Aspects of the Non-governmental Organizations' (NGOs')
Intervention in Situations of Conflict, With Particular Reference
to Afghanistan

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'There are those who give little of the much which they have - and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome'.

Khalil Gibran; The Prophet.
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Preface

This dissertation is an attempt to examine some of the aspects of the relief and development non-governmental organizations' (NGOs') intervention in situations of conflict or complex emergencies. The term NGO used throughout this paper is exclusively referring to Northern based international NGOs.

The particular area of interest in this dissertation is Afghanistan, a country which has suffered from the consequences of a severe violent conflict beginning with the Communist coup of April 1978 followed shortly by the Soviet Union's invasion of December 1979. One of the main outcomes of the Afghan conflict was the demolition of the state's legitimacy and authority. The gradual deterioration of the state's practical ability to govern and control the country, and the continuation of the war finally resulted in the total disintegration of the central government (April 1992) and the emergence of many local and regional power bases in the country.

In such circumstances and in the absence of a functioning and legitimate government, a great number of NGOs, mainly of Western origin, in the form of solidarity, relief and later on development agencies, mushroomed around the borders of the country. Since then the NGOs have been involved in a wide range of activities from collecting and dispatching information on the battle fronts, holding demonstration, conferences and producing specialized studies, to the provision of emergency relief and ultimately rehabilitation and development assistance.

Little has yet been written on the aspects of NGOs intervention in conflict situations. This topic remains an under-researched field which has not received sufficient attention to date. The problem is especially acute in regard to Afghanistan. With few exceptions, there is not undertaken any examination of NGOs intervention in Afghanistan by independent and reliable sources. Most of the literature written on this issue are focused on political aspects of the conflict and are largely limited to the presentation of quantitative and historical facts. This limitation has forced me to primarily base the assessment of NGOs intervention in Afghanistan on personal experience.

I hope this paper despite its limitations can be seen as contributing to further research work on the interaction between the NGOs' intervention and violent conflict.
Summary

This dissertation is a study of some of the aspects of relief and development non-governmental organizations' (NGOs') intervention in situations of conflict or complex emergencies. Its prime objective is a critical examination of the NGOs intervention and the impact of the international humanitarian assistance on the beneficiary or recipient populations. This paper is particularly concerned with the question of how relief assistance provided by NGOs in situations of conflict can be utilized and managed to promote long-term development. Given the nature and the extent of the current conflicts, this paper argues for linking relief and development in complex emergencies so as to incorporate participatory and people-centred development strategies into relief programmes. The argument is based on the perspective that undertaking development work in conflict situations is both essential and possible.

Chapter one is an introduction to the concept of conflict. It reviews different theoretical interpretations and further looks at the nature and causes of the current violent conflicts in relation to contemporary international politics.

Chapter two is a critical examination of NGOs intervention in situations of conflict. It looks at the nature of NGOs, their growing role and the opportunities that are provided for them by the international donor community. In comparison to other relief agencies, the unique and increasingly important role of NGOs in the new world order is discussed. In addition, the ambiguities in NGOs mission and the interface between the politics of the donor countries and humanitarian assistance are assessed.
Chapter three is an assessment of the negative impact of NGOs intervention in situations of conflict, in particular examining the interaction between humanitarian assistance and conflict. The argument in this chapter is centred on the issue that humanitarian assistance and emergency relief in situations of conflict, despite being life-saving and meeting the immediate needs, might have a long-term negative impact on the beneficiary populations. Relief work in situations of conflict is being politicised, delivered without proper account of the context and, thus, contributes to the exacerbation of conflict and creates further tensions.

As a follow up to the preceding arguments, chapter four is concerned with the interface between relief and development. While emphasising the inclusion of development strategies into relief programmes, it explores the issue as to why short-term relief work is appealing to the interests of both donor community and NGOs. Also debated is how the provision of emergency relief in isolation from other aspects of the conflict might continue to increase vulnerabilities, create dependencies and further exacerbate conflict. The linking of relief and development is advocated as an alternative approach, whereby committing aid resources to promoting development work is seen as a means to overcome the negative impact of relief and further increase the capacities of the target population. However, it calls upon the NGOs to develop a proper understanding of the conflict environment as a fundamental prerequisite for undertaking any development initiative.

Finally, the concluding chapter is a follow up of the preceding arguments and raises some further issues concerning the overall objective of the dissertation. Given the complexities, the diversities, the particular settings and historical...
backgrounds that lie at the root of any conflict situations, this paper strongly recommends situation specific approach. This is not to say that the application of experience learned elsewhere should be restricted. What is needed is to cut the cloth to fit the body not to trim the body to suit the dress.
An Introduction to Conflict

1.1 Background

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire gave rise to an optimistic view that the world and its inhabitants might finally rejoice with the advent of global peace and stability. This may have come true in the case of the Western countries who no longer feared finding themselves in a situation of immediate nuclear warfare with their ideological and political antagonist, the former Soviet Union and its allies. But this change of relations between the West and East blocs does not necessarily imply that the world is a safer place for all its residents, with the threat of war and conflict replaced with the optimism of harmony and stability.

Today, five years after the end of the Cold War, there are more regional conflicts and civil wars than at any other time this century. Satellite communications allow us to witness the appalling consequences of these distant wars, on television and in newspapers. The impact of these conflicts on human lives, social and economic development, and environment is devastating.

By the end of the Cold War there had been more than 34 major armed conflicts going on in the world, most of them within the existing state boundaries of Third World countries (International Alert, 1993, p 3). After almost 45 years of the arms race between East and West, which was simultaneous with a rapid process
of decolonization, the world’s attention has shifted to the unprecedented increase in violent conflict throughout the globe, especially in the Third World countries. Currently a substantial number of Third World nations, in addition to being burdened by harsh living conditions due to poverty and underdevelopment, are suffering from the various effects of internal strife and violent conflict.

What is conflict and what are its causes? A critical review of the current conflicts in different parts of the world reveals clearly the diverse and complex nature of this phenomenon. An examination of theoretical approaches to the nature of conflict shows "equally the complexity of the subject, the difficulty in reaching an unambiguous definition of it and the variety of different interpretations concerning its nature and its causes" (Hoyland, 1990, p. 2).

As Rupesinghe argues, conflict is frequently defined as a case of different actors possessing incompatible values, and pursuing incompatible goals. Conflict in the most general terms, according to Rupesinghe, "can be seen as collisions between projects", which "are sequences of actions directed towards a goal". Therefore conflicts happen when the projects of "different actors start impinging on each other". For example the conflict between the different ideologies, e.g. capitalism, communism, fascism, democracy, or the conflicts based on ethnicity, caste and tribalism, both present the collision between the incompatible values and goals of the different actors involved (Rupesinghe, 1993, p. 359).

The following brief review of academic literature on conflict provides more insight into its causes and nature.
1:2 Conflict in Theory

A theoretical approach to understanding of conflict in a social system reveals a variety of arguments and interpretations of the nature and causes of conflict.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1895) in his "quasi-biological" explanation of social conflict attempts to describe it in evolutionary terms whereby "societies evolved in much the same way as species". He argues that societies are in a constant process of struggle "to become more stable, more coherent and more complex", a similar process to the growth of organisms. Thus, in the process of society's evolution and through the process of "consolidation and integration" small social units are absorbed by powerful units or grouped together to form larger units. Recognizing the need for coercion in the process of society's evolution, Spencer asserts that: "In the early stages of a society's evolution, this process is 'managed' by military force... Later, as society becomes more settled and sophisticated, coercion is replaced by cooperation". In Spencer's view, warfare is not a failure in social relations; it is an inevitable "stage in a society's growing-up" (New Society, 1984).

The literature on 'functionalist' theories of social change provides more insight to a theoretical study of conflict. Clearly related to Spencer's ideas, the functionalists' perspective, which owes a great deal to the work of French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), holds that society behaves like the human body. In a social system, each part contributes to the function of the whole, which is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus in normal conditions, the society is enjoying a state of "good health" or "equilibrium". The basis of this
equilibrium is moral consensus and the shared values such as patriotism and religion. This theory sees social stratification as the means by which society motivates its members to perform essential tasks which are necessary to the society's efficient functioning. In functionalist theories, the emphasis is on stability, shared values and standards of behaviour, on solidarity and common interests. There is no conflict. Functionalists theorists believe that conflict is "abnormal" and is a "sickness of society" (New Society, 1984).

The conflict theories, on the other hand, take a directly opposing view and stresses the antagonism between different groups in society. Conflict theories owe much to Karl Marx' (1818-83) theory of class. Marx argued that fundamental conflict of interests in society is between the dominant and the dominated classes. Thus, the interests of those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour, Marx says, are incompatible. Marx laid stress on the ways in which societies are marked by conflict, rather than stability. To conflict theorists, values are seen as a means to justify and legitimate class interest (Brown, 1994).

However, there are other theorists of social change who follow a path of argument in order to reconcile the functionalist and conflict theories. Max Weber (1864-1920) in his "social action theory", prefers not to generalize about social conflict. He argues that society is neither in equilibrium as functionalists claim nor in conflict as Marxists attempt to prove. To Weber, the question of power is crucial in a social system: "Power is unevenly distributed among groups and individuals... Social order is a product of the rules and commands that the more powerful give to the less powerful. Therefore the social order normally operates
in favour of the most powerful" (New Society, 1984). According to Weber, any change in the social order will favour the powerless and, therefore, those who enjoy power tend to oppose change, even by coercion, and support the status quo. Weber, in an attempt to explain civil war within the boundaries of a sovereign state, further argues that a sovereign state has a "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its orders". So when this monopoly is severely challenged, by internal or external aggression, the state can consider itself at war in order to protect its interests (Ibid).

