Introduction

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History and Hope: The International Humanitarian Reader is a compendium drawn from some of the best chapters on various aspects of humanitarian assistance in a series that I have written or edited for Fordham University Press since 2001, numbering twelve volumes to date. Books in the series are used in universities and training courses around the world.

Many fine essays by outstanding contributors could not be included in this *Reader* because of the very real publishing restrictions of size and cost; nonetheless, this volume offers an unusually comprehensive overview of a complex and multifaceted discipline. Most of the original chapters chosen have been shortened, either by the authors or the editor, and much dated material was deleted. However, many examples from the past were retained so that the opinions and observations of the authors—all authorities who have worked in many of the great humanitarian crises of the past half-century—have that ring of truth that can be conveyed only by those with firsthand experience. Lessons learned from errors, and even failure, often provide the foundation for better approaches in the future. Some chapters have a brief addendum of two or three paragraphs to update the text, while several authors chose to provide internal edits to accomplish the same goal.

History and Hope also represents the completion of a phase in an academic program that was carefully conceived several decades ago. Didactic modules for classroom and field were developed and implemented by colleagues who believed we could distill our experiences from the harsh settings of humanitarian crises into solid, practical, field-oriented courses that would be of university level quality. Utilizing the book series, we have now trained more than two thousand candidates from 133 nations in the ever-evolving discipline of international humanitarian assistance.

The series began with *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start*, a text that argued for recognition of the centrality of humanitarian action in foreign policy, too often peripheral afterthoughts overshadowed by other national interests. The contributors utilized the methodology of public health in addressing the softer discipline of diplomacy. The second volume in the series, *Traditions, Values and Humanitarian Action*, was also a philosophic book assessing what influences

determine how both individuals and societies develop healthy—or destructive—policies and practices in international humanitarian assistance. Both those volumes provided solid foundations for the technical texts that followed.

The next two titles, *Emergency Relief Operations* and *Basics of Humanitarian Action*, are self-explanatory. These books were primers that were needed as our academic programs developed. The chapters reflect my strong conviction that the practical challenges of disaster zones and refugee camps were proper subjects for university study, and that our texts (and teachers) should be deeply grounded in the harsh realities that are standard in complex emergencies.

The next volume in the series is the most personal. *To Bear Witness: A Journey of Healing and Solidarity* is a compilation of some of my editorial pieces, unpublished lectures, short essays, and introductions to earlier books. I collected them, searching for meaning and continuity, as a tribute to my wife, who was my partner in a full life of humanitarian service. After she died, I reviewed our travels; at that time I had worked in sixty-five countries, mostly in troubled areas, and she had been with me on forty-five of those trips. We had a remarkably shared marriage for forty-four years. This book has been widely reviewed, reprinted and translated; it is an essential part of the series.

The following three books in the series provide more detailed information on specific problems in humanitarian assistance. *Human Security for All: A Tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello* was conceived as a practical contribution to honor the memory of a good friend and colleague who had paid the ultimate price for attempting to help those in humanitarian distress. Having attended numerous memorial services for Sergio, I felt that something more lasting was needed. Sergio had taught on our courses and delivered an eloquent commencement address for our graduates. He was the ultimate activist, and he deserved more than repetitive platitudes. I organized an academic symposium that drew together many of his UN co-workers, in which the President of Fordham University conferred on Sergio the first posthumous honorary doctorate in its 175-year history. The book is a practical, lasting testament to a remarkable life.

Technology and Humanitarian Action evolved from my experience as Chief Medical Advisor for Counterterrorism in the New York City Police Department. Scientists associated with the Defense Advanced Research Policy Agency (DARPA) impressed me greatly with their imaginative technologic proposals as we faced serious biological, chemical, and radiation threats to our safety. As my contact with these men and women deepened, I quickly realized how the intellectual and financial resources devoted to defense concerns dwarfed the attention given to the overwhelming, often intractable, problems that faced humanitarian workers. The book is built on vignettes detailing practical challenges in complex emergencies, followed by full chapters by DARPA scientists, most

of whom had never considered applying their talents and techniques to the humanitarian field. Unfortunately, a decade in technology is analogous to a century—or more—in the liberal arts, and most of the chapters are now quite dated. I am sad to report that the vignettes, on the other hand, have remained only too valid.

