

ADVOCACY AS HUMANITARIAN POLITICS:
TOWARD A BROADER CONCEPTION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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ABSTRACT

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Advocacy in the humanitarian field has historically taken a back seat to relief operations, and for good reason: the central imperatives governing humanitarian action—access (to populations in need) and security (of one’s teams in the field)—also limit humanitarian advocacy. Bedrock humanitarian principles such as neutrality, impartiality, and humanity ensure that humanitarian interventions are non-political (impartial), but also limit the scope of political activities like advocacy available to relief NGOs. This international division of humanitarian labor—with relief NGOs focused on needs-based assistance while political actors focus on the political work of resolving crises—has been unraveling in the post-Cold War world, forcing the relief community to reconsider its relationship with political action and its engagement with the so-called political world. This study argues that humanitarian advocacy is now indispensable to humanitarian action, and that relief NGOs must view advocacy as a vehicle for “operating in broader political arenas, while maintaining the core values of humanity and impartiality that make humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics” (Leader 2000: 4). The relief community can no longer limit itself to service delivery alone: investing in advocacy is the only way to safeguard humanitarian values, effectively engage political actors, and ensure humanitarian outcomes for vulnerable populations around the world.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION: ADVOCACY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In the past, there was a clear distinction between development aid, actions of solidarity in cases of disasters, and humanitarian action in times of conflict. Today, we seem to have entered a period of chronic crisis and conflict in which emergency humanitarian action has become the only available form of political expression.

Francoise Bouchet-Sauliner, *The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law*

The first responsibility of the humanitarian organisations is to bring their influence on all the players to get them to assume their responsibilities to the victims and respect the rules governing the conduct of hostilities.

Pierre Perrin, “War and Accountability—Accountability: a Framework”

The relationship between humanitarian aid and political action has always been ambiguous. The moment that political forces are absent or not coherent we ask for political action. The moment they get too involved, we ask them to stop.

Jacques de Milliano, former Director, MSF-Holland, quoted in Macrae and Leader, *Shifting Sands: The Search for ‘Coherence’ between Political and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies*

Advocacy in the humanitarian field has historically taken a back seat to relief operations, and for good reason. Unlike human rights advocacy, which can be done from a distance and can even impugn a government’s reputation in the process, humanitarian advocacy is constrained by its central imperative: gain access to vulnerable populations to relieve unnecessary suffering. Gaining access means operating within a nation-state’s sovereign territories (or the territories controlled by competing armed factions), and implementing effective relief programs means forgoing activities that might threaten a host regime’s international standing—especially if you want to protect your field staff, deliver life-saving assistance, and ensure access to the region in the case of future emergencies (Curtis 2001, 17).¹

¹ While humanitarian action has concerned itself with the consequences of both wars and natural disasters, this thesis focuses primarily on the role of international humanitarian interventions in internal conflicts.

Because gaining access and maintaining security are the central imperatives behind humanitarian action, bedrock principles such as neutrality, impartiality, humanity, and consent do more than just grace the pages of charters of principles: they provide operational guidance for field programs² and, in so doing, grant relief NGOs³ the apolitical positioning needed to justify intervening in the affairs and territories of sovereign of states. But when it comes to advocacy, these humanitarian principles cut both ways: while they help ensure access to vulnerable populations in the field (i.e., third-party interventions are legitimate under International Humanitarian Law as long as they adhere to these principles), they also limit the types of advocacy that relief NGOs can pursue: highly visible public campaigns, for example, are often forgone in favor of more confidential, behind-the-scenes activities pursued in an *ad hoc*, as-needed basis. The principal focus of humanitarian action has historically been to deliver effective, needs-based assistance to needy populations; advocacy has always taken place to some degree, but not as a core organizational competency with corresponding budgetary outlays, dedicated staff and resources, and strategic, long-term plans to build capacity.

Toward a Broader Conception of Humanitarian Action

Recent shifts in international politics, however, present compelling reasons for relief NGOs to enhance their engagement with political actors. A host of geopolitical,

² The term “field programs” is used throughout this thesis as a reference to relief and development programs currently deployed around the world—programs that directly deliver humanitarian benefits.

³ Several terms are employed interchangeably throughout this paper as synonyms for private humanitarian organizations: the relief community, the humanitarian community, and relief and development organizations, or simply relief or humanitarian NGOs (non-governmental organizations).

ideological, public policy, and analytical changes have taken place in the international system that have transformed the dynamics governing humanitarian assistance, challenging the very assumptions underlying International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and forcing a reevaluation of both the nature of humanitarian action and its guiding principles. “Taken together, these changes present a powerful challenge to the classical notion of humanitarian principles, and thus to the principles of humanitarian action” (Leader 2000: 2). Yet the crisis that has broadsided humanitarian action, its assumptions and operating principles, has had an equally disruptive impact on the mechanisms of political influence once available to the international community. These same geopolitical shifts have also undermined conventional diplomacy, and states are searching for new mechanisms of leverage—mechanisms in which humanitarian actors, versed in the geopolitical periphery, figure prominently.

In this thesis I argue that humanitarian action is political by nature, as it operates within a political framework, engages with political actors and processes, and is subject to real compromises over its principles, interests, power, and spheres of influence. The compromises and agreements that define the relationship between humanitarian action and the politics of nation-states (the aid-politics relationship) are being rewritten, and the relief community must actively engage in these political conversations to safeguard its values.

The relief community, therefore, needs to “develop ways of operating in broader political arenas, while maintaining the core values of humanity and impartiality that make humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics” (Leader 2000: 4). To safeguard

humanitarian values, relief organizations engage with a range of political actors in order to counter threats to humanitarian action (threats to the deployment of effective, independently assessed, needs-based programs) while striving to orchestrate conditions conducive to humanitarian interventions and values.

By way of example, three thumbnail sketches briefly illustrate the changed context for humanitarian NGOs and why broader engagement with political actors (advocacy) is now essential.

Zimbabwe

The current humanitarian crisis has become so politicized and polarized over the issue of land reform that the ongoing social emergency—the basic health and nutritional needs of the population—has been sacrificed for political ends. Political actors have severely reduced international assistance as a gesture of displeasure with the Mugabe regime, yet the health crisis and AIDS epidemic go unaddressed because of this larger political struggle, and the crisis could deteriorate further if the overall political climate is not addressed. In the past, humanitarian NGOs focused only on providing direct assistance; but today humanitarian actors see that they must engage political actors in the hope of reshaping the debate on Zimbabwe's crisis: shielding humanitarian action from politics and ensuring that the international community tackles the underlying causes of the crisis rather than allow political tensions to color its response to the social emergency. Only in broadening its political engagement can the humanitarian community assert

needs-based values and ensure that governments allow for humanitarian outcomes (ACF-France 2006).

Uganda

The crisis in northern Uganda, epitomized by some two million displaced living in squalid camps, has lasted nearly 20 years. In the past, the relief and development community has operated as it always has: mitigating the worst outcomes of the humanitarian crisis by meeting basic needs and delivering lifesaving services. Twenty years later, relief NGOs are still delivering these same services, but the overall political context has remained unchanged (International Crisis Group 2004; Refugee Law Project 2004). This begs the question of what it means to work toward humanitarian ends: if the result of 20 years is an ever-stagnating social emergency, then the relief and development community must question their role in shaping the political context and find ways to work with political actors to ensure long-term humanitarian outcomes beyond the immediate delivery of direct assistance. Hence the move toward broader engagement with political actors and a broadening of the scope of humanitarian action and the humanitarian mandate.

The United States

Research into U.S. public attitudes toward international assistance consistently reveals that the American public favors helping poor countries develop through a combination of short- and long-term initiatives—indeed, the U.S. public often believes its

government does far more than it really does (Interaction 2004; Kull 2005; Lake Snell Perry & Associates 2004; World Public Opinion 2005; Global Interdependence Initiative 2005). Yet this baseline of public support does not immediately translate into concrete government commitments to international initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals. The relief and development community must work to bridge these political values with concrete policy proposals that tap into this wellspring of public support, creating the commitment needed to foster sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty. Yet non-political humanitarian organizations cannot undertake the political work needed to orchestrate public opinion and pressure official government support without investing in their capacities for advocacy—i.e., recognizing the need to work in broader political arenas by expanding their efforts beyond field work. If the relief and development community wants to improve international commitments to humanitarian values like those embodied in the Millennium Development Goals—and the evidence says the U.S. public agrees—“it must engage in a struggle to get these values implemented in the public policy of nations” by reinforcing its ability to influence political actors and processes at every point of intersection (Macrae and Leader 2000, 57).

In other words, beyond delivering assistance, relief organizations must also engage in the political process, devoting organizational resources to the struggle to reshape the aid-politics relationships, working to generate long-term support for humanitarian values, greater respect for IHL, and political commitments to finding solutions to humanitarian crises. Humanitarian advocacy, as organized activism in

support of humanitarian values and outcomes, is political by definition; indeed, advocacy in humanitarian action is the very embodiment of humanitarian politics.

The Promise of Humanitarian Advocacy

To engage in “broader political arenas,” the relief community must employ a number of strategies aimed at influencing the complex of forces, actors, and processes that constitute the various dimensions of a humanitarian crisis: the breadth of decision-making processes that govern international public policy, the practices and ideologies of national and international agencies, public perceptions and attitudes toward aid and foreign assistance, and the interplay between diplomacy, international law, and the nature of belligerent groups that ultimately determine the state of humanitarian standards.

Advocacy—as “persuasive communication and targeted actions in support of a cause or issue that seek to change policies, positions, and programs” (Reproductive Health Outlook 2006)—offers a range of approaches suitable for engaging with political actors and processes. Advocacy means to speak on behalf of someone or something, but this thesis adopts a broader interpretation of the concept, however, defining advocacy as a set of interventions designed to change systems or institutions resulting in outcomes that threaten human lives (Knitzer 1976).

From a humanitarian perspective, life-threatening outcomes occur whenever vulnerable populations are denied access to the rudimentary materials and life-sustaining services they require for basic survival—whether this results from natural phenomenon or

from the direct or indirect consequences of human action. In such cases, vulnerable groups are entitled to protections, material assistance, and life-sustaining services under International Humanitarian Law, and the law spells out under what conditions assistance can be delivered within a state's sovereign territories.

The targets for change in humanitarian advocacy would therefore be the policies, practices, ideologies, or systems that prevent the accessing of humanitarian protections and assistance, or, in the absence of humanitarian programs, would prevent a population from accessing sufficient quantities of food, shelter, water, and medical care. A detailed look at humanitarian advocacy takes place in Section Two.