Contemporary sociological theorists do not necessarily see social conflict as a struggle between classes over means of production. Ralf Dahrendorf, the German sociologist, like Weber, sees social conflict as a power struggle between those who rule and those who are ruled. He argues that social organizations are characterized by two groups whose interests are innately opposed. These social groups may not realize this until something mobilises their opposed interests; they then become "interest groups" and begin to organize (New Society, 1984). However, Cohen (1968) while rejecting the idea that social conflict may be solely sufficient to cause social change, makes a distinction between "conflict" and "struggle" in a social system. He argues that "social conflict exists where the goals of one group are pursued in such a way as to ensure that the goals of another group cannot be realized". But "struggle occurs when action is taken to remove the source of conflict by reducing the power of another party, or by eliminating another party from the conflict". Cohen, however, asserts that the idea that conflict is a necessary condition for change can scarcely be contradicted. He considers social conflict as much the product of social change as the cause, which
according to him is a great obstacle to certain types of change (Cohen, 1968, p 182-3).

There is no society which does not have conflict of some kind or another. Though conflict, from a sociological prospect, is seen as a competitive process which fosters social change and as an ever-present aspect of social life, the questions that one may ask are why the Third World is the jousting course for the majority of the current armed conflicts? And what are the relationships between conflict, poverty and underdevelopment in these countries? Was the Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung right when he asserted that war and conflict are simply a continuation of politics?

1: 3 Conflict in the Contemporary World Order

Today inter-state wars have become uncommon, while the number of internal wars and violent disorder within a given state boundary are increasing. The causes of conflicts and civil wars in the Third World are manifold and complex, but the underlying roots can usually be traced in uneven distribution of social, political and economic resources, territorial and ideological competitions or ethnicity issues:

"The issues involved in such internal conflicts are primarily questions of political power. They manifest themselves in ethnic, minority or secessionist claims or demands for autonomy or issues of ethnicity mixed with questions of religion. These conflicts are themselves the consequences of nation building, particularly in post colonial state formations" (Rupesinghe, 1989. Quoted in Hoyland, 1990, p 8)
Nevertheless, a review of the nature of the currently ongoing violent conflicts in the world suggests that conflict, in its broadest sense, is a struggle for power. A struggle between those who control the socio-economic resources and aim to mobilize these resources to attain greater power and those who are the potential losers. This conflict may be disguised under religion, territorial disputes, ethnic, or demands for autonomy and self-determination, but the real question is concerned with the issue of power, control and authority, whether at the national, regional or international level. Most of these conflict situations are essentially "bargaining situations" (Freedman, 1994) between the internal and external actors involved in the conflict. Examples are the current conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

The majority of the current conflicts are indeed the continuation of the proxy wars initiated by the superpowers in the pursuit of their ideological and economic interests during the Cold War. The fear of nuclear warfare and the inherent risks of retaliation and mass destruction, prevented the superpowers from engaging in a full scale war. In their rivalry for the allegiance of much of the world, the superpowers agreed upon the rules for lesser forms of warfare in which they could engage safely, and which were fought in remote parts of the globe far away from their own cities. Vietnam and Afghanistan are the classic examples of proxy wars.

However the dynamics of the post Cold War are different from the post colonial era. The emergence of the uni-polar world, the redefinition of sovereignty, the claims for self-determination and nationality and the consequent process of state disintegration as in the former Soviet Union and East Europe portray a new
feature to conflict. This suggests that the conduct of war is changing, the environment in which wars are fought "is less stable and the reasons why they are fought less transparent" (Bulletin, 1995).

As argued earlier, social change promotes conflict. The same holds true in the interaction between development and conflict. Miller, while introducing the concept of "development wars", takes note that "... the process of development itself is conflict ridden and conflict producing. ... the attempt to accelerate economic, social, and political change often intensifies the historic tensions among different groups in society" (Miller, 1992, p. 5). Rupesinghe presents a similar argument emphasising that issues such as democratization, deprivation and poverty, frustration, modernization and consumerism, and the mass proliferation of arms can be held responsible for the increase of violence and wars in the world (Rupesinghe, 1993, p. 357). Indeed, the process of democratization and impacts of the application of the structural adjustment policies through privatization of national economies and the consequent weakening of the state's role in controlling the society in countries with a diverse social and economic set-up has increased the likelihood of violent conflict. The current violent conflicts in the politically and economically marginalized former territories of the Soviet empire and the ethnic and religious problems in the two south Asian states of India and Pakistan can be considered to be partly exacerbated due to the above factors.

An increasingly important element inherent in many current conflicts is the intervention of the external governments and international organizations in the
conflict and the dependency of the internal warring parties on assistance received from abroad. The pattern of interaction between the external factors and the internal settings varies from one situation to the other. It may be directly due to the potential threat to the powerful nations' political and economic interests, as in the case of the Gulf War. It may take place under the plea of restoration of democracy as happened in Haiti, or it may be disguised as United Nations peacekeeping mission to prevent bloodshed and protect civilians as in the case of Somalia and Bosnia. Despite all the other factors which may account for the formation and escalation of the current conflicts in the Third World, one may also argue that interference by outsiders in the internal affairs of the weaker nations had a significant role in conflict outbreak and its perpetuation. The example of the civil war in Mozambique which lasted for more than a decade reinforces this claim. Provision of military and other types of assistance by the then government of the Republic of South Africa and some other countries to the rebels was the main cause for the continuation of the civil war in Mozambique. The conflict could only be resolved after the installation of majority government in the Republic of South Africa.

The above brings another aspect of the study of conflict. A significant issue is the way a conflict is defined and explained, especially by outside sources. The interface between the interests of outsiders, especially Western powers, and the media plays a critical role in this regard. The Afghan conflict is an evident example. The disastrous Communist coup of April 1987 followed by the Red Army's invasion in December 1979 have imposed one of the most destructive conflicts on the people of Afghanistan. As a result the country and its populace
are still trapped in the webs of a deadly civil war fought by the various factions of the former anti-Soviet resistance, but fuelled and motivated by the political and military interference of the neighboring and regional powers. The West and its media naively defines the war in Afghanistan as a one-dimensional conflict rooted in ethnicity. Though there is a degree of ethnicity issues involved in the conflict, it is not its main cause, but rather a byproduct of the 16 year long war. A review of the current military and political alliances in the country which often cut across the ethnic boundaries support the argument that the cause of the conflict should be sought elsewhere than the ethnicity issue. Despite the withdrawal of the Russian troops (1989) and the collapse of the Communist regime (1992), the Afghan conflict which originated as a direct result of outside interference continues. The conflict was started as a consequence of the classic proxy wars between the then superpowers. The collapse of the Soviet empire resulted in a situation whereby the West lost its interest in this seemingly forgotten war. Yet the regional powers headed by Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the newly independent Central Asian Republics took over to fill the vacuum. Thus, the rivalry between them and their open interference in the country's internal affairs constitute the main reason for the perpetuation of the conflict. A proper study of issues such as the geo-political location of Afghanistan, especially in relation to the newly opened markets of Central Asia, the political and economic interests of the regional powers, the threat of Muslim fundamentalist movements, and the profound social and economic changes occurring during the war in the country can contribute to a better analysis of the conflict in Afghanistan, than the label of ethnic conflict can.
Conflicts have always been complex and there is little basis for predicting that the world will be a safer and more stable place than before (Legault, 1992, p. 82). The mass proliferation of arms, especially of small arms that can be bought and sold freely in many parts of the world, has significant impacts on the increase in the number of conflicts in the world. As far as arms export is a key principle of the foreign and economic policy of many of the developed countries, the likelihood of the emergence of new conflicts and the continuation of old ones will remain high.

Violent conflicts and civil wars are known to be a major cause of human suffering and underdevelopment. Conflict is very costly in terms of the sacrifice of human lives and human and economic development. The costs of conflict extend far beyond the physical destruction and casualties directly attributable to violence. Indirect suffering and casualties are much greater as the destruction of health networks, education facilities, agricultural lands, irrigation systems, roads, and the consequent lack of access to food and other basic facilities, in addition to psychological trauma, can lead to enormous suffering among the civilian population. Countries or societies suffering from violent conflict tend to get dependent on external assistance. This assistance may be in the form of emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction or development aid. Due to the complexity and the diversity of such societies and the peculiarity of the context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are among the most significant actors, providing a wide range of assistance to the populations in situations of conflict. Conflict, and in particular the rising proportion of internal wars, constitute an enormous challenge to NGOs. They face hard times in carrying out
their humanitarian mission as the number and extent of conflicts overwhelm the capacity, and willingness, of their over-extended coping mechanism.

The next chapter introduces some of the aspects of NGOs mission and their origins and will examine their intervention in the situations of conflict or complex emergencies.
NGOs’ Intervention in Situations of Violent Conflict

2: 1 What are NGOs?