The seventh and eighth editions of *Tropical Medicine: A Clinical Text* reflect my own professional background, as well as the cruel fact that in war zones and after disasters more people usually die of the treatable—and usually preventable—diseases that are the subject of these textbooks. Although *Tropical Medicine* is primarily intended for doctors, nurses, and public health personnel, it has also been used by nonmedical humanitarian workers whose duties require an understanding of the basic life cycles and transmission patterns of epidemic diseases. The eighth edition of *Tropical Medicine* is a "Jubilee Edition," reflecting its use in medical education for fifty years.

The next title in the series, *The Pulse of Humanitarian Assistance*, derives from my medical training. Taking the pulse—a basic diagnostic tool in medicine—is an ancient and trusted clinical exercise. At the bedside the physician uses a gentle, tactile measurement to see if the patient has a strong and steady circulation or one that is weak, irregular, thready, or even terminal. Taking the pulse is often the initial test performed by a medical doctor trying to establish an objective record rather than depending merely on a patient's subjective complaints. The nature of the pulse may lead to more refined studies, gradually building a foundation for rational therapy. Trying to detect a pulse is often the final act for a physician in determining if life has passed into death.

So, too, one can measure the pulse of humanitarian action today. In attempts to diagnose some of the major current problems that afflict the humanitarian profession, it also offers prognoses—predicting a way forward. If one is to address human suffering in the confusion that characterizes early complex humanitarian crises, especially those in the developing world, then the etiologic significance of poverty and ignorance, corruption and incompetence, and the all too often evil effects of religion and politics are areas of study as valid as the life cycles of microbes. Professionals in humanitarian assistance must try to measure these factors constantly, just as one carefully records the pulse on the bedside chart of a sick patient.

Even in Chaos: Education in Times of Emergency and *More with Less: Disasters in an Era of Diminishing Resources* were books developed during my capacity as Chief Advisor for Humanitarian and Public Health Issues for three Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA). The PGA is the most senior position of the United Nations, and they reflect the interests of all 193 Member States. These books became important parts of the legacies of the PGAs, and, as

with the others in the series, are used by policymakers, practitioners, and students in universities around the world.

Books in the series are listed at the beginning of this volume. The full table of contents of each book is available at www.fordham.edu/iiha. Seven of the texts are available in French translations. Bernard Kouchner, the co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières and of Médecins du Monde and, later, Foreign Minister of France, wrote Forewords for several of the books.

History and Hope is also a personal and professional culmination. I began working among populations traumatized by conflict, natural or manmade disasters, more than fifty years ago. My dreams of and plans for how to do difficult tasks better and how to create solutions to seemingly insoluble problems began in refugee camps and slowly coalesced in the stimulating atmosphere of halls of higher education. Preparing this anthology has allowed me to take stock of this particular body of work and to assess the continuity of a struggle that will never be complete.

It is clear, at least to me, that there has been much progress in our efforts to rationalize responses to the extreme challenges of delivering aid in complex humanitarian crises. An essential step was to create flexible structures through which both field operations and teaching programs could be linked. Many decades ago, with the practical help of former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's law firm, and with the unequivocal support of Father Joseph O'Hare, S.J., then President of Fordham University, we established both a charitable entity and an academic Institute. The Center for International Humanitarian Cooperation (CIHC) is a public charity founded by a small group of international diplomats and physicians who realized that health and other humanitarian endeavors sometimes provide the only common ground for initiating dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among people and nations shattered by war, civil conflicts, and ethnic violence. The Founders of the Center, some now deceased, included Secretary Vance, former UK Foreign Minister Lord David Owen, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Lord Paul Hamlyn, and John Cardinal O' Connor. We owe a great debt for their wise guidance and generous support. The CIHC has been afforded full Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the United Nations. In the United States, it is a fully approved charity by the Internal Revenue Service.

The CIHC and its Directors have been deeply involved in trying to alleviate the wounds of war in many areas. A CIHC amputee center for landmine victims in Northern Somalia was developed to provide a simple, rapid, and inexpensive prosthetic program that could be replicated in other areas where there were almost no health services. The center is still functioning in Northern Somalia, and the model has been used in Mozambique and Afghanistan. In the former Yugoslavia, the CIHC was active in prisoner and hostage release, as well as in providing legal assistance for human and political

rights violations. It facilitated discussions between combatants. The CIHC has provided staff support on the ground in crisis management in conflict zones in Iraq, East Timor, Indonesia, the Balkans, Palestine, Albania, Lebanon, Pakistan, Somalia, Kenya, and other trouble spots.