An Expanded Humanitarian Mandate?

As a wide-ranging set of strategies for influencing specific audiences and stakeholders, advocacy offers relief NGOs a number of options for engaging in political arenas. Relief NGOs already address life-threatening outcomes by directly intervening to deliver assistance, but “humanitarian space” must be secured in order to do this, which requires a minimum of political backing. Yet, as the relief community has witnessed over the past twenty years, humanitarian crises can last decades if the “appropriate” types of political support are not forthcoming and commitments from the international community are inadequate.

As humanitarian crises stagnate and international commitments wane, the relief community's “first responsibility” may now be to “bring their influence on all the players

to get them to assume their responsibilities to the victims and respect the rules governing the conduct of hostilities” (Perrin 2002). In addition to alleviating the effects of humanitarian crises, relief NGOs must use their unique standing—their first-hand knowledge and operational perspectives—to orchestrate the political involvement needed to secure “humanitarian space,” respect for IHL, and resolve long-standing crises.

Without corresponding programs in advocacy, humanitarian action runs the risk of being reduced to a mere palliative, endlessly mitigating the extremes of so many chronic crises whose only hope for resolution hinges on political solutions stemming from the international community’s involvement:

The ending of the Cold War eased the domination of political imperatives over humanitarian concerns, but rather than empowering humanitarian organizations to reassert respect for humanitarian values, political disengagement left humanitarian action in a vacuum. Without the power or mandate to address the causes of crises, yet deployed as the primary response, humanitarian action is reduced to a palliative to assuage the domestic public conscience in industrialized nations. (Terry 2002, 220)

Whether working to influence donor funding priorities, build a political constituency favorable to international assistance, orchestrate popular opinion and press attention, or remind international actors of their legal obligations under international law, systematic engagement in “broader political arenas” must be a core activity for relief NGOs if hunger, violence, and insecurity are to be properly addressed.

Scope of Thesis

My own experience working for the international humanitarian NGO, Action Against Hunger (internationally known as Action Contre la Faim, or ACF), has greatly influenced the course and direction of this study. Privy to internal conversations beginning several years ago, I became aware of the tensions associated with defining and applying the concept of advocacy in the humanitarian field: the tensions inherent in carving out political work for non-political organizations. I was fascinated by these discussions and wanted to help develop and define the concepts, hoping to add clarity to the ongoing debate.

It quickly became apparent that the tension brewing at ACF (the turmoil over advocacy) was directly linked to larger, unresolved discussions within the broader humanitarian community; tensions stemming from the relationship between humanitarian NGOs and their political counterparts in nation-states—the “aid-politics” relationship as I have termed it. This larger set of tensions seems largely to result from the ambiguity that has existed between the sometimes conflicting roles and responsibilities carried out by humanitarian and political actors, the forces that give shape to this evolving relationship, and the uneasy need for better coordination between the two in delivering humanitarian outcomes. The linkages between the need to define advocacy’s political terrain and the larger need for more effective political engagement on the part of the humanitarian community (i.e., advocacy) formed the crux of my investigation.

I chose to focus on an analysis of this internal discussion, hoping to present an understanding of the tensions facing the aid-politics dynamic (from the humanitarian perspective), trying to tease out potential solutions for the relief community, and attempting to develop a planning framework for an Action Against Hunger advocacy strategy. In choosing to focus on this internal discussion, I was encouraged by colleagues within the humanitarian field to seek out a group of analysts closely aligned with these discussions—the Humanitarian Policy Group (of the Overseas Development Institute)—who bill themselves as “Europe’s leading team of independent policy researchers dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice in response to conflict, instability and disasters” (Macrae and Leader, 2000). The HPG tracks these aid-politic issues and I have included their analysis in my arguments.

In selecting this topic and scope, I have eschewed a more traditional literature review in favor of producing an internal study on the need for political engagement on the part of humanitarians: this means I have foregone discussion of other important topics like the inherent problems and limitations associated with international NGOs, their potential for imposing Northern/Western bias, their sometime role as surrogate for the political-economic prescriptions or foreign policy goals of powerful Western states, and the philosophical and operational tensions that often belie the cohesion among the so-called “relief community.”

Although some of these issues do surface in my discussion of the evolution of the aid-politics relationship (e.g., the political abandonment of humanitarian action in the post-Cold War world, the drive to co-opt humanitarian action for political ends, the use of

humanitarian action as a surrogate for more substantive political involvement in international crises), my aim was narrowly tailored to highlight how the relief community is already involved in politics and argue for essential investments in advocacy so they can influence the direction and substance of the political process and thereby safeguard humanitarian outcomes.

Outline of Thesis

Over the next three chapters, I discuss a range of issues in arguing that advocacy must now be considered a core program focus for contemporary humanitarian action. In Chapter One, I tackle the political evolution of humanitarianism: the nature of humanitarian action, the role of relief organizations as the so-called “fifth pillar” of the international community’s humanitarian architecture, and the 19th century origins of nongovernmental organizations and of the humanitarian project—all while tracing the evolution of International Humanitarian Law and the founding precepts (humanity, impartiality, and non-discrimination) that emerged to become the guiding principles of humanitarian action.

This is followed by an assessment of the geopolitical changes that have redefined humanitarian action—and its evolving relationship with the politics of states—in the post-Cold War period: from the post-Cold War’s “politics of disengagement” to globalization and the emerging realignment of the “aid-politics” relationship. This section looks at the some of the developments—the reshaping of sovereignty, the rise of war

economies—that have contributed to the shifting nature of conflict and the subsequent rewriting of the dynamic between humanitarian actors and their guiding principles, governments and political actors, and non-state military actors.

This then opens up a more thorough analysis of the dynamic relationship between humanitarian action and state politics: from the reappraisal of humanitarian initiatives and the struggle to harness it for political ends, to the ultimate reunification of politics and humanitarianism. I trace the arc from the Cold War era of “unification” between aid and politics, highlight the “politics of abandonment” that followed, sketch how humanitarian action became a surrogate for political action, and how aid and politics are undergoing a sort of reunification in their struggle for complementarity and “coherence.”

The last section of the first chapter assesses the limits of humanitarian action and the need for political engagement on the part of nation-states in managing conflicts and creating humanitarian space (enforcing the “framework of respect”). The section ends with an assessment of the politics of humanitarian action and identifies pathways to political influence that make sense for the humanitarian mandate—setting the tone for Chapter Two, a discussion of humanitarian advocacy as humanitarian politics.

Chapter Two opens with a discussion of the political nature of non-political humanitarian organizations, what it means to operate in “broader political arenas,” identifies where humanitarian action and state politics overlap, and discusses these intersections as entry points for leveraging humanitarian influence over political agendas. In discussing humanitarian action’s political framework (world politics vs. realpolitik vs. partisan politics), this section makes the case that humanitarian advocacy must map and

monitor the breadth of interactions between the humanitarian and political “spheres” in order to safeguard humanitarian values and action.

The following section presents a working definition of advocacy, discusses humanitarian advocacy’s unique setting, and defines its applications within humanitarian contexts. The humanitarian advocacy is unpacked further in identifying its core characteristics (public vs. private), the three levels at which humanitarian action takes place (operational, thematic, and cause-related advocacy), defines the targets and aims of humanitarian advocacy (changing policies, practices, ideologies), and proposes a frame for assessing what issues should be addressed through humanitarian advocacy (micro-level vs. macro-level frames). The section ends by asserting that humanitarian advocacy is the embodiment of humanitarian politics.

The last section pulls all of these threads together in three brief case studies. Three examples of humanitarian advocacy—based on the international aid organization Action Against Hunger’s experience—are analyzed by humanitarian context, the types of advocacy employed (operational, thematic, and cause-related), the linkages with our working definition of advocacy, the areas where humanitarian and political action overlap, and how each exemplifies the struggle to redefine the relationship between humanitarian action and state politics. The first case study assesses Action Against Hunger’s (ACF) operational advocacy in Malemba, the Democratic Republic of Congo; the second looks at an example of thematic advocacy as ACF presents a critique of the

World Food Program's 2005 strategic plan; and the last case study assesses ACF's cause-related advocacy in conjunction with the ONE Campaign.⁴

The third and final chapter lays the groundwork for a proposed multi-part advocacy campaign for Action Against Hunger in 2007: a campaign to massively expand water-and-sanitation services to poor communities throughout the world—a campaign requiring a high level of coordination between ACF's field programs and its advocacy efforts at all three levels (operational, thematic, and cause-related). Chapter Three proposes that an organization like Action Against Hunger piece together an ambitious program to target the Millennium Development Goal for water and sanitation known as “Target 10.” The section begins to carve out a role for Action Against Hunger, links humanitarian Action with humanitarian advocacy, introduces ACF's field programs as a solid match for meeting Target 10's goals, and initiates a discussion on Target 10's linkages with advocacy.

An assessment then follows of the nature of the global water-and-sanitation crisis and the extent and distribution of unmet needs around the world: the threat from water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation is defined; numbers are crunched to demonstrate the returns on investment in health, productivity, and financial savings that would result from a successful Target 10 campaign; a global distribution of water and sanitation needs is presented—ranking regions by coverage rates and national and

⁴ The ONE Campaign's name derives from its mission: secure an additional one percent of the U.S. government's budget for international health and anti-poverty initiatives—it is not an acronym or an abbreviation.

sub-national distinctions; and lastly, Target 10 financing arrangements are introduced, for both poor- and middle-income countries.

The next section spells out in greater detail how ACF's program expertise is perfectly suited for delivering the types of water-and-sanitation improvements required by the Task Force on Target 10. A discussion takes place of Action Against Hunger's community-centered, comprehensive approach to sustainable service delivery; a field example from the Congo is offered as indicative of the types of water-and-sanitation programs that ACF carries out, engendering community ownership and collaboration.

The thread then leads to an in-depth look at advocacy within the context of Target 10's water-and-sanitation goals. After delineating ACF's role and defining which of the 2.6 billion people ACF could legitimately target—expanding water improvements to the rural poor in poor-income countries—I highlight the key obstacles identified by the Target 10 Task Force as essential barriers to overcome if the Target 10 objectives are to be successfully reached. Most of these obstacles involve political work rather than field work, and therefore are the domain of humanitarian advocacy. Through advocacy campaigns in “broader political arenas,” relief and development NGOs must ensure there is a deliberate commitment by donors to increase and refocus their development assistance and to target sufficient aid to the poorest low-income countries; a deliberate commitment by governments of middle-income countries that do not depend on aid to reallocate their resources so that they target funding to their unserved poor; deliberate activities to create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities; deliberate recognition that basic

sanitation in particular requires an approach that centers on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization; and deliberate planning and investment in sound water resources management and infrastructure (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 11-12).