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) represent a heterogeneous community due to the diversities in their origin, history, objectives, size and the socio-economic context in which they operate. Within the field of relief and development, NGOs with varying size and objectives are active: from the large Northern based organizations such as Oxfam and MSF to the local self-help groups in the South. A number of NGOs are concerned with the delivery of relief and welfare services to ease immediate suffering caused by natural or man-made crisis. Some other NGOs focus on activities aimed at community based development with the intention of building up local capacities for self-reliance. Possessing rather a radical perspective, some others have directed their efforts to foster institutional and social changes in favour of poor or dispossessed groups. A few others, while aiming to promote people-centered and grassroots development in the Third World, also engage in lobbying and advocacy campaigns in the North in order to influence policies that have negative effects for the poor in the South. Some of the NGOs, like Oxfam, are active in pursuing almost all these objectives, while some others, e.g. Action Aid, have specific priorities.

It is rather difficult to come up with a concise definition as to what an NGO is and what should be its common traits. An effort to define the general characteristics stresses:
"non-profit orientation, formal independence from government, and a legal charitable status safe-guarded by some sort of voluntary council of management" (Brown, 1990).

Most of the NGOs emanated after the two World Wars in Europe. The initial task of the NGOs was relief work in the war-torn Europe. Gradually, NGOs not only broadened their geographical area of concern to the poor countries of the Third World, but also widened their attention to encompass welfare. 1950's and 1960's witnessed an increase in the number of NGOs and a shift of focus from relief and welfare into development activities. NGOs initial development work was along the line of the modernization school's approach to development. Fundamental to this approach was the assumption that the Southern countries should import and apply "Northern ideas", "Northern technology" and "Northern expertise" to tackle their socio-economic problems (Clark, 1991, p 35). However, during the last three decades, NGOs successively diverted their ideology and their practical approach from the conventional development models. Thus, the focus shifted on a broader understanding and appreciation of the causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World. The change in policy has been significant in the last two decades. Areas such as political education, conscientization (after Paulo Freire), grassroots development and issues such as advocacy and political campaigns for social and economic justice and human rights have become the mainstream of NGOs mission both in the Southern countries and in the North. Nevertheless, the move towards more overt political crusade has not proved very comfortable for NGOs. This was especially significant in the case of those NGOs who were dependent to a greater degree for their funds on
governments. In addition, the conservative charity laws, particularly in the UK, caused consequential problems for NGOs political campaigns.

2: 2 A Growing Role for NGOs

The growth of NGOs can be traced in the circumstances that formed the traditions of the Western countries' international affairs policies. Walker argues that humanitarian assistance has been funded for the most part by the "old liberal democracies" of the West, shaped in a large part by the tradition of "church", "charity" and "colonialism", and "massaged by the pragmatics of foreign policy" (Walker, 1995). This recognition is also demonstrated in the increase of aid channelled to NGOs by the Northern governments in the last decade. According to Brown, NGOs based in the 26 countries of OECD "were responsible for $5.3 billion worth of assistance to the developing countries" in 1986 (Brown, 1990, p 3). Alan Fowler has estimated that due to the increase in aid to NGOs, there will be a near doubling of NGOs resources from around $6.3 billion to $12 billion by the year 2000 (Harding, 1994, p 32).

Opinions vary and are contentious as to why there has been a great increase of interest in NGOs work and the consequent rapid growth in resources and opportunities available to them in recent years. By and large, NGOs mandate, their "comparative advantages" (Tendler, 1982), their flexibility and practical ability to respond to needs, and their alleged political neutrality are held to be the reasons for the increased attention they have received. In addition, the failure of the large 'top-down' development programmes undertaken by the governments of the developing countries and the resultant ineffectiveness of government's
Interventions in the development field provided more opportunities for NGOs intervention. Furthermore, the parallel rise of the neo-liberal economic policies of the industrialized Northern countries have had particular impact on the growth and the subsequent importance given to NGOs. The stress placed by the neo-liberal policies on the reduction in public expenditures and a decrease in the role of state in social and welfare services, increased the potential for intervention by NGOs to fill the vacuum (Harding, 1994, p. 5).

Hermet argues that humanitarian assistance has been used by the Western countries both as a means to legitimize their foreign policy and as a practical foreign policy tool. He states that humanitarian assistance has been more appealing to the strategic interest of the West than military intervention, economic sanctions, complex negotiations or loans granted to Third World dictators that "would never be repaid". In a review of the Western countries' approach to humanitarian aid, Hermet highlights their policy saying that:

"The Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, deprived of more traditional ways to make their presence felt, had long been making use of humanitarian aid. The major powers, for their part, noticed that aid handed out by government or inter-government bodies was much more costly and yielded fewer results than that provided by private organizations run chiefly by volunteers.... This gave national governments, the European Community and UN agencies the idea of subsidising NGOs in this worthwhile and self-interested cause" (Hermet in Jean, 1992, p. 110).

Omaar & de Waal present a similar argument stressing that the strategic and commercial interest of the Western donors in the poor countries of the Third World is declining and their prime concern is increasingly to avoid bad publicity.
at home from humanitarian crises. Therefore, they claim, channelling funds for relief programmes through NGOs rather than through host governments suits these priorities well as NGOs work is flexible, short term, and has high profile and little accountability. They maintain that "the increase of donor funded NGO relief operations and western disengagement from poor countries are two sides of the same coin" (Omaar & de Waal, 1994, p.6).

2.3 NGOs and the New World Order

Until the end of the Cold War the world for NGOs was relatively simple. The Cold War and the existence of the relatively strong and centralized national states in Third World countries restricted the activities of NGOs. In order to operate in a country, the consent and cooperation of the host government were required. The end of the Cold War and the alteration of the international relations based on the politics of the polarized world has brought about significant changes in the perceived role of the state, particularly in the Third World. On the one hand, the impacts of the structural adjustment package has resulted in reduction in the role of the state in many countries. On the other, as a result of the increase in the number of violent conflicts many developing countries no longer exercise the same centralized and authoritarian states as before. Some states like Afghanistan, Liberia and Somalia have even ceased to have a recognized government. Consequently the main burden for looking after the victims of conflict and other vulnerable people is being laid at the shoulders of NGOs and other relief agencies. Particularly NGOs' role in the regions affected by violent conflict is significantly increasing. As political instability and conflict reduces the efficiency of the government agencies and as there is a risk of diversion of
assistance, either by government or by the rebel groups, from its intended beneficiaries. NGOs have increasingly become the preferred channelling option to the donor countries. During the Cold War NGOs and other international relief agencies, as well as outside governments, concerned with the concept of state sovereignty, were generally reluctant to assume responsibility for threatened internal populations. But today NGOs are facing situations in which the greatest need is inside the borders of the countries at conflict. NGOs operations are now set up to reach civilian population, caught in the crossfire in their own communities suggesting that NGOs in the future may be operating in conditions of violence as the norm rather than the exception.

Besides NGOs, the other international bodies involved in humanitarian crisis are the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). However, the UN's work is bound to the limits set up by its Charter. Respect for the governments of the sovereign member states is highly appreciated by the UN's mandate. Ideally, UN and its agencies have no mandate to operate in a territory where there is no internationally recognized government. This prohibits the UN's agencies from undertaking humanitarian interventions in territories affected by conflict including areas controlled by the rebel movements challenging the authority of a UN's member state's government. In addition, UN's bureaucratic structure does not allow the organization to have an unambivalent and timely response to the needs of the populations caught up in conflict. Furthermore, problems in coordination of activities among different UN agencies severely limits its practical capacity on the ground.
Due to the above political and practical limitations on actions by UN agencies, the NGOs and the ICRC often stand out as the preferred and less politically hazardous available channel for humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies. However, the capacity of the ICRC in offering humanitarian relief assistance is also limited by its "framework for international humanitarian law" and the "Geneva Conventions" (ODI, 1993). As a result, NGOs have increasingly been considered the most practical channel available to donor countries in complex emergencies. Besides, NGOs with their self-inflicted mandate of humanitarianism have always given themselves the right to intervene in situations of conflict to provide assistance to people in danger, very often even against the wishes of the concerned country's governing body. Some of the NGOs, e.g. the solidarity ones, were even created for this very purpose, interfering in some countries of the world hit by conflict and violent disorder.

The Kurdish refugee crisis following the Gulf War in 1991 resulted in the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution 688 which established the important precedent that, under certain circumstances, "the international community is prepared to use force in support of humanitarian relief operations" (ODI, 1993). Also, some consequent resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council on situations in countries like Somalia and Bosnia provided privileged status to international relief agencies. Thus, open violation of state's sovereignty in the pursuit of humanitarian objectives has become acceptable, disguised under the plea of military humanitarianism. The polity of the post Cold War and the privileges provided thereby to NGOs and other relief agencies not only encourage
them to take more explicit political stands on situations in Third World countries, but have also motivated them to call for UN's military intervention.

However, the honeymoon between the NGOs and the UN's military intervention in pursuit of humanitarian objectives has not lasted long. The effectiveness of UN's military intervention in response to complex emergencies were soon questioned by NGOs criticising UN's "structure", "mandate" and "funding". For instance, the UN-sponsored Operation Restore Hope in Somalia came under serious critique for inefficiency, lack of accountability and poor recognition of the local realities (Oxfam, 1993). The *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF) report on "world crisis intervention" (1993) is explicitly more critical:

'...The UN resolutions adopted in connection with the flight of the Kurds and the Yugoslav and Somali conflicts all refer to the protection of aid convoys - a new doctrine in humanitarian action - while not one mentions the protection of the victims. The civilian population is regarded solely as the recipient of aid, which is lavishly provided with the best of intentions, even if it never reaches its intended target. Preoccupation with logistics eclipses concern for human beings, as if soap or milk powder could prevent bombs from falling on hospitals, or generosity could offer protection against murder and expulsion' (Jean, F. 1993. Quoted in Omaar & de Waal, 1994, p 8).