The need to establish educational programs, as well as universally recognized academic standards for humanitarian assistance workers, was early recognized as urgent, and it soon became our top priority. To address this challenge, the CIHC joined with Fordham University in New York City, creating an Institute for International Humanitarian Affairs (IIHA). The essential, indeed indispensable, links between academia and humanitarian field operations are obvious in this *Reader* and in the IIHA's regular symposia and Occasional Papers.

The links are possibly most evident in our flagship course, the International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA), which is offered three times a year in different locations around the world. This diploma program is offered under the joint auspices of the CIHC, Fordham University, The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and the United Nations System Staff College. Other academic partners for the IDHA have included the City University of New York, University of Geneva, University of Liverpool, and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. It is a highly intense, month-long residential course with twelve-hour days of lectures, scenario exercises, and debates. The course was devised to simulate a humanitarian emergency situation. Candidates are judged by strict academic criteria with weekly oral and written exams. The average age of our candidates is thirty-eight, and most of them have had significant field experience. They represent virtually every discipline working in humanitarian crises.

Today, our thousands of alumni work in almost every agency of the United Nations and in most major nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) around the world. In addition, the IIHA at Fordham University offers a master's degree in International Humanitarian Action (MIHA) and an undergraduate International Humanitarian Affairs minor program. The IIHA also offers many specialized training courses including, inter alia, humanitarian negotiations, international human rights, humanitarian law, ethics accountability, and mental health in war zones. The IIHA is the sole academic center in the United States recognized as a full partner by NOHA, the consortium of universities coordinating teaching and research in humanitarian assistance in Europe.

Total emergency relief aid spending has increased significantly in the last forty odd years. In 1970 global emergency aid spending was less than $1 billion per year. This figure began to rise sharply in the 1990s, and by 2010 annual spending was more than $20 billion per year. The end of the Cold War, the subsequent proliferations of civil wars, and their consequent displacement crises in the 1990s certainly suggest that this increase in spending was driven in part by a concomitant increase in

need. A decade into the twenty-first century, we are able to observe the "humanitarian international"—a vast complex of international organizations endeavoring to deliver humanitarian assistance—as a globally powerful entity, with capabilities and ambitions far beyond what existed in the early 1970s.

The rapid expansion of humanitarian aid has been accompanied by extensive commentary on the successes and failures of relief and aid operations; on the delivery of goods and services; on the need for minimum standards; and on the need for training and qualifications for aid workers. Professionalization and accountability have been suggested time and again as panaceas for the persistent, significant flaws in humanitarian responses to disasters and emergencies. Concerned individuals, departments, and institutions dedicated to promoting professionalization and accountability are clearly emerging. *History and Hope* provides them with a single volume that details the major topics faced during this evolution.

It is difficult to describe the moment at which a new profession is recognized. Historically, professions have emerged through a mixture of public and private interests, associations between practitioners and academics, state institutions and private ones. These processes are messy, time-consuming, and essential. At Fordham University's IIHA, our faculty has been engaged in this development for decades, attempting to shape humanitarian practice while avoiding the pitfalls of creating a system that benefits the professionals more than those it claims to serve.

Humanitarian assistance is a discipline that attracts men and women who, in often-terrible situations, continue to strive for a better world. They have dreams and visions, values and traditions, which have not been suppressed by many earlier challenges. In fact, improvements in disaster prevention and response have often come because of adversity. The improvements—the establishment of accepted standards for shelter, food, protection, human rights, education, a code of ethics for workers, and an emerging body of human rights and humanitarian law—have been accomplished without abandoning the noble principles of independence, neutrality, and impartiality that are the foundation for our work. One of the main dangers ahead, in my opinion, is that this very foundation may be destroyed because fiscal concerns are subordinating humanitarian work to the political and military activities that accompany complex humanitarian crises.

When the United Nations Charter was drafted in 1945, there was but a single mention of humanitarian affairs. Maybe understandably, in the horrifying afterglow of World War II, the UN Charter focused mainly on human rights and the prevention of conflict. The full history of the United Nations, however, is far more nuanced than the words of the Charter. While the Charter is almost silent on humanitarian assistance, the deeds of the Organization speak for themselves. United Nations–led relief operations actually predate the final signing of the Charter.

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) was its first major international operation, offering critical help across the destroyed landscape of Europe, addressing hunger and other needs of refugees as World War II was winding down. Shortly, other agencies, such as UNICEF, UNRWA, and UNHCR, became essential tools in the UN arsenal for disaster relief, and their mandates grew—and changed—in response to the realities of the Cold War, superpower politics, instant communications, and, later, the collapse of the Soviet Union. Only then was there a greater willingness on the part of the world community to identify disaster zones and demand access to suffering populations.