But these core advocacy areas must be unpacked, defined, and broken down into manageable sub-campaigns if any progress is to be documented and evaluated. To overcome these general Target 10 obstacles, there are a number of other advocacy areas that must be identified and addressed, and in this section I discuss the need for targeted advocacy efforts in a number of subsections of this broader Target 10 campaign: advocacy areas such as capacity building among operational NGOs, government funding and budgetary priorities, policy coordination on international development goals, targeting and influencing key stakeholders and institutions, and orchestrating public support for Target 10's goals. I then subject each of these advocacy areas to an analytical framework designed to tease out the specific components that a successful, multifaceted Target 10 advocacy campaign would need to address, selecting a handful of components to analyze within each advocacy area. Examples of these components include:

Advocacy Area: Capacity building, funding priorities, policy coordination, influencing key stakeholders and institutions, or orchestration of public support

Type of Advocacy: Public or private; operational, thematic, or cause-related

- Target for Change:** Specific objectives (for each segment of the larger campaign), immediate and long-term changes sought
- Target Audience(s):** Identify key influencers and stakeholders who can bring about such change
- Basic Framework:** Develop appropriate advocacy strategies for reaching targets and objectives
- Coalition Partners:** Identify potential allies for coordination and greater impact
- Resource Analysis:** Identify organizational, financial, and staff commitments needed
- Political Sphere(s):** The politics of international solidarity of donor states, politics of national interest of donor states, conflict politics, and domestic policies of donor states
- Aid-Politics Issues:** Where international assistance and humanitarian action coincides with politics
- Evaluation:** Criteria and tools for evaluating the impact and gains of specific advocacy efforts

Throughout the discussion within these chapters, I hope to demonstrate that humanitarian action can no longer subsist on relief programs alone. Rather, in placing advocacy at the center of humanitarian action, the relief and development community may be expanding their mandate, but that it is the only way to ensure that humanitarian values survive in an ever-changing political world—a world in dire need of humanitarian

advocacy's unique, needs-based approach to politics; an approach that ultimately saves lives.

CHAPTER TWO: THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Humanitarianism, broadly speaking, is a catchall phrase for practicing or advocating humane action, generally understood as concern for humankind.⁵ The International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC) provides a more contemporary understanding of humanitarian values in one of the more authoritative humanitarian documents, the ICRC's "Commentary to the Geneva Conventions." In the words of Jean Pictet, one of the "high priests" of the ICRC, humanitarian is "being concerned with the condition of man considered solely as a human being, regardless of his value as a military, political, professional or other unit', and 'not affected by any political or military consideration'" (Quoted in Mackintosh 2000, 5).

This latter definition is firmly associated with a specific form of international politics known as humanitarian action. Humanitarian action, "by which most people mean relief to suffering populations after a natural disaster...or during disasters of human design...is one of the few parts of the international system that still seems to be functioning as it was meant to" (Rieff 1995-96, 1). Others distinguish between "acts of solidarity" when responding to natural disasters like the recent tsunami in South- and Southeast Asia, and "humanitarian action" when efforts are organized to relieve or

⁵ *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (1994), s.v. "humanitarianism."

mitigate the impacts of violent conflicts on civilians (Bouchet-Sauliner 2002, 6).⁶ The latter connotation is the focus of this particular study: humanitarian action undertaken by private organizations to deliver assistance amidst civil conflict.

Relief NGOs: The Fifth Pillar of the International “Humanitarian Architecture”

The dynamics behind the management of international humanitarian crises are complex, with a number of different actors determining the outcome. According to humanitarian analyst Thomas G. Weiss, eight different actors play a role in any given internal conflict: three of them come from within the conflict area (host governments, armed opposition groups, and local NGOs) while five actors hail from outside the area of conflict (U.N. humanitarian agencies, donor governments, military forces assuming humanitarian tasks, the ICRC, and international NGOs) (Weiss 1996, 437-39). The latter five actors make up the international community’s “humanitarian architecture”—the international division of labor and responsibilities for collectively managing internal conflicts; this paper focuses on the “fifth pillar of the international community’s humanitarian architecture”: private relief organizations (Weiss 1996, 437-39).

Non-governmental organizations, as distinct from commercial enterprises, are formed largely to ““serve underserved or neglected populations, to expand the freedom of or to empower people, to engage in advocacy for social change, and to provide services”” (McCarthy et al., quoted in Weiss 1996, 447). Relief NGOs provide their brand of

⁶ “Acts of solidarity” should not be confused with so-called “solidarity organizations” whose mandates are decidedly political (not impartial), as NGOs that “deliberately provide relief to the victims of one side to a conflict” (Mackintosh 2000, 5).

services to vulnerable populations reeling from the impacts of violent conflicts. In providing their vital on-the-ground services (e.g., shelter, medical attention, access to food and water, international visibility and media attention), relief NGOs contribute handsomely to the international community's "humanitarian architecture" (Weiss 1996, 437-39). The United Nations, international diplomacy, the International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC), donor governments, and a host of other agencies all have key roles in coordinating international humanitarian responses, but they directly rely on the operational capabilities of relief NGOs in six vital areas: assessment, negotiation, resource mobilization, delivery of services, coordination, and strategic planning (Weiss 1996, 447-453). These activities define humanitarian action, are carried out by private humanitarian organizations, and constitute an invaluable part of the international "safety net."

By the end of the 20th century, relief NGOs had become central to the international community's emergency response capabilities, providing operational expertise garnered through their years of first-hand experience with the political, resource, logistical, and diplomatic dimensions of humanitarian crises. It is this range of expertise that relief NGOs should package and channel via strategic advocacy programs to better inform the processes that constitute the international community's "humanitarian architecture." This may seem a logical conclusion—the deepening of NGO involvement in international politics—but it is a relatively recent development in the history of international politics.

The Origins of Humanitarian Action:
NGOs, Nation-States, and Humanitarian Norms

The role that relief NGOs currently play in international assistance is a relatively recent development, and the widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of non-state actors in such roles has not always been the case. And even as NGOs gain ground in terms of legitimacy, the role that relief organizations play is quite contested—both within humanitarian circles and without—and there are competing understandings of the goals and values that humanitarian action should espouse.

Humanitarian action's current configuration originated with the development of civil society (nongovernmental) organizations in 19th century Europe and the United States. Social movements during the mid-1800s, imbued with the “civilizing mission” and progressive ideals of the era, sought to humanize the technical ferocity of war and formed organized societies to address these concerns (the most notable of which were the Societies of the Red Cross which managed to form chapters in many European nations). The dynamic that these groups put in place eventually led to the signing of the first Geneva Convention in 1864 and to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) under its various guises and names (Hutchinson 1996, 346-354). This dynamic also initiated the arduous process of legitimizing the role of nongovernmental organizations in state politics. The Red Cross Societies, steeped in the Enlightenment ideal of progress, set out to humanize the barbaric conditions found in modern warfare (not to mention other social ills), and in so doing provided the catalyst for discussions on the limits of war—the principal concern that gave shape to this

budding humanitarian movement, and a question on which contemporary humanitarianism still pivots.

The 19th Century Humanitarian Project: Cultural and Military Constraints

Yet the humanitarian movement that took shape in the 19th century was decidedly different from its 20th century counterpart. Despite the Red Cross' nominal commitment to humanizing acts of war, these commitments were quite limited in scope in part because 19th century civil society saw war as ““a normal and desirable social activity”” (Mann, quoted in Hutchinson 1996, 351). This conception of war, coupled with nationalism, produced a very different humanitarian configuration.

Seeing nothing wrong with the legitimacy of war as a tool of the state, the founders of the Red Cross set out “not to abolish war but to make it less barbaric by improving the lot of sick and wounded soldiers through the formation of voluntary aid societies” (Hutchinson 1996, 346). Yet, the founders of the Red Cross—one of the best known self-described humanitarian organizations of the era (and the precursor to the ICRC)—steered the incipient humanitarian movement toward objectives that were, by today's standards, decidedly anti-humanitarian: the promotion of “military-mindedness” among the populace; an understanding of humanitarianism as patriotic self-sacrifice in the service of one's country's wartime needs; and the facilitation and eventual integration of these “voluntary aid” organizations into the command structure of the military itself (Hutchinson 1996, 351). Instead of “making war more civilized, [organized charity itself]

became militarized and adapted to the needs of belligerent nations, who soon became champions of this different conception of wartime charity” (Hutchinson 1996, 6).

The 19th century humanitarian project was also constrained by state interests. As Hutchinson notes, most of the proposed humanitarian agenda was rejected outright by national governments.⁷ Only the signing of the Geneva Convention, “an international convention that would grant special protection to the wounded and to those caring for them,” made sense to the military imperatives of the period, and thus the configuration of 19th century humanitarianism was largely defined and confined by state interests (Hutchinson 1996, 346-47). Humanitarians may have provided the public face for the movement that led to the signing of the Geneva Conventions, but had the humanitarian project not coincided with the political interests of the elites, conditions may have been less favorable for the Geneva Conventions (Leader 2000, 11).

Nonetheless, regardless of the limits on humanitarianism in the 1800s, NGOs (and most notably the ICRC) had been legitimated by nation-states to some degree, and their selective accommodation of the 19th century humanitarian project was a remarkable, if unforeseen, break from the Westphalian system of total state sovereignty. Beyond the establishment of an incipient system of international humanitarian law, states had ushered in a new breed of non-state actor that would prove as significant as the development of

⁷ Other components of 19th century humanitarianism that were not aligned with military interests (and which were therefore rejected) were: (1) the proposal “to send onto the battlefields of Europe bands of volunteers, inspired by the purest motives of Christian charity, who would be able to supplement the presumed insufficiency of army medical organization”; (2) “to stimulate among the common people...feelings of respect for those killed and wounded in battle, no matter what uniform they were wearing”; and (3) “the creation of a neutral charitable army upon which belligerents could draw in time of need” (Hutchinson 1996, 346-47).

humanitarian law during the coming century (Leader 2000, 5). “Indeed, the idea of a secular, universal organization with a specific mandate to protect those beyond the limits [of war], rather than the development of [international humanitarian] law itself, is in many ways the most distinctive contribution the twentieth century has made to the humanitarian idea” (Leader 2000, 5). This distinctive 20th century contribution was made possible by the struggles that 19th century civil society initiated, in both giving shape to humanitarianism and in securing NGO involvement in government.