The intervention by NGOs in situations of conflict, beside being politically ambiguous and open to contentious debates, possesses many other aspects. This is to a great extent because many actors are involved in such situations and because of their changing socio-political environment. There may be a government which enjoys, at least partial, international recognition as a sovereign state. There is the rebel group(s) which controls part of the territory of the country. There are some
foreign sources who, depending on their interests, either support the government or the rebels. And finally there is the international community, often represented by UN, which presumably tries to mediate as the peace broker and who also provides humanitarian assistance. NGOs operating in such situations are increasingly realizing the ambiguities associated with their mission. Complex emergencies have become more frequent and long-lasting. The international community’s response is confused. Peace-keeping and emergency assistance have become inextricably interlinked, with the latter often becoming politicised in the process. Humanitarian aid has been massively applied to immediate solutions, without proper accommodation of rehabilitation and development needs. The marking characteristics between humanitarianism, imposed assistance, politics and military intervention are still not unclouded. According to Hermet:

"This can hardly fail to remind us of colonial times, when good intentions abounded and gunboats came to the rescue of worthy missionaries beset by natives so lacking in understanding that there seemed little other hope of saving them" (Hermet in Jean, ed., 1992, p 111)

However, NGOs with the alleged reputation of neutrality have been given increasingly more opportunities by the donor community to provide assistance in complex emergencies related to conflict. The provision of humanitarian assistance in situations of conflict has always been, and will most probably continue to be, one of the major components of NGOs' missions. NGOs' intervention in complex emergencies has been primarily focused on the provision of emergency relief aimed at the lessening of the immediate suffering. The apparent intention is to provide relief and support to the victims. Nevertheless, it is argued that the delivery of relief commodities in an environment which is
continually threatened by socio-political insecurity and conflict, may well act to
deteriorate the situation. As we shall see in the next chapter, NGOs intervention
in complex emergencies may be effective in terms of being life-saving, timely and
low cost. Yet, it has had severe negative impact as the delivery of relief assistance
in such situations has contributed to the reinforcement and exacerbation of
violent conflict.

In the next chapter, we will assess some of the negative aspects of NGOs'
intervention in situations of conflict and will examine the interaction between
humanitarian assistance and conflict.
An Assessment of the Negative Impacts of NGOs’ Intervention in Situations of Conflict

CHAPTER 3

3: 1 Introduction

NGOs are presumably always ready to intervene in emergency situations offering relief and other types of humanitarian assistance to people in need. Their intervention in situations of violent conflict or complex emergencies has recently become a matter of contentious debate. The debate is to a great extent associated with confusion and doubt regarding the effectiveness of the NGO’s intervention. The complex nature of conflict situations, the high degree of uncertainties inherent to these situations, NGOs lack of a fair understanding of the environment, their widespread neglect of the way assistance interacts with other aspects of the conflict, and finally their failure to adopt proper approaches to encounter the many challenges they face are central to these arguments.

A review of the current literature reveals a general feeling, among aid policy makers, donors, and some of the NGOs operating in situations of conflict in both donor and recipient countries, that international humanitarian assistance in conflict situations is not sufficiently effective. This assistance is usually assessed as costing too much, producing too little, often bringing negative results and politically ambiguous.
Article 10 of the Fourth Geneva Convention makes reference to the rights of the "impartial humanitarian organization" to offer relief and assistance to civilians in non-international conflicts (Oxfam, 1995, p. 842). However, neither the definition of 'impartial' nor the exact nature and extent of such rights are clear. The ambiguity in justifying the intervention is evident. Some NGOs in practice refer to humanitarian principles and considerations, which are themselves highly ambiguous, to justify their work, rather than international humanitarian law. For instance, Oxfam states that it is "committed to the relief of human suffering wherever it occurs, and to the policy of non-partisan support to people in need" (Oxfam, 1995, p. 842). While others, e.g. solidarity NGOs, are created to support and side with those political or civilian groups that they consider to be oppressed and in need of external assistance. On its stand on humanitarian assistance, Oxfam stresses that its "concern is to provide assistance to people in need, wherever it can reach them. Thus, political considerations should not in themselves determine the extent and nature of Oxfam's involvement in providing humanitarian relief" (Oxfam, 1995, p. 842). In MSF's 1992 report on aid and humanitarian crisis, the editor emphasises that "humanitarian action aims to preserve life and human dignity and to restore people's ability to choose". He further asserts that "... humanitarian aid does not aim to transform society but to help its members get through a crisis period" (Jean, 1992, p. 7). Again, this is an ambiguous description as both terms 'humanitarian' and 'crisis' are normative and open to varying interpretations raising a number of issues and doubts, the most important of which can be the question of the ethics of humanitarian and relief intervention. The feeding camps set up and run by the international aid apparatus, which assisted those responsible for the recent ethnic genocide and massacre in
Rwanda, reinforce such a doubt. In addition, in the case of the current long-lasting complex emergencies characterised by sequential crisis and a hostile environment, how much authority does the 'humanitarian action' have to 'preserve life and human dignity'? How long it can afford to do so? And why should the outsider 'humanitarianist' always do this? The case of Rwanda is a striking example. How can the 'humanitarianists' justify their action of feeding the soldiers of the former Rwandan army while its leaders are currently building up their military capacity to start a new crisis there. The interface between NGOs humanitarian assistance and conflict in Afghanistan presents a similar case.

Throughout the Soviet occupation and the Communist era, NGOs extended their full support to the Afghan 'freedom fighters' consciously ignoring all instances of human rights abuses and political repression by them. It was only after the downfall of the Communist regime when the cry for human rights entered NGOs jargon and consequently the 'freedom fighters' of the yester years were redefined as 'warlords'.

Considering the realities of the recipient societies, the official stand and policy outlines of the NGOs make little sense. NGOs' humanitarian mandate is self-inflicted and open to diverse interpretations, based on their 'political considerations', 'institutional' or 'fund-raising' issues. Omaar & de Waal (1994) in their paper "Humanitarianism Unbound" critically assess the international relief organizations response to the genocide in Rwanda. They hold that some of the NGOs which at first made genocide their headline in Rwanda in a move towards a sophisticated political approach invariably regressed to a "basic", "simplified" "humanitarianism". Thus, they argue, the preoccupation of NGOs with responding
to the relief demands of the refugees resulted in circumstances where the NGOs "lost sight of the larger picture" and pushed the issue of genocide down the agenda, "beneath the demand for an immediate humanitarian response" resulting in a situation whereby:

"Massive humanitarian assistance was given to the killers, including food, transport and a secure base from which to launch attacks into Rwanda. Ironically, while the soldiers of the new government of Rwanda remain unpaid volunteers, the genocidal army of the former government, now in exile, is fed by international food aid" (Omaar & de Waal, 1994, p 35).

The question of how to respond to complex emergencies is one of the most pressing challenges faced by the international aid community in general and the NGOs in particular, given the latter's wide range of involvement in such situations.

3: 2 The Interaction Between NGOs' Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict

As argued in the first chapter, there is a direct link between competition over resources and conflict. The same holds true in the interaction between humanitarian assistance and conflict. The introduction of resources by NGOs and other relief agencies in complex emergencies increases competition between the parties to the conflict over the benefits of such resources. This way of providing undue material and non-material assistance to the combatant parties can serve to prolong the conflict, hence also the suffering of the population whom the NGOs aim to help. Anderson (1994) outlines ten cases in which "certain approaches and processes of project design and aid delivery" contribute to sustain rather than abate existing violent conflict. Omaar & de Waal (1994) present a similar
argument saying that: "Recent history has provided examples of the many ways in which relief has become intimately involved in insurgency and counter-insurgency warfare, the struggle for state power, and warlordism". Building on some of their points, I would like to explore further the interaction between NGOs' humanitarian assistance and conflict in the following:

1. **Resources supplied by NGOs into an area controlled by a party or parties to the conflict lead to both increasing competition and suspicion among warring parties and are directly or indirectly used by the combatants.** NGOs through their emergency relief operations can provide further means of income to the warring authorities by renting vehicles, premises, staff, guards, paying fees/taxes, supplying hard currency, etc. Thus, in such circumstances the overall effect of relief aid may be seen as actually prolonging war by feeding warring armies that may not otherwise remain in the field. NGOs operating in Afghanistan are well aware of the 'rate' of 'bribes' that they use to pay to the 'check posts' of the combatants while transporting their relief conveys.

2. **Providing strategic protection when the military or political objectives of the combatant authorities coincide with the logistical requirement of the relief operation.** This can occur by maintaining supplies to the population in garrison towns, that would otherwise remain unsupplied and hence become vulnerable militarily. Keeping roads open for transporting humanitarian assistance can serve military purposes as well.
3. External resources in terms of relief packages brought into conflict situations by NGOs add to overall resources in the area, and it can contribute to severe distortions in local economic activities. On the one hand the provision of relief items free internal resources to be used in the pursuit of military objectives. The free delivery of food and other relief items can motivate the militias to remain in their military bases and avoid any economically productive activity as their families’ food demands are being taken care of by NGOs. On the other hand, relief assistance may increase income and employment opportunities for certain groups to the exclusion of some others which consequently increases inter-group tensions. This also results in further widening the gap of access to resources available in the society and accordingly increasing the social and economic partition between the different segments of a society.