The Charter has, as its foundation, the sovereignty of Member States. But today, almost everyone recognizes that international humanitarian action often requires moving across national borders in order to offer relief to victims. For that very reason, humanitarians also contend that their work warrants respect for a neutral—as opposed to political—space in which they can provide impartial assistance to all in need. There seems to be an inherent conflict in these views on sovereignty and intervention, at least as understood at the birth of the United Nations. Since then there have been emerging concepts of the fundamental obligations of States toward individual citizens, especially when it becomes clear to the international community that a State is not providing necessary basic assistance to those in desperate need. This period of evolution in our understanding of the nature of sovereignty, and the tensions that exist between those who favor intervention over the absolute rights of the State, are ongoing. The Right to Protect (R2P) thesis has been used to justify various humanitarian interventions (as, for example, in Libya), but not without a growing concern about the limits and justifications for such actions.

A further development at the United Nations, namely that the Organization should deliver assistance “as one,” has inevitably increased the involvement of political and military actors in what had previously been solely a traditional humanitarian domain. I believe there are serious dangers in such an approach, since the humanitarian actor is almost always a minor partner, especially in financial terms, when compared with the budgets of military and peacekeeping operations. The goal of complete coordination of U.N. activity under one head in a complex humanitarian crisis sounds desirable from a fiscal and administrative point of view. But it could well destroy the very freedom that made humanitarian assistance unique and effective. There is almost certain to be significant resistance to this approach in the international humanitarian community.

Humanitarian assistance is a noble undertaking. At an individual level it is as old as mankind, with tales of generosity and compassion being part of the myths, legends, and foundations of every society. As a formal discipline, however, the organized response to the chaos and suffering that is an

inevitable part of armed conflicts, or extraordinary natural disasters, has very slowly evolved. In modern times there has been a growing realization that both innocent victims and injured combatants deserve protection. Henry Dunant's attempt to establish neutral, "universal" space for humanitarian aid in 1859 in the midst of the Battle of Solferino is often cited as the beginning of what we now accept as international humanitarian law. The Geneva Conventions were later established to codify humankind's rules for the treatment of civilians and the injured, as well as for the behavior of combatants. The implementation of the Conventions has, sadly, been a tale of constant exceptions and shameful interpretations.

At the close of the Cold War humanitarian assistance entered an era of enormous complexity, and it was ill prepared for the challenges that aid agencies faced. There were no universally accepted standards for providing care in such dire situations. There were few comprehensive training programs; in fact, there was not even a common vocabulary for guiding humanitarian workers. Academia was not part of the solution, and its absence added to the problems.

More than three decades ago I insisted on a last-minute change in the title of one of my books. I did not want the planned *Threads in a Tapestry*, but rather, *Threads for a Tapestry*. I had to convince the publisher that the original title implied that the tapestry was already completed, while I still see the tapestry of my life as an ever-evolving one. Now, as I collect these written strands from the past, they are offered not as a final compilation but as part of an ongoing effort to use the platform provided to an international physician, teacher, and humanitarian worker to bear witness, especially in our privileged nation, to the sufferings and inequities experienced by the downtrodden masses of the world. The plight of the poor, the rights of the oppressed, the anguish and chaos of epidemics, and complex humanitarian crises have been my chosen fields.

Emergency relief operations are the starting point for most international humanitarian assistance programs. Wanton killing and brutality within supposedly sovereign borders; ethnic and religious strife; millions of near-starving refugees; other millions of migrants fleeing their homes out of fear for their lives; human rights trampled down; appalling poverty in the shadows of extraordinary wealth; inhumanity on an incredible scale in what was supposed to be a peaceful dawn following the Cold War—these are the awesome challenges that face the world community, and are quite different from the nation-state rivalries and alliances that preoccupied statesmen during most of the last century. More and more, these humanitarian crises are immediately known to us in an era of instant communications. They demand a response, and that response, to be effective, cannot be mere compassion or sympathy but must reflect an emerging science and the strengths of multiple partners.

It is often a dangerous and deceptive exercise to indulge in a "humanitarian intervention," implying that supplying food, water, shelter, or medical relief satisfies obligations when, in reality, such activities are often only a convenient way for governments to avoid dealing with difficult underlying political problems. The awareness that humanitarian aid can be a "band-aid" approach—satisfying but ultimately futile—is a humbling but essential realization for those who accept leadership positions in the field.