International Humanitarian Law, Principles, and Action

In addition to the contributions from 19th century civil society, the origins of contemporary humanitarian action also hail in part from early- and mid-20th century struggles with the horrific realities of two world wars—struggles that culminated in the codification of the broadest and most explicit statement of humanitarian law to date, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Geneva Conventions, along with Hague Law, collectively form much of what is know as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), or the “international law of armed conflict” (Bouchet-Saulnier 2002, 1, 8).

Humanitarian action and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are both informed by humanitarian principles. There is much confusion in distinguishing between “humanitarian principles” versus the “principles of humanitarian action,” but being able to distinguish between these concepts, and knowing how and when they interact, is of importance if we are to understand the obligations that IHL imposes on the different

constituents of the “humanitarian architecture.” “Humanitarian principles,” in short, refer to the broad set of standards that form the foundation of IHL (and which are described below), while the “principles of humanitarian action” refer to a more tailored set of operational guidelines for carrying out humanitarian relief work in the field (Mackintosh 2000, 3).

International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), first and foremost, is premised on the idea that war has limits. IHL’s two constituents, “Geneva” and “Hague” law, set legal precedents and impose obligations on specific groups of warring parties (Leader 2000, 2; Mackintosh 2000, 3). Hague law, codified during the Hague Peace Conference of 1899, is generally concerned with the conduct of hostilities; its most significant principle is that there are limits to the types of methods that can be deployed during military hostilities—i.e., it prohibits the use of weapons designed to cause unnecessary or gratuitous suffering. Hague law also distinguishes between military and civilian targets, a concept that is likewise developed in Geneva law (Mackintosh 2000, 3).

Geneva Law, whose four Geneva Conventions of 1949 represent its most complete statement, contains “nothing about the conduct of hostilities: instead [it is] concerned with the treatment of victims of war” (Mackintosh 2000, 3). All four conventions deal with the wounded and sick presumably held in enemy territory, and all four “prescribe minimum standards of treatment to be afforded persons taking no active part in...hostilities” (Mackintosh 2000, 3). The first and second Conventions deal

exclusively with military personnel (with regard to war on land and sea, respectively); the third Convention concerns the treatment of imprisoned military personnel; and Convention IV deals exclusively with civilians (Mackintosh 2000, 3).

International Humanitarian Law, incidentally, is binding on all states and non-state parties, regardless of whether they are signatories to the Geneva Conventions, “in so far as they reflect customary international law” (Mackintosh 2000, 3). Legal doctrine also deems any Convention signed by states to be binding on “any two or more non-state parties involved in an internal conflict, even if no state is involved” (Mackintosh 2000, 3). Essentially, the humanitarian principles enshrined in IHL are internationally binding to all parties. What is the relevance of IHL to humanitarian action, to humanitarian principles, the principles of humanitarian action, and the international division of humanitarian labor in general?

Humanitarian Principles

The actual provision of services to vulnerable populations during times of conflict (humanitarian action) is only minimally referenced in IHL, chiefly in the fourth Geneva Convention—although it is also mentioned in Article 3, which is common to all four Conventions, and the two Additional Articles of 1979. Almost all references within IHL refer to nation-states, with minor exceptions in references to third party, non-state actors (of which only the ICRC is listed by name).

It cannot strictly be said, therefore, that the Geneva Conventions confer rights or impose obligations upon humanitarian agencies. The Conventions simply do not address these actors. The articles of the Conventions which concern civilian relief

rather describe the situations in which states must allow such assistance to be delivered to the civilians in their power, and the conditions which they are entitled to impose on such delivery. (Mackintosh 2000, 3)

In other words, key humanitarian provisions, such as a threatened population's right to assistance and protection, are phrased in IHL as obligations on states, rather than as explicit rights held by civilians or the humanitarian community. "An impartial humanitarian body, such as the ICRC, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict," which is as close as the Geneva Conventions get to bestowing rights on non-state actors in Common article 3 (Mackintosh 2000, 3).

But this language is sufficient to entitle relief organizations access to vulnerable populations because: (1) according to binding IHL, states must allow humanitarian operations within their territories as long as those operations meet certain conditions, and therefore relief NGOs meeting these standards can legitimately insist on access; and (2) relief NGOs have access to the legal standards spelled out in IHL which therefore provide both guidance and recourse to international opinion if their operations meet the legal conditions but they are still barred from direct access to beneficiaries (Mackintosh 2000, 3).

The provisions of the Conventions which relate to relief reflect the same concerns faced by humanitarian organisations today. The drafters of the Conventions accepted that states would not allow humanitarian assistance to pass through their territory were it to advantage the military effort of the enemy. The conditions which states are entitled to impose are designed to minimise, if not eliminate the impact of relief on the progress of the war. (Mackintosh 2000, 3)

International Humanitarian Law clearly sets up binding obligations on all states and warring parties to allow relief efforts within their jurisdictions, spells out the conditions under which relief NGOs can insist on access, and outlines preconditions which humanitarian organizations must meet to gain access. These IHL principles do impose limits on the types of humanitarian involvement that can be undertaken during a conflict, but the “real significance of the idea of humanitarian principles [in IHL] is the obligations it places on belligerents to limit the way they fight war” (Leader 2000, 5).

The legal requirements spelled out in IHL (i.e., the humanitarian principles) also have a broader relevance for humanitarian action: they are not only principles by which states must abide, but they also serve as the building blocks on which the guiding “principles of humanitarian action” have been erected. The “principles of humanitarian action” must take abstract IHL concepts like neutrality, impartiality, and humanity and make them operational, i.e., find ways to put them into practice. Relief NGOs have had to follow some version of these principles since the founding of the ICRC (Mackintosh 2000, 5; Weiss 1999, 2).

The Principles of Humanitarian Action

Because the Geneva Conventions phrase the provision of humanitarian relief in terms of obligations on states to allow for relief operations under specific circumstances, the “principles of humanitarian action” appear as conditions for NGO access under IHL. Three specific legal requirements—the terms humanitarian, impartial, and non-discrimination—“appear repeatedly in the Geneva Conventions...to qualify legitimate

relief activity” (Mackintosh 2000, 5). These three conditions are echoed in the Red Cross Movement’s own “fundamental principles,” which in turn have been the humanitarian system’s point of reference for establishing operational “principles of humanitarian action” to guide the design and implementation of their relief programs (Leader 2000, 5).

Contemporary humanitarianism has largely incorporated the Red Cross’s “fundamental principles” with minor variations, invoking some combination of the ICRC’s “[h]umanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, universality, voluntary service, and unity [which] are principles of ‘humanitarian action’ (guiding relief and protection of rights) as distinct from principles of ‘international humanitarian law’ (like the distinction between combatant and noncombatant, for instance)” (Weiss 1999, 2).

In addition to appearing in the Geneva Conventions, these three concepts are well represented in major humanitarian policy statements and accords like the Red Cross / NGO Code of Conduct, the ICRC’s Commentary to the Conventions, and show up in many field-specific reiterations such as the “Ground Rules for Southern Sudan” and the “Joint Policy of Operation in Liberia,” to name a couple (Leader 2000, 5; see Atkinson and Leader 2000; Bradbury et al. 2000).

The principles of humanitarian action, the “well known ideas of neutrality, impartiality, independence and the rest serve to legitimise ICRC’s [and other relief NGO] intervention in conflict, to position it in respect to the actors in a conflict in a way that is both ethically justifiable and politically possible, and to guide staff negotiating the complexities of working in the midst of violence” (Leader 2000, 5). Yet, as important as they are for guiding NGOs through the complexities of humanitarian action, it is

important to remember that in “many war zones, context is as important as principles because the latter often clash. Operational principles thus are not moral absolutes...they are norms toward which to strive, but without the illusion that their application is possible in every situation or that their success is guaranteed. They are means to achieve ends but not ends in themselves” (Weiss 1999, 6).

The principles of neutrality and impartiality, which became embodied in the accepted practices of humanitarian action, reflected a shared understanding between humanitarian organizations, politicians and the military of the political function of aid in conflict situations. These principles can be seen as part of a deal between these different actors, whereby the potential strategic costs of facilitating humanitarian access are offset against the strategic and political benefits of granting it. (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291)

The Red Cross’ list of seven principles is largely derived from IHL’s two foundational principles, “humanity” and “impartiality,” while the concept of “non-discrimination” can be said to be contained between the two (Mackintosh 2000, 5). Understanding the intended meanings of these terms within IHL is important if we are to gauge the debates over these principles in the current geopolitical climate.

Impartiality. Jean Pictet, one of the “high priests of [the ICRC’s] ethical framework,” dissected “impartiality” and found three distinct meanings (Leader 2000, 5). The first isolated meaning is *non-discrimination*, or the “absence of objective discrimination on the basis of membership of a social ‘group’”—as the Conventions strictly prohibit discrimination on account of race, color, religion, faith, sex, birth, or wealth, or other criteria (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

The second component of “impartiality” is the principle of *proportionality*, “or that assistance will be afforded according to need...[something that is]...echoed in all of the charters of principles currently in use or under consideration by relief agencies, and can be said to be a principle firmly embedded in international humanitarian law” (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

The third component of “impartiality” admonishes against “subjective distinctions” on whether specific individuals are innocent, guilty, good or bad, and as such deserving or not of assistance (Mackintosh 2000, 6).⁸ As we shall see, this third element of Pictet’s reading of “impartiality” is of considerable concern in policy debates surrounding humanitarian policies and the political involvement of states.