4. By working through existing controlling authorities in order to gain access to people in need, NGOs, wittingly or unwittingly, contribute in giving legitimacy to such authorities. The presence of NGOs alongside controlling authorities give those forces humanitarian credentials that they may not otherwise deserve. The political judgment of NGOs’ expatriate workers is frequently unreliable, due both to a lack of understanding of the different dimensions of the conflict, and their own political considerations. Hence, their political commentaries may give propaganda on behalf of the controlling authorities. This certainly provides additional publicity to the claims of the warring groups. Most often this is aggravated when journalists who accompany NGOs give favourable publicity to the controlling authorities. As international power politics influence the extent and the manner in which an emergency is covered by media, usually the main
concerns of journalists and their host NGOs are personal fame and publicity to attract more international aid. Yet this may be to the detriment of information on human right abuses and other forms of social and political oppression.

6. By adopting policies of solidarity with movements fighting for their legitimate rights under oppressive regimes, NGOs can get involved in the internal politics of such movements which in turn results in a number of undesirable consequences. This issue exacerbates when the solidarity NGOs become operational in terms of relief agencies. Firstly, it can contribute to the will of such movements to engage in violent conflict over prolonged periods of time, keeping them away from negotiating tables. Secondly, for political considerations or logistical reasons, NGOs may build up special relationships with some certain groups within the movement which can eventually result in detrimental consequences for the recipient society. The case of Afghanistan illustrates this point explicitly. The many relief and solidarity NGOs supporting the 'Afghan cause' against the Soviet invasion in the 1980s to a great degree become involved in the internal politics of the resistance groups. This partial approach of NGOs were demonstrated both in terms of political and material support to some certain groups. NGOs tendency to assist their favorite groups was not only limited to organizing political campaigns and propaganda for them, but also in effect were demonstrated in the concentration of relief activities in the areas controlled by these groups. While NGOs cite security and logistical problems in defending their policy of aid concentration, political considerations played the key role. This partisan stand resulted in circumstances whereby aid has been denied to many other groups of the population. Consequently NGOs not only lost their identity as independent
and impartial agencies, but also practically limited their scope of operation as the fear for retaliation by rival groups prevented them of entering areas controlled by antagonist parties.

7. The international diplomatic agenda may become preoccupied with questions of humanitarian access and the security of international aid workers, neglecting more important issues regarding the causes of the conflict, and thus concentrating on the relief operation as an end in itself. The case of the conflict in Liberia demonstrates this point well. All the news coming out of this troubled country is dispatched by aid agencies, concerned with the safety and security of aid personnel and conveys. This preoccupation has given the conflict a forgotten profile limiting the international community's responsibility solely to the provision of humanitarian assistance.

The case of international assistance channeled through NGOs in countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and recently Rwanda provides enough evidence, however sad, to give credence to the preceding arguments. For instance, Somalia has been frequently mentioned as a testing ground for NGOs accommodation to violence and their tolerance of diversion and extortion of humanitarian assistance. It was probably the first case that aid agencies hired armed guards. The aid agencies probably paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to factional leaders such as General Adid, and played a crucial role in enabling them to maintain their militias (Omaar & de Waal, 1994, p 19). And thus the "multimillions" spent on relief items have given the competing factions an enduring reason to fight (Hanington, 1992, p 175).
The case of Afghanistan illustrates the same scenario. In Afghanistan, in the absence of legitimate and functional central or local governments, NGOs, unimpeded by accountability, aimed at targeting their assistance to specific groups—often organized around political and military incentives. This political approach to aid has strongly contributed to the exacerbation of tension and prolongation of the conflict in the longer term. Baitenmann takes account of the "politicisation of humanitarian aid" in Afghanistan writing that: "Many of the nearly 300 NGOs involved in Afghanistan have provided badly needed humanitarian aid. When studied more closely, however, one realizes that NGO 'humanitarian' work has to varying degrees, been used for political purposes" (Baitenmann, 1990, p 82).

NGOs conducting cross-border activities in Afghanistan in the 1980s, according to Baitenmann, faced a dilemma whether to work with civilian authorities such as local councils, where it existed, or to work with the military commanders of the resistance who had already built local organizations in their controlled areas. NGOs went for the easy and high profile option of working through the commanders. In doing so, they not only diverted from their mission of supporting the needy civilian population, but also contributed in giving further legitimacy and strength to the combatants. The delivery of the so called 'cash for food' assistance to military commanders helped the latter to have extra resources to mobilize the population under their control for their military and political objectives. An example of this is the support given to the military leader of one of the warring parties: "Massoud has been the favorite of the NGOs because of his institutional capacities. Yet according to a UNHCR official, whatever Massoud
has been able to develop in terms of an economic base has been financed by NGOs" (Baitenmann 1990, p 72). Massoud is the de facto military chief of the current regime in Kabul whose forces are involved heavily in the ongoing bloodshed. Husum (1990) asserts the same claim:

"Resources of the civilian relief organizations are made available to the "great" commander who is able to guarantee military and political safety in his district, who can guide journalists and relief experts safely across the border, who is in control, who commands the effective machinery that people from the West like (...). The NGO pays the wages of the European health worker. But he lives for long periods of time in the commandant's houses. He eats there and is protected there, and he causes considerable worry and trouble(...) Nevertheless, the fact is that the European health worker who crosses the border, enters into a rather traditional contractual relationship with a commandant, and becomes his specialized worker and his man" (Husum, 1990, p 9 & 13).

Countries and societies suffering from violent conflict inevitably need a substantial degree of assistance from outside. However, the question of the relative role, responsibility and authority of external donors and NGOs in undertaking relief, rehabilitation and development activities in such situations is one of the most important and most delicate issues.

In theory, there is no contention that assistance from outside should be subsidiary to local efforts, and that the main responsibility and authority should at last remain with the local people. Assistance provided by NGOs, after responding to the very immediate emergencies, should focus on local capacity building, and commit itself to reinforcing local coping mechanisms, institutions and capacities in order to promote a self-reliant and sustainable pattern of development. In practice, however, the opposite happens. NGOs' assistance rather than being
supplementary to local efforts, tends to become a substitute, subordinating and burning up local coping mechanisms and controlling the existing or emerging local institutions (UNRISD, 1994, p. 17). NGOs massive assistance extended to some military commanders in Afghanistan not only enabled them to remain active in the battle fields for many years in comparison to those commanders who did not receive NGOs support, but also contributed to legitimize the authority of such commanders over the civilian populations. This political and partial approach to aid by NGOs has also advanced serious distortionary effects on the local communities and their traditional institutions, and has aggravated rather than solved the problems. In short, the example of Afghanistan clearly indicates how humanitarian assistance has been used as a political device, aimed at supporting some certain military and political forces in the country with no regard to its longer term impact on the majority of the population. However, as the current political and military developments in the country verify, the politicisation of aid by NGOs at the local scene has not proved to be sustainable either politically for the commanders or financially for the NGOs.

3.3 Redefining NGOs’ Role: Learning From Experience

The assessment of the negative impacts of NGOs intervention in complex emergencies related to conflict poses some fundamental dilemmas on the NGOs’ role and the overall effectiveness of their intervention. Finding ‘right’ outlets and solutions seems difficult, if not impossible. In fact the search for ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ solutions seems to raise more questions than solutions. The ‘either’ and ‘or’ options do not correspond to the realities of today’s world. Some argue for establishing a “code of conduct” in relation to humanitarian assistance and
conflict (Minear and Weiss, 1993). But as experience reveals the degree of respect and commitment to such a code may differ among individual agencies, in addition to being open to their subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, as Anderson argues, some clarity can be gained if these dilemmas could be sorted out (1994, p 17). A constructive approach may push for practical individual and situation specific remedies rather than generalized and theoretical ones. This implies that both the challenges and the potential solutions should be narrowed down to particular situations. As far as the practical approaches to the issue are concerned the main question to be scrutinized is the effectiveness of the intervention and its short and long term impact on the targeted population.

Many NGOs are more or less familiar in dealing with emergencies caused by natural disasters. However, conflict situations and the dynamics of war are very different to those of a natural disaster. Historically the term "complex emergencies" came forth in the late 1980s, and gained wider recognition with the Gulf War. The UN considers a complex emergency as a "major humanitarian crisis of a multi-causal nature that requires a system-wide response" in which "a long-term combination of political, conflict and peacekeeping factors is also involved" (Duffield, 1994, p 38). As Duffield argues, complex emergencies are inherently political crises. In contrast to natural disasters, complex emergencies "have a singular ability to erode the cultural, civil, political and economic integrity of established societies". Complex emergencies attack social systems and networks and they are internal to political and economic structures of a the society. The environment of a complex emergency is peculiar. Its contextual traits suggest that a line of distinction should be drawn between it and natural disaster.
Thus, it is not viable to transfer the relief mechanisms applied for natural disasters to conflict situations. The logic of relief work evolves from a natural disaster model that pays little attention to social and political factors (Duffield, 1994, p 38). For instance, the relief programmes in Afghanistan, Angola and Somalia primarily have been concentrated on the delivery of basic survival commodities. Though these situations are political emergencies, the programmes offered have their operational origins in the response to natural disasters.

