refugee camp called Bidi Bidi. Initially, the camp was expected to hold 40,000 people. Soon after it opened in August, it started growing by twice that number every month. Now it's a sprawling expanse of mud-walled huts and tents, inhabited by one-fifth of the almost 1.3 million South Sudanese who have fled violence, hunger and rapid inflation in their home country.

1. Using examples explain five types of emergencies.

Emergencies can be classified into Complex and natural emergencies, the term “complex emergency” was first coined in UN circles, probably in Mozambique, as a diplomatic euphemism for a “chronic political” rather than “natural” emergency and the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996, study 2, 5) points out that complex emergencies tend to have multiple causes, but are essentially political in nature and entail violent conflict. They typically include a breakdown of legitimate institutions and governance, widespread suffering, and massive population displacements, and they often involve and require a range of responses from the international community, including intense diplomacy and conflict resolution efforts, UN policing actions, and the provision of multilateral and bilateral humanitarian assistance by official and private agencies. A complex emergency tends to be very dynamic, characterized by rapid changes that are difficult to predict. Not limiting emergencies to complex scenarios, there are also natural emergencies with devastating effects as mentioned below.

Floods

Floods happen frequently and can cause a lot of damage. Floods are usually caused by heavy rain or thunderstorms. They can cause injury and loss of life, damage property and pollute our water and land.

Floods become dangerous if the water is very deep or travelling very fast or the water has risen very quickly, or if they contain debris like tree branches and sheets of iron.

Storms and severe weather

Major storms and severe weather can happen any time of the year and affect wide areas. They can include strong winds, heavy rain or snow, thunder, lightning, tornadoes and rough seas.

Earthquakes

Each year we have over 150 earthquakes that are large enough to be felt. A large damaging earthquake could happen any time and can be followed by aftershocks that continue for a long time. Most earthquake-related deaths and serious injuries are caused by collapsing walls, and falling glass and objects caused by the shaking. In a major earthquake, masonry and glass can fall off buildings and into the streets.

Tsunami

A tsunami is a series of waves caused by large earthquakes. A tsunami wave can grow to become a fast-moving wall of water. Example of such a tragedy is the earthquake that hit the northern coast of Japan on March 11, 2011 was recorded at magnitude 9.0—the worst ever recorded in Japan. It generated an unprecedented tsunami, obliterating coastal villages and towns in a matter of minutes. In some areas, the tsunami climbed over 100 feet in height and traveled miles inland. Amazingly, amateur and professional photographers captured it all on video, including remarkable tales of human survival, as ordinary citizens became heroes in a drama they never could have imagined (2011 WGBH Educational Foundation).

Volcanoes

Hazards from volcanoes can include ashfall, falling rocks, very fast-moving mixtures of hot gases and volcanic rock, lava flows and massive mudflows. They can injure and kill people, and damage property, sometimes hundreds of kilometers away. The second-largest volcanic eruption of this century, and by far the largest eruption to affect a densely populated area, occurred at Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines on June 15, 1991. The eruption produced high-speed avalanches of hot ash and gas, giant mudflows, and a cloud of volcanic ash hundreds of miles across. The impacts of the eruption continue to this day (U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 113-97).

C) Highlight the two principle functions and two Auxiliary Functions of Humanitarian systems. Support your answers with relevant examples.

Coordination

Coordination is a means of creating an enabling environment where independent organizations can collaborate to improve the quality and expand the scope and impact of their interventions. In humanitarian emergencies where the national government is unwilling and/or unable to bring humanitarian relief to those affected, international support is required. The United Nations (UN) is mandated to support the coordination of international humanitarian agencies in order to deliver assistance in a cohesive and effective manner to save lives and alleviate suffering. In some situations, the United Nations system may have to take the lead in overseeing a humanitarian response; in others, with the national government able and willing to fulfill its responsibility to support crisis-affected populations, the degree of international activity may be limited to bilateral donor support. Having said that, all humanitarian actors involved have a responsibility to coordinate with other organizations to share information or resources that contribute to the priorities of a humanitarian response, particularly since timeliness is of critical importance during disasters.

The Cluster Approach

In 2005, as an attempt to increase efficient and effective coordination between humanitarian actors in relief efforts, the United Nations implemented a coordination mechanism called the Cluster Approach. Its aim is to enhance partnerships and complementarity among United Nations agencies, the Red Cross movement, international organizations and NGOs at both local and international levels. The concept of a ‘cluster’ refers to a group of organizations coalescing around a common sector of humanitarian relief, such as health, protection, and education.

The "auxiliary roles" or functions are the embodiment of a National Society’s auxiliary status in concrete activities, i.e. the implementation in actual practice, of its permanent status as auxiliary to the public authorities, as opposed to other tasks which a National Society undertakes in a private capacity and outside of its relationship of auxiliary.

In practice, the auxiliary role brings with it mutual benefits and responsibilities.

The benefits for the humanitarian organizations include the ability to use the

name and emblem; a distinct identity, clearly separate from NGOs; access to decision-makers in government and the armed forces; a recognized part in national plans and policies in the health and social welfare sectors and in disaster preparedness and relief; involvement in the State’s implementation of international humanitarian law; participation with governments in the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent; service as a

link between government and civil society (Alasan Senghore 2017)

auxiliary function

In Botswana, the National Society is involved in programmes which address

aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A main focus is the provision of psychosocial support to orphans and vulnerable children, to supplement government programmes which target the basic needs of HIV/AIDS orphans. The Botswana Red Cross also helped the Ministry of Health in a measles vaccine campaign, assists the Department of Social Welfare (Ministry of Local Government) provide food to destitute persons in remote rural areas, supports the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Culture by providing services to youth, and is represented on the National Disaster Committee. It works with a range of other government ministries, from the Ministry of Education (to assist people living with disabilities), Ministry of Works and Transport (on road safety), the Office of the President (on issues of refugee health), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (on Movement issues and treaty ratification, and, where necessary, seeks their help with other Ministries).

References:

Holsti, 1999

Kaldor, 1999

Doyle and Sambanis, 2000

Cooley and Ron, ( 2002)

Rucht, (2006)

Donini, (2006)

Stoddard (2003)

(2011 WGBH Educational Foundation)

(U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 113-97)

Alasan Senghore (2017)

Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996, study 2, 5)