Humanity. The term “humanity” also appears in IHL and informs the other principles. The ICRC, in Pictet’s words, defines “humanity” (or its derivative, “humanitarian”) as ““being concerned with the condition of man considered solely as a human being, regardless of his value as a military, political, professional or other unit’, and ‘not affected by any political or military consideration’” (Quoted in Mackintosh 2000, 5). Although there are ongoing debates within IHL as to what qualifies as “humanitarian” under IHL (especially in situations when relief is afforded to only one geographic area or political constituency), it may be that “no more can be deduced from this term than the very basic Red Cross definition of the principle of humanity: preventing and alleviating human suffering” (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

⁸ “An interesting contrast can be drawn here with international refugee law. Under the statute of UNHCR [the U.N.’s High Commissioner for Refugees], that organization is prohibited from assisting those accused of international crimes,” a source of considerable tension for agencies working under the principles of refugee law and IHL (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

Neutrality. The term “neutrality” does not actually receive any mention within IHL.⁹ “Neutrality is nonetheless one of the fundamental principles of the Red Cross, and so is brought within the ambit of the Conventions by reference to [the ICRC commentary on the Conventions]” (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

For humanitarian organizations, the “traditional notion of neutrality may have been associated with silence, but agencies such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) [Doctors Without Borders] claim to work in the ‘spirit of neutrality.’ They will denounce parties that breach international humanitarian law and commit human-rights abuses, but will not put themselves into a position of solidarity with any particular side in the conflict” (Curtis 2001, 13). If unbundled, however, “neutrality” has two constituent meanings (as it appears in the ICRC’s commentary on the Conventions), both of which are well represented within IHL: ideological neutrality (“presumably expressed through comment or operation”), and non-participation in hostilities (direct or indirect) (Mackintosh 2000, 6). This latter aspect is at the very core of humanitarian principles, designed as they were to prevent aid from becoming an advantage to “the adverse party.” Some of the “more detailed conditions set out in the Conventions are expressions of this basic requirement of neutrality,” and there are even detailed suggestions on what might be done to meet these operational requirements (Mackintosh 2000, 6). For example, Article 23 of the fourth Convention states that unless a relief NGO can guarantee that (a.)

⁹ Interestingly enough, the term “neutrality” is not mentioned in the Geneva Conventions, but instead shows up in the ICRC’s literature. One reason for the absence of “neutrality” may be that “the term has a technical meaning in international law, in relation to the positions of non-belligerent states. While this sense of the term is not without relevance to humanitarian agencies, it has more resonance with the ICRC than with relief agencies” (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

consignments are not diverted from civilian ends, (b.) that effective controls are in place, and (c.) that no advantage will accrue to the enemy (economically or militarily), the NGO cannot insist on access under IHL. The article then goes on to state the types of activities that would have to take place under IHL: the supervision of any distribution of goods; relief NGOs must control any and all goods they bring into a territory—something that most relief NGOs are keen to ensure to meet ethical and accountability considerations, but “here we see that it is an explicit requirement of [IHL]” (Mackintosh 2000, 6).

Consent. The final concept to consider is the role of “consent” in humanitarian action. Although not an explicit principle as outlined in IHL, it nevertheless underlies the legal statements within the Geneva Conventions in that relief efforts can only take place if they meet certain criteria (i.e., do not amount to a forced intervention), since “nonintervention in domestic affairs is the glue of international relations”—although the notion of nonintervention has been subjected to contested interpretations over time (Weiss 1999, 1, footnote 1). In addition to underlying central issues of state sovereignty, it is a key operational procedure for relief NGOs to seek consent from the warring parties of a given region if their personnel and programs are to be allowed to operate in some semblance of legitimacy and safety.

Changes in Humanitarian Action

The development of humanitarian principles in IHL is significant because it has obligated belligerents to limit how they wage war (although we will see shortly that this is no longer necessarily the case). The principles enshrined in Hague and Geneva law clearly place obligations on how individuals are to be treated in wartime, whether they are civilians or military personnel, and states have largely had incentive to abide by these obligations (Leader 2000, 5). That is, until recently.

This “classicist” configuration of humanitarian principles, legal obligations, and guiding assumptions—with its seemingly tidy division of international labor between state obligations and relief NGO contributions—is now largely defunct (Weiss 1999, 2; Bouchet-Sauliner 2002, 6). The relationships and roles that once made up the “humanitarian architecture” during the Cold War are in flux, and relief NGOs are struggling to find new approaches to solving complex humanitarian crises in today’s geopolitical context.

The forces that gave shape to IHL during much of the twentieth century had in many ways “been formulated mainly to deal with a different world from today’s—a world populated by governments and regular armies whose interests were served by adhering to the rules of warfare” (Weiss 1999, 2):

[H]ow [humanitarian principles] are expressed, and the extent to which they are respected, is historically determined. Determining the limits of war is an intensely political process and thus will reflect the politics of the time. It is a process largely determined by politicians and soldiers, not humanitarians. The modern expression of this idea is found most clearly in International Humanitarian Law (IHL). It is predicated on the international political system at a certain point in its evolution,

and so on the nature and function of warfare in that system. As such, it assumes war to be a political process fought by, or for control of, states. (Leader 2000, 2)

Indeed, a host of geopolitical, ideological, policy, and analytical changes have imposed seismic changes on the dynamics that govern the delivery of humanitarian assistance, challenging the very assumptions underlying IHL and forcing a reevaluation of both the nature of humanitarian action and its guiding principles. This is obviously an “intensely political process” reflecting the politics of the times. “Taken together, these changes present a powerful challenge to the classical notion of humanitarian principles, and thus to the principles of humanitarian action. A new ‘deal’ is being negotiated” (Leader 2000, 2).

Post-Cold War Challenges: Redefining Relief and Politics

The relationship between humanitarian action and state politics has always been contested and subject to competing claims over proper roles and responsibilities. While the uneasy relationship between aid and politics has undergone several permutations during the late 20th century, the geopolitical upheavals of the post-Cold War period were transformative; indeed, both political and humanitarian actors are still reeling from these seismic shifts. Nevertheless, both sectors seem to recognize the need for a more coherent response to international humanitarian emergencies, albeit from very different vantage points.

An Evolving Relationship: Humanitarian Action and Politics

Conceptually, the relationship between humanitarian action and politics (i.e., the aid-politics relationship) can be thought of as having passed through three phases: the period after WWII in which aid and politics were generally unified (when humanitarian action complemented the political engagement of states); a post-Cold War phase during which humanitarian assistance was “abandoned” by the customary role provided by politics, leaving relief NGOs as the only Western representatives in many conflict-ridden countries (the separation of humanitarian action and politics); and the current process in which politics and humanitarian action are struggling to redefine the terms of their reunification, the types of international responses and specific roles each should pursue (the reunification of politics and humanitarian action) (Weiss 1999, 22; Macrae and Leader 2000, 16).

During the evolution of the aid-politics relationship, the role of humanitarian action has been transformed from providing independent but complementary relief services during internal crises—as an adjunct to the involvement of state politics—to operating as a *substitute* for state political involvement (the post-Cold War withdrawal of state engagement), and now seems to be the *only* form of political engagement that states entertain when dealing with humanitarian crises (Macrae and Leader 2001, 290).

The interplay between humanitarian action and the “high” politics of states can be thought of as an international division of labor, with each sector performing specific roles in managing humanitarian crises. During the Cold War era, for example, primacy was given to state political objectives, and state politics meant deploying diplomatic, military

and economic assets in a world where international “intervention in the internal affairs of states, including humanitarian assistance interventions, was limited...by an unconditional respect for states’ sovereignty...[which]...was functional in containing the risk of direct confrontation between the superpowers” (Macrae and Leader 2001, 292). But as the geopolitics shifted, the complementary role provided by the relief community was also challenged.

With the demise of the Cold War, trends emerged in a rapidly globalizing world that triggered a radical realignment of the relationships and norms that governed international politics during the Cold War. International humanitarian relief, a central pillar of the Cold War’s “humanitarian architecture,” suddenly found itself at the center of a restructured post-Cold War world, facing forces that threatened to undermine its relief programs, efficacy and independence, and traditional modes of operation.

The “Politics of Disengagement”: Globalization and the Post-Cold War Realignment

A number of geopolitical, ideological, and policy changes coalesced to challenge the guiding assumptions underlying both humanitarian action and conventional political engagement. Such upheavals have triggered a search for new approaches to managing internal conflicts, mitigating violence, and addressing humanitarian crises (Leader 2000, 3; Weiss 1999, 1, 6; Mackintosh 2000, 1; Curtis 2001, 5).

Shifting Perceptions of Sovereignty. One of the more striking changes in the post-Cold War environment has been a shift in the perception of state sovereignty. After the interventionist days of the colonial era, the concept of unconditional sovereignty

became ascendant in the aftermath of WWII, emphasizing “the imperative of absolute and unconditional respect for sovereignty” in international relations. This interpretation of sovereignty functioned to reduce the risk of a superpower confrontation by “placing a premium on non-intervention in the internal affairs of another state” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 11).

This emphasis on absolute sovereignty and non-intervention, of course, was only selectively invoked in Cold War politics. Superpower interventions “in the form of military assistance and development aid” routinely took place and “shaped the political and economic dynamics of proxy conflicts¹⁰ across the Third World during the Cold War” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 11).¹¹ Perceptions of absolute sovereignty (and its value to powerful states) slowly changed toward the end of the Cold War as superpower investments in once strategic Third World allies became economically, politically, and strategically unsustainable. As the threat of a superpower confrontation faded, domestic political concerns questioned the costs and strategic value of Cold War era transfers of military and economic assets in support of struggles that were no longer of vital interest to Western powers (Macrae and Leader 2000, 11).

Powerful states began to selectively abandon notions of unconditional sovereignty in the post-Cold War world, with Western powers justifying a more interventionist approach in mitigating the instability associated with internal conflicts in the post-Cold

¹⁰ Proxy wars during the Cold War were conflicts between the two superpowers that involved third party states and governments as supplements for or as substitutes for fighting each other directly—“the agency of one who acts by appointment instead of another.” *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (1994), s.v. “proxy.”

¹¹ Not to mention adversarial interventions in the affairs and regional interests of a highly competitive superpower rivalry (e.g., CIA- or Kremlin-sponsored coup attempts, political espionage, assassination plots, and material support for political opponents to the official regime, etc.).

War world. As superpower micro-managing receded, bilateral political engagements placed new demands on former client states, requiring that they meet specific political and economic prescriptions to qualify for assistance. This blurring of development aid, bilateral assistance, and humanitarian aid divided the world in two, with qualifying states enjoying the benefits of bilateral relations with the West. Yet for those former client states that did not—or were not able to—comply, bilateral relations with the West were almost nonexistence, save for the presence of relief NGOs.

A significant phenomenon also arose during this period of disengagement: entrenched “war economies” in states at the geopolitical periphery characterized by disintegration of the state, destabilizing violence between competing armed groups, predatory resource extraction and asset-stripping, trade in military hardware and international contraband, and more. “War economies” were significant as engines of humanitarian crises and as destabilizing forces for humanitarian action (Duffield 2001).