One significant characteristic of complex emergencies is their longevity. Despite the increasing number of complex emergencies and their seemingly permanent nature, still they are considered, markedly by aid agencies, as a 'transitory setback' and of a short-term or abnormal occurrence. The long lasted cases of political turmoil in Afghanistan, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan and many other places support this argument. The logic of relief as a short-term effort which originated from the response to natural disasters is not applicable here. Take Rwanda and the feeding camps, for example. If the situation remains the same as exists now for many years to come: Will NGOs and other aid agencies continue to feed hundred of thousands of refugees there? If Rwanda is not a 'hot-spot' any more; will it be still politically and financially feasible for NGOs to do so? Similar questions apply to Afghanistan and Somalia where no end to the conflict and the emergency situation is foreseeable.

Where does all this leave NGOs? What are the options open to them? Are there any alternatives available? Certainly there is a need for reflection - on what happened and what can be learned. The international aid community has now
become aware of the dilemma. The need for reorientation of both policy and practice is becoming evident. As one of the alternatives, there is a call for the so-called 'relief-rehabilitation-development continuum' or linking relief and development and its application in complex emergencies. Seaman states that the concept of linking relief and development, although current since the mid-1980s, "has grown in prominence since the Gulf War and the increasing international preoccupation with humanitarian relief" (Seaman, 1994, p. 33). Yet, so far this remains little more than a "wishful policy statement" (UNRISD, 1994) and little is yet known of what this would imply concretely in terms of changing present approaches, institutions and practices of humanitarian and relief assistance.

However, the most problematic issues in complex emergencies for the NGOs are grounded in their superficial understanding of the context and the narrow scope of their intervention itself. Many NGOs, in theory, argue that intervention should be based on effectiveness. This claim raises some problems. On the one hand, it is difficult to make a general statement about effectiveness, and on the other it is not easy to find a mechanism to measure effectiveness. The term is normative and open to varying interpretation to different actors e.g. the recipients, donors and NGOs. Hence, it is important to note that neither addressing the immediate needs nor the short-term positive results of the intervention process can provide enough credence to justify its effectiveness. Intervention is an ongoing social and economic process and, thus, its various dimensions and long-term effects must be considered. As Fowler argues: "Intervention defines the position of NGOs as outsiders in the continuing lives of the intended beneficiaries". Moreover, an intervention "recognises that there is already a context - the ongoing lives of
people- in which action is to occur and which must therefore be taken into account" (Fowler, 1990, p 14).

The case of NGOs intervention in Afghanistan delineates further the above point. NGOs working in Afghanistan generally have had very little success in exploiting their comparative advantages. Three leading reasons can be cited for this: the politicisation of aid (as discussed earlier), the predominant role of relief culture, and the failure to develop a fair, consistent and unbiased understanding of the context. For example, most of the 100 solidarity and relief NGOs working in Afghanistan did not have, and many of them still do not have, any operational theory and strategy on which to guide and manage their intervention. The solidarity NGOs in Afghanistan have had a very strong ideological and ethical commitment to the 'Afghan cause'. But by becoming operational there has been a severe lack of theory, practical expertise and approaches due to their biased stand on local realities and lack of organizational strength. This is especially important as many of the same NGOs are now involved in rehabilitation and development activities, even though they haven't succeeded in developing an operational theory to accommodate their new commitment. The need for developing such a theory and strategy to reflect their identity in their new role is evident. As Korten says "in the absence of theory, the aspiring development agency almost inevitably becomes instead merely an assistance agency..." which "runs considerable risk of inadvertently strengthening the very forces responsible for the conditions of suffering and injustice that it seeks to alleviate through its aid" (Korten, 1990, p 113). There is a real danger for the solidarity and relief NGOs to remain active beyond their initial mandate, if they do not evolve an organisational theory and
practical approaches to accommodate their new commitments to the people they want to serve. NGOs should acknowledge and accordingly respond to the conflicting organizational demands of relief and development, otherwise they bring the paternalistic culture of solidarity and relief to rehabilitation and development work. They have to reconcile these conflicting demands either by ceasing to exist or committing themselves to build up competence and capacity to become capable of meeting the requirements of their new mission. At the operational level, the trade-off between the initial mandate and the commitment to rehabilitation and development work requires a more responsive and flexible approach towards people's need and a fair understanding of the context. This commitment makes it essential for the NGO to prioritize 'what people want', and what best the NGO can offer. There is an absolute demand on NGOs to reflect upon their intervention and upon their identity to make sure how best to manage their intervention in the changing environment of complex emergencies. They must accord a high priority to reflection and learning from their experiences to see where conflict fits into their changing roles and commitments.

In the next chapter, I will examine further the issues of relief and development, and the potential for linking them in complex emergencies.
CHAPTER 4

Relief and Development Strategies in Times of War: Issues and Options for NGOs

4: 1 Introduction

Relief and development interventions share a basic principle: both are means, though different, by which NGOs and other agencies intervene in the lives of others in order to offer assistance to people in need.

Traditionally relief work or humanitarian assistance has been focused on the lessening of the immediate needs of a population suffering from natural or man-made disasters. Relief aid has been concentrated on the alleviation of emergency situations, and has been implemented with a short life-span, in a top-down approach, based on relatively little analysis of the underlying causes of the disaster. The sense of urgency associated with relief work characterizes it as a process based on a speedy delivery of materials, such as food and medicine, to meet an immediate deficiency or shortage experienced by the target population. Thus, the timely delivery of assistance, it is argued, favours a centralized and directive structure where the aid agency is the doer while the beneficiary is seen as passive recipient. Relief work has often been termed by its critics as a means that creates dependency and consequently undermines beneficiaries' capacity and damages their coping mechanisms. In short, relief assistance offers little more than a temporary lessening of the more visible symptoms of a problem and,
therefore, it is different from, and should not be confused with development work (Korten, 1990, p 118).

Development work is different from relief. It is long-term and a slower process focused on tackling the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment. Development necessarily involves structural transformation implying social, economic and political changes in favour of the targeted population. Development is a normative concept, and a value-led and people-centred process. It is seen as a continuing "process by which the members of a community or society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in quality of life consistent with their own aspirations" (Korten, 1990, p 67).

Development requires establishing a different kind of relationship between the NGO and the beneficiaries. Ideally it demands a relationship based on equal partnership. In a 'people-centred' development process, the stress is on the local control of the development intervention and the belief that the initiative for development should be generated locally. This type of development intervention, advocated in theory strongly by some NGOs, requires a bottom-up, decentralized and flexible approach, based on the full participation of the beneficiaries in the inception, planning, implementation, evaluation and benefits of the intervention.

Despite the different objectives, cultures and modes of operation between relief and development, a total distinction between them has negative impact on the beneficiaries. This is because in the absence of a development component to
relief work, it cannot assist the victims to promote sustainable change in their environment. It may create long-term dependencies, undermine local coping mechanisms and increase vulnerabilities. Thus, a practical inclusion of activities such as training, employment, income generation and awareness raising should be seen as an essential part of a relief intervention. This can greatly reduce beneficiaries' vulnerability, thus preparing the ground for the subsequent development process.

In situations of conflict where an immediate risk of conflict renewal and break out of violence exists, some argue that engaging in long-term development activities is not feasible. It is assumed that the break out of new violence may jeopardize and destroy any development activity thus making it difficult to foresee any promising outcome. They, therefore, tend to term development efforts in such circumstances premature and wasted, and insist on the delivery of assistance in the form of humanitarian relief.

4: 2 Why Relief?

Humanitarian assistance and the provision of emergency relief to the victims of conflict and natural disasters has been considered as one of the most appealing tools available to the richer countries of the North. Media coverage of African famine in the early 1980's played a crucial role in raising public awareness in the North resulting in a flood of funds in terms of private and public donations to NGOs relief efforts (ODI, 1988, p 2). Despite the general stagnation in development aid by Northern donors, relief expenditure has increased in recent years. The UN's World Food Programme declares that recently 40-50 million poor...
and hungry people have been assisted by it every year with over three millions
tons of food aid valued at US $ 1.5 billion (Herbinger, 1994, p 96). 80% of WFP
emergency aid was for man-made rather than natural disasters (IDS, 1994, p 2).
The same accounts for NGOs relief programmes. For example, currently more
than half of Oxfam's total budget is allocated for emergency relief work (Oxfam,
1995, p 799). In Georgia NGOs alone were said to be feeding 40% of the
population through their relief activities (IDS, 1994, p 11).

Though the relief and humanitarian intervention by NGOs in situations of conflict
has been associated with diverse effects, little attention has been paid to its
longer-term, often negative impact. In fact relief work has no mandate, besides its
narrow scope of material delivery, to reduce its negative impact on the recipients.
In relief work the recipients are nothing more than the passive and helpless
'victims' of a disaster. The 'victimization' of the target population is significant.
Relief has to dramatically 'victimize' the recipients to justify its own survival, as
relief itself is highly dependent on the 'mercy' of the donors. This is why there are
always the pictures of the famished babies and other victims of disasters brought
closer to the attention of the general public and donor institutions through the
mass media. In fact this is to stimulate a humanitarian response to raise funds.
The higher the profile of the disasters, the easier it is to raise funds. Complex
emergencies possess such a high profile, albeit in the early stages, hence, large
amounts are donated generously to the aid agencies. These money has to be spent
as soon as possible in order for the NGO to be accountable to its constituencies
and to secure further funds. And if there is fund and budget, then the NGOs and
other charities are ready to take action. This way of responding to an emergency
is appealing to donors too. By funding high profile short-term measures they not only avoid a long-term commitment, but also can appease their own political constituencies.