Everything evolves and grows, or it stagnates and dies. This is clearly true in nature, where plants and animals need to adapt constantly in order for their species to survive. Our most profound thoughts also evolve, often very slowly, and sometimes coalesce into workable concepts only after prolonged gestation. It is also obvious that the philosophic, economic, and even religious bases of civilization change in response to unforeseen challenges, sometimes influenced by new technology and knowledge, often in reaction to failures. The semantic specificity that is expected in medicine is equally necessary in disaster management. "Humanitarian crises" are rarely the result of just a failure of the humanitarian system. Solutions, therefore, will not be found by merely addressing unmet humanitarian needs.

Slowly but steadily, such philosophic observations led me more and more deeply over time into the uncharted seas that influence complex humanitarian crises. Some factors—medical, demographic, epidemiologic, logistical—are easily measured, and an effective response can usually be formulated. Yet it is those less definable, more subjective forces that so often determine the course of events. As in human relations, it is usually the subtle, but utterly essential, influences of natural empathy and understanding; a respect for the diversity of humanity; an appreciation of others' values and customs; a willingness to cooperate, and share; and the courage to give and to love that most often provide the critical defining balance between success and failure.

Professionals in humanitarian assistance must approach those in pain in a nonjudgmental manner. They learn to leave behind their pride and preconceptions and to sublimate their own interests and agendas in an act of solidarity with refugees and displaced persons who need their help. One learns to tread softly, to offer change with great care. One quickly finds that existing customs and practices in any community, even in the chaos of a refugee camp, must not be altered without consultation and deliberation. The ways of a people, sometimes quite incomprehensible to one trained in a Western scientific system, are ultimately that group's own precious heritage and protection. Attempts to introduce new methods and replace timeworn approaches can be devastating, especially in times of crises, when a society is extremely vulnerable and utterly dependent on strangers for the essentials of life.

These personal observations were the primary genesis of the International Humanitarian Book Series. For many decades I have been privileged to work in remote areas among people far removed from the effects, good and bad, of modernity. The more I traveled, read, and participated in the daily lives of isolated clans and communities, the more convinced I was that the richness of humanity lay in its incredible diversity. I do not share the belief that there is only one right way—whether that is how to rule, or how to worship, or court a mate, or establish a family, or express love, or even how to die. Any diminution in that diversity diminishes all of us. Attempts to homogenize the world, to impose uniform standards of behavior, to stifle differences of opinion and style, to impose restrictions on customs and practices because they are different from our own are regressive, usually destructive, acts. The biologic world thrives in its complexity, and artistic creativity flourishes best when there are multiple stimuli.

Humanitarian workers, if they are to be effective, must be realists. They deal every day with the cruel facts of human suffering, and no amount of rhetoric can alleviate pain or provide sustenance in times of widespread natural or manmade crises. The most indispensible resource in disaster preparedness and response is trained personnel. Education is a manifestation of society's belief that somehow, someday, somewhere there will be a life after the near death that is reality for so many innocent victims in conflict and postconflict situations.

Only the university can provide the legitimacy and credibility needed in a new world where globalization and international regulations guide all our actions, including the provision of disaster relief. Only a university, empowered by government departments of education, can confer degrees and diplomas. This is absolutely critical for a discipline such as humanitarian assistance, where multiple skills, mandates, and qualifications must be brought under the same umbrella. By its very nature, experts in humanitarian work must be recognized as such by many nations, since those afflicted by war and disaster flee across borders seeking safe havens in neighboring lands.

The university has become an essential partner in international humanitarian assistance. Untrained workers are now rarely accepted, even as volunteers, by major NGOs and reputable international organizations. An academic diploma in humanitarian assistance has become a *sine qua non* as relief workers increasingly move from the UN and national relief agencies to the private sector and back. The imprimatur offered by a highly respected, university diploma, based on practical experience, is now appreciated around the world. *History and Hope* is a result of the long struggle to link academia and humanitarian action.

Ultimately, preserving "humanitarian space" will be imperative. Only the education of a committed cadre of trained professionals will be able to secure the traditions of neutrality,

impartiality, and independence. In this *Reader* the history and hope of that endeavor seem, to me, to blend and rhyme into a poetic and noble assertion, one of undoubted reality but softened by the romance of universal love. The seeds of experience will, we hope, be allowed to blossom into wisdom. Future generations will have to continue the endless effort to relieve unnecessary suffering and promote universal justice and peace. *History and Hope* should help guide the way forward. That surely is my intent.