War Economies & the Nature of Conflict. In addition to contributing to the dynamics of “failed states,” the development of “war economies” ushered in an era of warfare with very different dynamics. The withdrawal of superpower involvement in the proxy wars of the Cold War period was associated with a profound shift in the nature of conflict, the nature of civilian-military norms, and the use of warfare as an economic activity—phenomena that have undermined the principles enshrined in IHL, challenged standard humanitarian modes of operation, and driven the diplomatic community in search for new mechanisms for regulating internal conflicts.

A number of characteristics in war economies point to the “development of new survival strategies by elites that include dismantling welfare bureaucracies, violent predation, and forming links with the international grey economy” (Leader 2000, 12). As a result, many former proxy states have been reduced to perpetual zones of conflict as various factions vie for control of the state and leverage whatever resources they can find to finance their activities.

The dependence of Third World belligerents for supplies of weaponry and budgetary support, meant that during the Cold War the respective superpowers had both the incentives and the means to influence the nature of proxy conflicts. With important exceptions, the withdrawal of extensive external financing, combined with extreme strain on public financing, has meant that warring parties have had to find new sources of income to sustain their conflicts. The emergence of what have become known as ‘war economies’—the extraction of wealth as much as an end in itself as a means to sustain military activity—became a marked trend in contemporary conflicts from the mid-1980s onwards. (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14)

To sustain their military activities, armed movements have pursued a range of activities characteristic of “war economies”: trade in natural resources (oil, diamonds, minerals, forest products); the production of narcotics (cocaine, opium); the violent stripping of civilian assets; and the manipulation of markets and systems of external aid (e.g., diverting food drops, preying on recipients of aid). These types of activities are inherently dangerous for civilian populations because war economies hinge on a new type of relationship between warring parties and non-combatants: the severing of any reciprocity between civilian populations and warring factions and the direct targeting of civilians as a source of war-sustaining wealth and services (Leader 2000, 13; Macrae and Leader 2000, 14).

This changed nature of conflict in the post-Cold War environment has had enormous implications for humanitarian action and IHL. As an important source of labor and assets for armed groups, civilian populations are transformed into a source of strategic value in a war economy and, as such, are controlled and preyed upon. As a result, the distinction between combatant and non-combatant enshrined in IHL has largely become obsolete.

The subsequent blurring of the distinction between civilian and military groups is not a new feature of conflict, and was common to the guerrilla wars after 1945. What is new, however, is that in contrast to the liberation and secessionist movements that characterized the conflicts between the 1950s and 1980s, in the post-Cold War era, the reciprocal links between military forces and civilians living under their control appear to have been severed in many areas of the world. In the process, the distinction between combatant and non-combatant is not simply blurred, but rather dismantled by predatory military groups. (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14)

The ethical framework guiding humanitarian action—humanitarian principles such as impartiality, neutrality, and consent—assumes general acceptance of the notions “that war has limits, that...belligerents are concerned with political legitimacy, and that all states have an interest in preserving respect for IHL” (Leader 2000, 3). The legal requirements of IHL also assume reciprocity between armed movements and civilian populations: that warring parties have an interest in protecting the health and security of their civilians, and that consent can be secured prior to pursuing humanitarian projects in support of populations caught in the middle of a conflict. The strategies pursued in war economies, however, “no longer depend on any kind of consent from or accountability to society; there is no necessity for any kind of social contract. In short, a ‘governance gap’

has emerged between rulers and the ruled” (Leader 2000, 12); to ““paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, war has increasingly become the continuation of economics by other means”” (David Keen, quoted in Leader 2000, 12-13).

The assumptions underlying IHL and humanitarian principles are no longer valid in many contexts, placing humanitarian action on shaky ground. The changed nature of conflict complicates the creation and maintenance of humanitarian space and thus the implementation of relief programs. Calling on belligerents to protect non-combatants—a fundamental humanitarian concern outlined in the fourth Geneva Convention—is meaningless if civilians *are* the intended targets of military campaigns (Leader 2000, 11). If armed groups have no discernible political project, nor any need for moral legitimacy, their brutal military campaigns against civilians openly flaunt humanitarian norms and IHL. These belligerents are immune to external condemnation and care little about their international reputation.

Until recently, the two most essential humanitarian principles—neutrality (not taking sides with warring parties) and impartiality (nondiscrimination and proportionality)—have been relatively uncontroversial, as has the key operating procedure of seeking consent from belligerents. However, a host of developments in the 1990s has altered this attitude toward humanitarian action. These include the complete disregard for international humanitarian law by war criminals and even by child soldiers, the direct targeting of civilians and relief personnel, the use of foreign aid to fuel conflicts and war economies, and the protracted nature of many so-called emergencies that in fact last for decades. The result has been a collective identity crisis among aid workers in war zones as well as among those who analyze such efforts. (Weiss 1999, 1)

The targeting of civilians for the extraction of local and international wealth puts “humanitarian principles...under siege. The extent to which they can be applied depends

on the context...[and humanitarians]...are becoming aware of the unacceptable results of applying neutrality, impartiality, and consent when dealing with unprincipled actors in a variety of armed conflicts” (Weiss 1999, 6). The essential point, for all parties, is that *“the principles of humanitarian action have shifted from being conditions imposed on agencies by elites to conditions agencies are trying to impose on the belligerents”* (Leader 2000, 21; emphasis in original). That is, the crisis that has broadsided humanitarian action, its assumptions and operating principles, has had an equally disruptive impact on the mechanisms of political influence once available to the international community. The geopolitical shifts resulting in war economies have also undermined conventional diplomacy, and states are searching for new mechanisms of leverage.

Reappraisal of Relief: New Entry Point for Politics. As we have seen, the demise of the Cold War meant that superpowers no longer have the incentive or the means to influence the nature of proxy conflicts, and the changed nature of conflict has deprived previously influential states of their traditional means of political influence over erstwhile allies. In the post-Cold War world, “the conventional tools of international diplomacy are proving of limited value in engaging with increasingly factionalised armed movements which draw significant financial benefits from sustained violence” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14).

Traditional diplomacy, like international humanitarian law, “seems to have been formulated mainly to deal with a different world from today's—a world populated by governments and regular armies whose interests were served by adhering to the rules of

warfare” (Weiss 1999, 2). With traditional Cold War diplomacy no longer an option, a search is now under way for new “entry points” for managing conflict and dampening the ability of armed groups to disrupt civilian life and stability. The former international order “has lost its political rationale. Organised violence has adapted and, through the opportunities afforded by globalisation, become self-sufficient and no longer in need of state sponsorship” (Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis 2001, 270). A UN official quoted by Macrae and Leader remarks that contemporary diplomacy is in transition:

‘The old, Cold War, rules don’t apply any more, it is no longer a case of Security Council members phoning up their allies and telling them to behave. Traditionally we relied upon political leverage, and in particular on pressure from the Security Council. Peacekeepers were usually deployed when the superpowers had scared themselves so much that they decided they had to do something. If we cannot rely on this anymore, then we need to look for other entry points.’ (Macrae and Leader 2000, 13)

In searching for new mechanisms or “entry points” for managing internal conflicts, states eventually seized upon the perceived potential of humanitarian aid as an entry point, hoping to influence the behavior of warring factions by putting conditions on the delivery of aid. Humanitarian aid was, after all, one of the few remaining links western states had with the geopolitical periphery after disengaging from Cold War politics.

[The] international community has been seeking new ways to influence not only the conduct of war (and so improve adherence to international humanitarian law), but also its very course. In the search for new points of leverage a range of instruments have been developed. Alongside the use of sanctions and selective armed intervention, the use of aid, including humanitarian aid, as a tool of conflict management has gained increasing prominence over the past decade. (Macrae and Leader 2001, 294)

This attempt to seize humanitarian aid and use it to further the aims of foreign policy runs counter to the long-standing independence of relief and assistance—humanitarian assistance is apolitical by mandate, serving all human needs regardless of a population's political value. Suddenly, humanitarian relief was faced with the prospect of being integrated into the political realm of foreign policy. The geopolitical restructuring that took place after the demise of the Cold War world essentially initiated a new struggle over how to define the relationship between state politics and humanitarian aims (Curtis 2001, 6).

And while most political and humanitarian actors agree that both sectors have important contributions to make in this search for a renewed division of international labor, there is significant unease and difference of opinion over how this interaction will take place, what it will look like, and who will decide the outcome. “It is no longer assumed that a separation between aid and politics is either feasible or desirable,” nor has the process of redefining this relationship run its course (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291). There is yet room for relief NGOs to influence the outcome.

In the next sections we see why it is vital that humanitarian NGOs engage in these political discussions, and why investing more fully in their capacities for advocacy may be the relief community's only hope for influencing the outcome. Humanitarians clearly “have a stake in political outcomes at every level, and their actions influence and are influenced by such outcomes” (Weiss 1999, 11). Improving their ability to engage in broader political arenas is the only way to guarantee a voice for the humanitarian

community while enhancing their influence over the decisions of political actors and processes.

The Reunification of Politics and Humanitarianism

As mentioned above, the relationship between state politics and humanitarian action during the mid- to late-20th century is often portrayed as having three distinct periods: the complementary division of labor that allegedly existed during the Cold War; a period of political abandonment coinciding with the demise of the Cold War; and the current disorderly period of reunification in which a new deal is being wrought (Leader 2001, 14-15).

Unified and Complementary

During the Cold War, a common understanding of the purpose and role of humanitarian assistance ensured a common understanding of the division of roles between states and relief NGOs. In a nutshell, the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC, and the tenets of IHL were the points of reference for determining the interplay between humanitarian action and political roles: relief NGOs would work to provide temporary relief while political and diplomatic efforts would organize to resolve the roots of a conflict.

While there was never a “golden age” when humanitarianism was completely insulated from politics—much aid was indeed “an extension of the foreign policies of

major donors, especially the superpowers”—it was easier, both “conceptually and practically, to compartmentalize humanitarianism and politics” (Weiss 1999, 22). Nevertheless, this common understanding of the relationship between relief and politics was reflected in a number of institutional settings. Unlike the politicized realm of military transfers and development funding, for instance, humanitarian assistance “was not subject to political conditionality and did not imply political legitimization of the government in the recipient country” (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291). This distinction between the conditional (political) transfer of military and development assets and the provision of (non-political) humanitarian assistance was a defining characteristic of the Cold War era relationship between political and humanitarian aims.