The humanitarian aspect of relief work is strongly appealing because images of the helpless victims evoke compassion amongst the public. Funds for relief are often referred to as 'hot money' which has to be spent in a comparatively short period of time. The high expectations placed on the use of this money are seldom realistic. Public and donor pressure requires NGOs to be seen doing something in the direction of the alleviation of human suffering. This speedy action often can lead to hurried decisions resulting in inappropriate and contradictory responses. Admitting failure and embracing errors in relief work is highly detrimental to any individual NGO, as the funding sources are highly insecure and the competition among NGOs to obtain funds is fervent. The timely delivery of relief assistance in order to alleviate suffering requires focusing on material and tangible goals such as provision of food and medicine. However, in complex emergencies this one-dimensional humanitarian response is considered insensible resulting in a severe neglect of the underlying causes of the conflict and the longer-term implications of the way in which it is provided. The technical nature of relief work leaves little room for the consideration of social, economic and political aspects of the situation. For instance, value issues such as awareness raising, capacity building and the overall question of social and economic equity are not matters of concern to relief and humanitarian assistance. As Oxfam states, "the great emphasis on speed, and the tendency to see emergency programmes in terms of logistics", 43
means that little dialogue is made in the initial stages with the people who are actually affected by relief assistance (1995, p 823).

However, integrating short-term relief programmes into a longer-term development process is not without problems. If relief work in complex emergencies is to become part of the solution, and not to continue to be part of the problem, then there are major dilemmas that need to be addressed. In addition to the practical challenges from the field, the changing environment of the whole aid business should be considered. A new relationship between North and South as a result of the Post Cold War world order is emerging. The change in the interests of the Northern donors has resulted in a reduction in the quantity of development aid. While this coincides with the rapid increase in the number of violent conflicts in the South, the pattern of humanitarian intervention is also changing. Military humanitarianism has become a distinct and integrated part of the new system. This new component is reinforcing the already existing dilemmas. No proportionally right answers are available. At the same time the gap between 'rhetoric' and 'realities' is widening. No wonder if one concludes that "appeasing Northern constituencies rather than tackling the crisis may be the main impact of so-called humanitarian intervention" (Duffield, 1994, p 40).

Nevertheless, after decades of experience in relief work, there is a growing awareness amongst the aid agencies, as well as the recipients, of the potential harm that the continuation of relief assistance in isolation from other aspects of the situation can cause. Thus, the need for a broader approach to relief is now being discussed and recognized. The workshop on linking relief and development
held at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex in 1994, the establishment of 'The War-torn Societies Project' as a joint effort by The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and The Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) in Geneva, the case studies by Mary B. Anderson of The Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. (CDA) in Massachusetts are all contributions that provide a great deal of both theoretical and practical insight to strengthen this approach. The approach emphasises on the reorientation of the role of relief. It sees relief as a means of contributing to victims' capacity building, encouraging local initiatives and developing local coping mechanisms.

There is an essential need for the relief and humanitarian assistance to encompass a broader concept and practice in order to address the problems raised by complex emergencies. The seemingly permanent nature of such emergencies demands a mix of short and long-term responses. To assume that there is only one solution to these problems is counter-productive, thus an approach combined of different responses can make the search for solutions more constructive. For example, the strengthening of the target populations' capacities is an important issue. The participation of local people and their organizations in relief programmes, and respect to the local initiatives and knowledge can help to reduce vulnerabilities and thus better cope with the crisis in longer term.

4: 3 Linking Relief and Development
Though the transition from relief to development has been problematic for NGOs because of organizational issues and the demands placed on them by the donors,
linking relief and development is gaining increased popularity. As Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell argue, the basic idea of linking relief and development is simple and sensible in theory. They hold that emergencies are costly in terms of human life and resources, disruptive of development and demand a long period of rehabilitation. According to them, development policy and administration are often insensitive to the immediate needs and the significance of protecting vulnerable households against risk. Thus, if relief and development can be linked these deficiencies can be overcome as: "better development can reduce the need for emergency relief; better relief can contribute to development; and better rehabilitation can ease any remaining transitions between the two" (Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell in IDS, 1994, p 1-2).

The idea of linking relief and development in political emergencies caused by conflict is of fundamental importance. This is despite the argument that the long-term and slower process of development is not compatible with the urgency of the need and thus hampers practical action which needs to be taken now. But what is needed here is to direct development to the reduction of vulnerabilities, and relief to the encouragement of long-term development (Maxwell & Lirenso, 1994). For example, Stewart states that from a human and economic perspective, the argument that development should be postponed until the conflict is over is usually wrong for two reasons: Firstly, the termination of development activities means "holding back on all social and economic investments" for an indefinite period that raises "the development cost of wars, which is especially serious when the war is prolonged". Thus, "refusing to finance development during war increases both the immediate and the longer term costs of war". Secondly, it is
often difficult to make a clear distinction line between relief and development. Therefore if relief is to be effective, then there is a need for a development component. For example, providing entitlements, says Stewart, by "generating productive employment or self-employment" is usually a more efficient form of relief than providing "hand-outs" (Stewart, 1993, p 376). Oxfam asserts the same claim writing that "the conventional division of programmes into the categories of relief, rehabilitation or development" is unhelpful. Such a division does not represent the "realities on the ground, where roles traditionally associated with development are possible in relief situations and vice-versa" (Oxfam, 1995, p 825). Herbinger presents similar arguments. He holds that bureaucratic, professional, logistical and intellectual requirements have resulted in different mindsets creating an artificial division between relief and development which "in the reality of the poorest developing countries does not exist". Thus, in some cases the separation of relief and development programmes has become part of the problem rather than the solution. He maintains that linking relief and development obviously "saves costs where resources, otherwise required for relief, become productive for development" (Herbinger, 1994, p 96).

However, the contextual requirements of complex emergencies suggest that the optimum level of consideration should be applied by the NGOs in selecting their development tasks and intervention. Provided the NGO has sufficient institutional capacity, two issues are of particular importance here: choice of intervention or the tasks to be performed, and the relationship with the intended beneficiaries. I would like to elaborate further on the above issues in particular reference to NGOs work in Afghanistan.
Given both the high degree of need for external assistance and the opportunity costs of the resources provided in complex emergencies, the choice of intervention/project for the NGO is crucial. The environment of development work, especially that of rural development, as Chambers (1993) argues, is Complex, Diverse and Risk-prone (CDR). The already existing high level of contextual uncertainties of development intervention are compounded when such initiatives are undertaken in the hostile and ever-changing environment of conflict situations. This practically limits NGOs control over the development process. Therefore, NGOs intervention ideally should be based on small-scale, flexible and demand-driven initiatives. The commitment to small-scale development work suits NGOs missions best, as neither funding nor an NGOs' organizational capacity may allow for large-scale and technical oriented activities. Experience shows that many such large-scale technical activities undertaken by NGOs have been destined to failure. The case of 'The Agriculture Survey of Afghanistan' programme undertaken by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and financed largely by USAID represents a typical example. The programme was initiated to carry out a technical survey of agricultural status in the country and supply data to the various agencies working in the agricultural field. This multi-million dollar programme, failed to produce significant and reliable input to the rehabilitation and development work in the war-torn country. Its inception was faulty, motivated by budget and technical considerations, not by the requirements of the context. Its mandate of collecting agricultural data in a changing environment constantly threatened by violent conflict was not only unfeasible, but also superficial. Its scale was too large covering a wide range of geographical areas while the programme did not have sufficient technical capacity to carry it out.
Therefore, its achievements were very limited as its staff, for lack of security or other reasons, were not able to collect data from the field and thus relied greatly on second and third hand sources. Besides the practical incompetence of this programme, its sustainability as a donor-led programme was greatly in doubt, and consequently ceased to exist when the donors stopped funding.

Considering the opportunity costs of the scarce resource of aid, is it viable to invest in such programmes? Can such programmes in a war-torn and fragmented society, where the need for social reconciliation is the foremost challenge, serve any other purpose than its narrowly defined technical objectives? Development work do not necessarily imply exclusively undertaking economic-oriented large scale projects. Development is neither a 'supply-driven' process nor is it solely concerned with the 'material outcomes' of some projects. In a war-torn society, focusing on social aspects of development such as education, training and awareness raising is just as important, and possible, as the delivery of project packages. Indeed the facilitation of such activities provides opportunities to a wide range of population and helps them to better understand the consequences of conflict, promote peacebuilding initiatives and pave the ground for further development work.

The relation with the intended beneficiaries is the second major problem faced by NGOs in linking relief and development. Though many NGOs in theory emphasize to build up local capacities and encourage local participation in their development programmes, their work in the field demonstrates the opposite. Two
issues deserve broader consideration in this connection. Firstly, the question of choosing the local partners; and secondly, NGO's relation with its partners.

The currently prevailing fashion of NGOs development work strongly recommends working through partners, preferably indigenous institutions. For instance, many NGOs and the UN agencies working in Afghanistan in their new task of 'community based development' stress partnership with the traditional Afghan *Jergas* or *Shuras* (local councils). The UN's Operation Salam Report on Afghanistan (1991) reads that: "In both rural and urban Afghanistan, communities traditionally make collective decisions through a *jerga*. The *jerga* is a meeting of elders, influential local people and religious leaders". The report after highlighting the importance of the *Shura* as a key element in the process of rehabilitation and as a reliable partner to UN agencies and NGOs further asserts that:

"The advantage of working with communities and their representatives are many. Such structures encourage self-reliance, realistic expectations, efficient use of resources, broad participation, skill development, and continuity after the implementing agency has deported" (UN, Operation Salam Report, 1991, p 2).