By channeling resources through international organizations [like the ICRC and relief NGOs]...political distance between donor and recipient countries was maintained in practice as well as in theory. In other words, there were efforts to separate humanitarian interests from foreign policy and defence interests of donor countries. These efforts were reflected in the principles used to guide humanitarian action, the mandates of emergency relief bodies, and the institutional relationships between aid, defence and foreign policy actors. (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291)

Yet, this international division of labor was quickly reshaped by other global forces, the consequences of which imposed further adjustments and tensions on the interplay between politics and relief.

The “Politics of Abandonment”: Humanitarian Action as Political Surrogate.

Along with the withdrawal of state interests from the geopolitical periphery came a “politics of abandonment” in which “aid agencies were left as the primary means for political engagement by the West” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 17).

Without the geopolitical competition that characterized the Cold War era, major states had little incentive to continue investing in distant struggles of questionable strategic value. As noted earlier, this withdrawal of First World resources was an important factor in the development of war economies; the “withdrawal of the political incentive of Western governments to invest in bolstering Third World states has also had dramatic effects on the volume and conditions of aid flows” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 11). Relief aid increasingly replaced the official development assistance offered by Western states as the post-Cold War worldview decreased the volume of aid and disbursed much of it through NGO proxies.

The political abandonment of the periphery was closely aligned with the development of a post-Cold War worldview emphasizing a different “strategic hierarchy.” As expressed by USAID officials working under Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, countries in the post-Cold War world were suddenly classifiable as one of four types: those that actively participate in international affairs and “abide by mutually agreed rules”; emerging democracies that choose to engage in international affairs “because they accept that course as in the best interests of their people”; “rogue states that reject the benefits of positive participation in international affairs, suppress their people and often support terrorism; and states that have failed and are unable to provide the basic requirements of life and physical security for their people” (Atwood and Rogers, quoted in Macrae and Leader 2000, 11-12).

This worldview rearranged the disbursement of development and military aid. Whereas the former superpowers would subsidize regimes of strategic importance, in the

post-Cold War landscape there was no superpower competition for those states unwilling or unable to abide “by mutually agreed rules.” Those states declared “rogue” or “failed” were largely disqualified from official bilateral investment from the West. The lot of these peripheral states, and their populations, fell to the relief community.

This arrangement—using relief NGOs as surrogates for political engagement with the periphery—saddled humanitarian action with the political and strategic objectives that were once the obligations of states and the international community (Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis 2001, 270). Humanitarian action thus shifted from being an adjunct to political engagement to operating as a *substitute* for the West’s engagement with the politically abandoned periphery. States increasingly relied on relief agencies to mitigate atrocities in the absence of any real political engagement from the West (Leader 2000, 12).

[T]he end of the cold war resulted in the political disengagement of major powers from the geopolitical periphery, often leaving development and humanitarian actors as the sole representatives of Western powers in non-strategic countries. Developmental and humanitarian assistance were expected to fill the space left by the withdrawal of diplomacy, leading to a blurring of the lines between politics, development and humanitarian assistance. (Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis 2001, 270)

Yet voluntary relief organizations have little influence over the way a conflict is conducted, nor are they capable of rescuing “failed” states or resolving entrenched conflicts (Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis 2001, 272). Such projects are rightly the domain of state actors in possession of the diplomatic and security muscle that can wield real economic, political, and military clout. “Humanitarian action, by itself, cannot solve the problem of the populations’ suffering, which exists in a political and military framework.

Pouring assistance blindly into such contexts can neither improve the quality of politicians' work nor decrease the weight of military actors' influence" (Bouchet-Saulnier 2002, 4).

Toward the end of the 1990s, states began to realize the limits of their hands-off approach. A number of factors led states to look for new ways to influence long-standing conflicts, and the activities of relief agencies—as the West's only link with the geopolitical periphery—seemed a logical starting point.

In the search for new points of leverage in conflicts a number of strategies have emerged. These have included the increasing use of sanctions and selective use of armed intervention, the choice of instruments reflecting the strategic significance of the particular country. Widespread in those countries on the geopolitical periphery is the use of aid, including humanitarian aid, as a tool in international efforts for conflict reduction...[I]nternational aid is...now legitimate to use...as a tool for political intervention and as part of a coherent strategy for conflict reduction. (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14)

Since the late 1990s, the reunification of aid and politics has transformed humanitarian relief yet again; this time, from aid as a *substitute* for Western political engagement to humanitarian relief as the *only* form of Western political engagement with the periphery. This can be seen in the prevailing preference for “strategies of in-country and temporary protection [that] are replacing [the] willingness to accept large numbers of refugees. Humanitarian assistance is increasingly becoming the preferred response to complicated crises” (Mackintosh 2000, 1). As elaborated in the next section, the “post-Cold War realignment and the rethinking of sovereignty... forced a re-examination of the relationship between aid and politics, fuelling demands for coherence” between the two spheres (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14).

The Reunification of Aid and Politics: The Struggle for “Coherence”. Along with the dramatic shifts in geopolitics and sovereignty in the post-Cold War world, changes were also afoot in the analysis of aid and politics. These changes culminated in a new aid paradigm centered on calls for greater “coherence” between the political and humanitarian spheres, although there is little unity over the meaning of “coherence.” There are two opposed readings on reunification: coherence as the *integration* of humanitarian action into a conflict management paradigm in the service of political objectives; or coherence as increased *complementarity* between the two realms—a formal sharing of strengths, information, and expertise from the independent but overlapping spheres of aid and politics. The reexamination of the roles of aid and politics in conflict management is firmly under way, but the exact configuration of this division of labor has yet to be decided (Macrae and Leader 2000, 14).

Interest in coherence was driven by many factors, several of which were internal to the aid sector. Many governments became increasingly uneasy with the growing costs of international aid in response to conflict-related emergencies. Official development assistance (ODA) was on the wane as greater resources were devoted to containing conflicts through humanitarian relief. “The rise in relief expenditure can be explained not only in terms of a rise in humanitarian need, but in relation to the growing scope for humanitarian intervention, enabled by the softening in the international position regarding sovereignty” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 15). And the scope of responsibilities placed at the doorstep of humanitarian action had indeed experienced exponential growth.

[T]he current crisis of the welfare state, the collapse of certain states, and the chaotic construction of an international society are all new causes for the increase in humanitarian action. Epidemics, famine, conflict, exodus, populations marginalized or abandoned within a state, forgotten countries (on the path to disintegration or collapse), the forsaken of the society of nations—humanitarian action occupies the space left vacant or not yet filled by the established powers. (Bouchet-Saulnier 2002, 5)

As humanitarian relief received greater resources and responsibilities—shifting from *substitute* for political engagement to the *only* form of political engagement—the activities, effectiveness, and escalating costs associated with relief were subject to greater scrutiny and criticism from a growing range of political actors. “The financial and geographical expansion of humanitarian operations attracted considerable attention from within the aid community and more broadly. No longer associated purely with the logistics of moving emergency food aid to the victims of flood and drought, nor with the secretive workings of the ICRC, humanitarian assistance entered the realm of high politics and media coverage” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 16).

The calls for coherence and the reappraisal of the impact of aid in emergency settings were also propelled to the forefront of international debate by the enormity of the Rwandan genocide. In fact the two readings of the coherence debate—integration versus complementarity—hinge on whether one sees Rwanda as a failure of humanitarian relief or of politics. The relief community sees Rwanda as a political failure (citing the lack of an appropriate and timely political response) and places responsibility for the avoidance of future Rwandas within the rightful duties of political actors. According to the humanitarian reading of Rwanda,

The underlying problem has been and continues to be political, but the international community failed to come to grips directly with the political problem. Thus it has in effect...left both the political and humanitarian problem generated by the Rwanda crisis in the hands of the humanitarian community. This is untenable. It puts burdens on the latter that it cannot and should not assume...In other words, the problem was less that international political and humanitarian responses to conflict and genocide were incoherent, than that there was an absence of any significant and effective political intervention. (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291)

The political reading of Rwanda, on the other hand, came to very different conclusions: the challenge, as states saw it, was to integrate an ineffective aid regime into a “coherent” international response in which aid would figure as one of several policy tools “alongside sanctions, demarches and the use of military force,” serving the international community’s pursuit of stability (Macrae and Leader 2001, 291).¹² Among many political actors, the perceived failures of humanitarian relief have added momentum to the integrationist interpretation of coherence, which currently dominates the process of reunification between aid and politics. Yet incorporating humanitarian relief into an integrated political approach, defined by and tied to state political objectives, threatens to undermine the nature and independence of humanitarian action.

As the next section indicates, humanitarian action must find ways to operate in conjunction with political action in order to be effective; but the relief community has yet to present a cohesive proposal of its own specifying what the relationship between aid

¹² An important critique of the reunification of aid and politics is that it threatens to integrate humanitarian relief into a framework for global conflict management in the service of “liberal governance,” or the liberal political-economic order. This view cautions that this interpretation of “coherence” would not only subvert humanitarian action and values to the political objectives of powerful nations, but would also make relief NGOs complicit (unwitting or otherwise) in the fulfillment of a totalizing Western political project—the imposition of a regime of liberal governance (See Duffield 2001).

and politics should look like. As expressed by Jacques de Milliano, former Director of MSF-Holland (Doctors Without Borders), “The relationship between humanitarian aid and political action has always been ambiguous. The moment that political forces are absent or not coherent we ask for political action. The moment they get too involved, we ask them to stop” (Quoted in Macrae and Leader 2001, 2).

The Limits of Humanitarian Action and the Need for Political Engagement

We have seen how political actors depend on humanitarian action to fulfill key roles in international politics, but the reverse is also true: humanitarian action is dependent upon politics. Relief NGOs must have the political involvement of powerful states and an actively engaged international community; they can do little to fulfill their mandates without it. This has always been the case, but is even more so today as political and humanitarian actors strive to reestablish a working division of labor. There is “no exit strategy for humanitarians if states do not take their humanitarian responsibilities seriously and use coercion to halt genocide and other massive abuses of civilians” (Weiss 1999, 20).