The above approach to partnership represents an absolute misunderstanding of the current context, is a misleading concept, and is in total contrast with the notions such as 'self-reliance', 'efficient use of resources' and 'broad participation'. Rehabilitation and development work in an environment affected by violent conflict requires a viable knowledge of the profound social, political and economic changes occurring in the society. The traditional *Shura Jerga* was a
legitimate and accepted element in social and political decision-making in many Afghan communities. But the 16-year old conflict has deeply changed its legitimacy, its role and its character and makeup. For instance, most of these Shuras are controlled by the military commanders, relating to different warring parties. Both the commanders and the parties did not exist in the pre-conflict situation. In fact, the current Shuras predominantly represent the personal, political and military interests of the controlling local authorities, or the local elites, more than the interests of the community. The members of the current Shuras are not selected or elected by the community, but are appointed by the controlling authorities to safeguard their interests. In addition, such communities do not form an unity, but are highly heterogeneous and divided. This is why one can find more than one Shura within an otherwise single community. Taking into account the arguments presented in the last chapter, such an ill-conceived approach greatly strengthens the very factors and forces that are responsible for the continuation of war and suffering. Moreover, an approach to rehabilitation and development based on such a misleading concept of the actual situation will never promote 'self-reliance', 'participation' and 'efficient use of resources'.

As argued earlier in this paper, a significant prerequisite for a successful approach in linking relief and development in complex emergencies is a thorough understanding of the context. Thus, an emergency should not be seen only as a physical event in terms of statistics, for example damage or deaths, but rather as the product of a particular set of social, political and economic factors (Seaman, 1994). This understanding will make the search for a proper mechanism for linking relief and development more effective, and provide further groundwork to
deal with the issue of local partnership efficiently. The inherent complexities of such situations places heavy demands on NGOs to be prudent in choosing their development partners. The likelihood for profound changes in social, economic and political relations and roles in communities affected by conflict is very high. Local communities, institution and groups may not enjoy the same characteristics and represent the same interests as they did in the pre-conflict context.

The above suggests that NGOs relationship with the intended beneficiaries should take a thorough account of the changing context reflecting a deeper appreciation of local realities. Development work in conflict situations requires different methods of action and a different sort of individual and organizational relationship with the beneficiaries. Its personnel and institutional demands requires a different set of personal, professional and organizational values and competency. The young, adventurous, politically motivated, well-intentioned personnel of solidarity and relief work equipped with a superficial understanding of the context, and possibly a technical skill, may not be able to grasp the inherent development aspects of the work. Development work is not a process narrowly centred on material outcomes and gains. It requires a high degree of efforts and commitment in the part of the NGO to build up trust and an unambivalent relationship with the beneficiaries. Development work emphasizes potently on the principle of down-ward accountability and increased responsiveness at field level. Development work requires the NGO not to limit its responsibility to the mere provision of pre-planned projects, handouts and gifts. It requires the NGO to take the role of a catalyst, a change agent, providing an enabling environment strengthening people’s capacity to determine their own
values and priorities and organize themselves to challenge the underlying causes of conflict, poverty, oppression and discrimination in their environment.
Conclusion

This paper has been an attempt to examine and explore some of the aspects of non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) intervention in situations of conflict or complex emergencies with particular reference to Afghanistan.

The analysis of conflict and violent disorder in the Third World countries revealed that while the potential for the outbreak of further conflicts are increasing, the causes and nature of this already complex phenomenon are changing, becoming less transparent and more complicated. It has also been pointed out that the issues arising from conflict are as manifold as the complex nature of conflict itself. And while currently there is no predictable scenario foreseeing an end to conflicts and internal strife in the Third World, the suffering and devastation caused is becoming more visible.

The significance of NGOs intervention in situations of conflict has been the main focus for this paper. NGOs in their brief of assisting people in need have come a long way. Despite all the shortcomings, pitfalls and errors, NGOs have been able to offer both moral and material support and assistance to the victims of conflict. While NGOs mandate and objectives are changing, their role in channeling aid is receiving wider recognition and appreciation. Yet in the socially disintegrated and changing environment of complex emergencies, NGOs are faced with major
dilemmas and challenges in how to manage their intervention and how best to offer their services.

These dilemmas have lead to arguments that humanitarian assistance restricted to relief work proves to be ambiguous in its mandate, and politicised in its nature, often leading to widening social and economic inequalities, creating further dependencies, undermining local coping mechanisms, exacerbating conflict, and consequently causing additional problems for the beneficiary population. It is also debated that humanitarian assistance has not been applied to address the underlying causes of conflict and has been put to use only as a short-term remedy without proper consideration of its long-term effects. Furthermore, it is argued that if humanitarian assistance could broaden its narrow technical scope from simply meeting immediate needs, and also accommodate long-term commitments in its brief, it can contribute more effectively to addressing the problem. The debate on linking relief and development has been centred on the above issue. Its point of focus has been on the importance of directing the scarce resources of relief to the practical incorporation of development strategies in its mission. Fundamental to this argument has been the need to target relief work to reduce vulnerabilities, build up capacities and raise awareness among the beneficiaries with an overall mandate of paving the ground for peace and social reconciliation in societies affected by conflict.

Throughout this paper, the call for a better understanding of the context of conflict situations has been evident. As experience shows, NGOs operating in situations of conflict are too often preoccupied with the physical affects of the
conflict and the political and military maneuvers in the environment. This preoccupation has largely prevented them from reflection upon their own role and its interaction with the changing environment of conflict. This has resulted in a situation whereby the diversities in the changing context of conflict, the heterogeneity of the population groups and their changing roles and responsibilities have received little consideration. Consequently, NGOs have failed to help and empower the target populations to the extent that they could have done.

As experience indicates most NGOs in situations of internal conflict set up cross-border operations. Whereas the conventional relief work may fit into such a method of operation, it comes into conflict with the terms of rehabilitation and development work which requires establishing intimate relationship with the beneficiaries. The establishment of such a relationship requires more effective field level strategies allowing beneficiaries participation in the decisions that affect their lives. Decentralization of organizational structure provides an ideal model in order to reduce the burden arising from the distance between the field and the headquarters, and also to assist the NGO in building up trust and confidence with the beneficiary population.

NGOs have their own agendas and priorities. Still, conflict and its politically polarized context require an high accord to the principle of impartiality and independence. Abiding by the principle of impartiality does not imply avoiding commitment to justice and respect to the rights of the people. What is needed is
the application of an operational impartiality, refusing to take a stand supporting one side or the other, and thus promoting social and political cohesion.

So far NGOs response to complex emergencies has typically been reactive focusing on the immediate impact of conflict. However, in conflict situations relief work soon becomes a political quantity. Taking into account the longevity of the current conflicts, the interaction between conflict/hunger and politics/relief can have detrimental consequences for the beneficiaries.

NGOs assistance to a conflict situation should ideally be integrated into a dynamic of peace. The NGO community is becoming aware of the interaction between aid and peacebuilding. Still, given the heterogeneity of the NGOs' community, their individual agendas and priorities and the ever-present lack of coordination among them, a hypothetical approach to peacebuilding may not produce practical outcomes. Also, by considering the complexity of the factors that lie at the root of conflict it is difficult for NGOs with their limited scope of activities to play a significant role in peacebuilding at a national or wider level in a given society. A realistic approach requires practical steps whereby peacebuilding activities should be integrated into NGOs plan of action and should be seen as a consistent ingredient of any interface between NGOs and the beneficiaries in a continuum of relief-development and peace. Such an approach to peacebuilding requires a significant change in NGOs organizational culture and modes of operation reinforced by an ideological commitment. However, this is not an easy task. As long as NGOs are external bodies to the local communities and ignorant of the actual realities and as far as they limit their input to material
and project handouts, their practical capability and their ideological commitment to peacebuilding are open to strong doubt. Perhaps the least the NGOs can do is to reflect upon their own activities to see if they promote or reduce tension and conflict. Thus a prerequisite for any role by NGOs in peacebuilding is to build up their own institutional capacities in conflict resolution skills, perhaps through developing an understanding of the modes of conflict resolution at the local level in a participatory approach accommodating beneficiary representation in all stages of the task.

Humanitarian relief and development work during violent conflict are tasks of enormous complexity. They expose NGOs to particular strains and tend to reveal contradictions, tensions and weaknesses in terms of NGOs institutional capacities and practical approaches. While NGOs are constantly at risk of becoming part of the political and economic dynamics of war, the conditions of the conflict environment place limitations on their practical responses. From the viewpoint of the NGOs, their conflict related experiences are confusing and ambiguous, dictated by forces and factors beyond their control.

While NGOs are enjoying the unprecedented opportunities extended to them by the politics of the post Cold War, opinions will continue to vary over what is the most appropriate role for NGOs to play. There are major dilemmas to face and hard questions to answer. As the world is in transition and there will be more disasters and conflicts to deal with, the future may help to clarify some of these issues. But over and above all these concerns should stand on one overriding principle: In this increasingly complex and competitive environment NGOs need
to be constantly reminded that their mandate to serve others is self-inflicted, and perhaps the NGOs themselves are the most appropriate bodies to reflect on the questions and dilemmas they now face in a rapidly changing new world order.
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