Indeed, there have been few exit strategies for many entrenched conflicts around the world, from northern Uganda to the Congo, Sudan to Angola, where chronic conflict and its humanitarian consequences have stagnated for decades with no political solution in sight. Yet, instead of using the weight of political pressure to influence warring parties and work toward lasting solutions, state politics “abandoned” its responsibilities for much

of the recent post-Cold War past. The result, as we have seen, was an increasing reliance on humanitarian actors to fulfill the strategic and diplomatic functions normally performed by states, and for which relief NGOs are poorly suited. This political imposition on humanitarian action has been well documented by many analysts:

The French writer, Jean-Christophe Rufin, has written of the “humanitarian trap.” What he meant by this is the attempt to use humanitarian action in ways in which it was never intended, most importantly as a substitute for Western political engagement. In our time...humanitarian action in general and emergency aid in particular are...usually emblematic of the rich world’s political failure rather than of its moral success.¹³ (Rieff 1995-96, 8-9)

“In the past, there was a clear distinction between development aid, actions of solidarity in cases of disasters, and humanitarian action in times of conflict. Today, we seem to have entered a period of chronic crisis and conflict in which emergency humanitarian action has become the only available form of political expression” (Bouchet-Sauliner 2002, 6). It is paramount that humanitarians and politicians resurrect a central role for political action in managing international conflicts, one that capitalizes on the particular assets available to states in influencing the outcome of internal conflicts.

The Muscle of Nations: State Assets and Conflict Management

Official state engagement through normalized political and military relations has many advantages over relying solely on relief agencies to influence the course of conflicts and humanitarian crises. Political and military actors possess “important assets and bargaining chips” that non-state actors lack. “These include: political legitimation in

¹³ Jean-Christophe Rufin, at the time of this writing, serves as President of Action Against Hunger–France.

the international community; access to key decision-makers in the host government; diplomatic infrastructure in the shape of embassies; and significant stand-by capacity for logistics and engineering work” (Macrae and Leader 2001, 302). When such infrastructure is withdrawn from “rogue” or marginalized states, the only link to the outside world is typically the presence of (non-state) relief agencies. Humanitarian relief is therefore a “form of international policy, with official aid agencies taking responsibility for political labour in non-strategic parts of the world” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 16). Yet, without official political involvement, relief can only ever have a limited impact.

Humanitarian Space as a “Framework of Respect”

A useful way of understanding the limits of humanitarian action to alter the course of a conflict—as well as their need to effectively engage with a range of political actors—is to consider the concept of “humanitarian space.” Humanitarian space is generally conceived of as geographical and apolitical: the expanding or contracting realm in which relief efforts take place, which is often synonymous with the securing of access to beneficiaries (Leader 2000, 8).

Another way to phrase this concept, capturing more complexity in the process, is to cast “humanitarian space” as a “framework for respect.” The concept of the “framework” avoids the simplistic geographic sense implicit in “humanitarian space” and eschews the portrayal of an apolitical space in which relief NGOs operate. Instead, the “framework of respect” emphasizes “all those factors in a given context that determine

the extent of respect for applicable norms of international humanitarian and human rights law” (Leader 2000, 8).

Thus in a particular conflict the determinants of the framework would be: the particular nature of the warring parties, their objectives and strategies; civil institutions and organizations; cultural mores and rules; the regional and international dynamics of the conflict; the levels of interest and attention of the major powers; and the impact of humanitarian organisations. Each element will play a role in determining at any time the overall level of respect for IHL, though some are obviously much more important than others. (Leader 2000, 8)

This concept places humanitarian action firmly within a political context in which the activities of aid organizations are only one among many factors whose dynamics determine the extent of respect for IHL. The “framework of respect” affirms that there are international standards by which behavior can be judged and held accountable, and, importantly, makes clear “that the primary determinants of respect for legal norms are not humanitarian agencies but other much more powerful forces and organisations, such as political, economic and military actors and broader processes of globalization” (Leader 2000, 8).

This understanding of the forces that determine the “extent of respect for...norms of international humanitarian...law” reinforces the fact that political work is at the center of solving humanitarian crises, which is important because for all “its high visibility to outside observers, it is easy to overestimate the role of the humanitarian system in establishing the framework of respect” (Leader 2000, 29). The “framework of respect” also highlights areas where humanitarian action and “high” politics intersect and overlap,

and as such, provides relief NGOs with a number of strategic entry points for influencing the political processes that determine the state of IHL.

The Politics of Humanitarian Action: Pathways to Political Influence

Humanitarian action has always been a highly politicized activity, but its unique position in international politics required relief operations to remain officially apolitical, neutral, and impartial (Curtis 2001, 3). Political neutrality, however, meant not favoring one political faction over another, not that relief NGOs operated in an apolitical context. Far from it.

Although humanitarian agencies go to great lengths to present themselves as nonpartisan...they are deeply enmeshed in politics. Budget allocations and turf protection require vigilance. Humanitarians also negotiate with local authorities for visas, transport, and access, which all require compromises. They feel the pain of helping ethnic cleansers, feeding war criminals, and rewarding military strategies that herd civilians into camps. They decide whether or not to publicize human rights abuses. They look aside when bribes occur and food aid is diverted for military purposes. They provide foreign exchange and contribute to the growth of war economies that redistribute assets from the weak to the strong. (Weiss 1999, 20)

Today, however, there is no illusion that humanitarian action is not a form of politics as “there is no longer any need to ask *whether* politics and humanitarian action intersect. The real question is how this intersection can be managed to ensure more humanized politics and more effective humanitarian action. To this end, humanitarians should be neither blindly principled nor blindly pragmatic” (Weiss 1999, 22).

As geopolitical changes continue to pose challenges for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the ethical framework guiding humanitarian action (as well as the international community's collective response) will have to adapt to a dynamic set of circumstances. Yet the factors that determine the extent of respect for IHL are known entities, and thus, the "first responsibility of...humanitarian organisations is to bring their influence on all the players to get them to assume their responsibilities to the victims and respect the rules governing the conduct of hostilities" (Perrin 2002, 2).

The fact that humanitarian space cannot be opened or maintained by humanitarians themselves suggests clear benefits from thinking politically and collaborating with diplomatic and military institutions. This political vision transforms humanitarianism. At the same time, the political sphere needs to be widened to ensure that the international arena is as hospitable as possible for both emergency aid and the protection of rights. (Weiss 1999, 21)

If coherence is to make sense, "humanitarian action has to be coherent with a form of international politics that is both vigorous and based upon the need of conflict-affected people rather than the domestic politics of powerful states...[This] requires diplomats as much, if not more than, aid workers. Without such politics, coherence is merely a smokescreen for continuing inattention" (Macrae and Leader 2001, 305).

A key challenge for the relief community, therefore, is "to better conceptualise and implement a 'humanitarian politics'" that can both marshal an appropriate political response and simultaneously allow for adaptation to changing circumstances. Relief agencies must develop "ways of operating in broader political arenas, while maintaining the core values of humanity and impartiality that make humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics" (Leader 2000, 3, 4).

To operate in “broader political arenas,” humanitarian NGOs will have to systematically invest in their advocacy tools and capabilities. Advocacy already takes place in an *ad hoc* fashion, but humanitarian NGOs can more effectively shape their relationship with politics if their unique field perspectives and operational expertise are strategically packaged and delivered in a sustained fashion at key points of intersection between politics and humanitarian action. Needs-based relief programs are necessarily at the heart of humanitarian action, but it is now imperative to supplement field programs with dedicated efforts to coordinate and craft an international response more favorable to humanitarian values, projects, and IHL. And this cannot be secured by focusing on field programs alone. The next chapter assesses the nature of advocacy, its relationship with humanitarian action, and what systematic advocacy could mean for the aid-politics relationship and the future of humanitarian action.

CHAPTER THREE:

HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY AS HUMANITARIAN POLITICS

As established in the previous chapter, humanitarian action is political by nature, especially in the post-Cold War era. It operates within a political framework, engages with political actors and processes, and is subject to real compromises over its principles, interests, power, and spheres of influence. The compromises and agreements that define the relationship between humanitarian action and the politics of nation-states (the aid-politics relationship) are being rewritten, and the relief community must actively engage in these political conversations to safeguard its values.

The relief community also understands that their programs and commitments are of limited value without a functioning political framework, and that the onus of orchestrating this political framework may now fall within their mandates: the principles guiding humanitarian action, as we have seen, “have shifted from being conditions imposed on [humanitarian] agencies” by political elites to conditions that relief agencies must get political actors to uphold and abide by (Leader 2000, 21).

Relief NGOs, therefore, have a clear stake in not only securing a political framework, but in securing a political framework that is conducive to their values and commitments. Yet determining what exactly constitutes the “right” type of political framework is far from easy (Curtis 2001, 3; Macrae and Leader 2000, 56). Nevertheless, relief NGOs must make this a priority, as their “first responsibility” may now be to “bring

their influence on all the players to get them to assume their responsibilities to the victims and respect the rules governing the conduct of hostilities” (Perrin 2002, 2).

In order to get other players to assume their responsibilities, humanitarian NGOs must clearly define the division of labor they expect to have with political actors and strive to formalize these arrangements in their institutional relationships. The “failure to define this [in the past] meant that humanitarian agencies were confused when their calls for ‘political action’ were answered, but answered ‘wrongly’” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 56). Yet this periodic confusion over the international division of labor is symptomatic of this lack of dialogue between humanitarians and political actors. Beyond delivering direct assistance, relief organizations must engage in the political process if their concerns are to be seriously considered; organizational resources must be devoted to advocacy if the aid-politics relationship is to be reshaped in support of humanitarian values, greater respect for IHL, and political commitments to ending humanitarian crises. Humanitarian advocacy, therefore—that set of strategies enabling relief NGOs to engage with political actors—is political by definition; indeed, advocacy is the very embodiment of humanitarian politics.

This chapter is devoted to a discussion on how and where humanitarian action and state politics overlap, along with my proposal of a working definition for humanitarian advocacy. The last section pulls all of these threads together in three brief case studies based on the international aid organization Action Against Hunger’s experience in field work and are analyzed by a clearly defined set of criteria.

Operating in “Broader Political Arenas”:
Where Humanitarian Action and State Politics Overlap

Humanitarian actors, it has been argued, “need to develop ways of operating in broader political arenas, while maintaining the core values of humanity and impartiality that make humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics” (Leader 2000, 4). To safeguard humanitarian values, relief organizations ““must define a long-term humanitarian policy based on a serious analysis of several actors...[This] implies a humanitarian strategy distinct from tactical moves imposed by the variety of crises. Neglect of this work of reflection leads to contradiction, confusion...and the degradation of humanitarian action to the level of an instrument of political actors”” (Freyomon 1972, cited in Macrae and Leader 2000, 57).

Relief NGOs recognize the need to engage with a range of political actors in order to counter threats to humanitarian action, threats like being incorporated into the foreign policy of states, of being reduced to a surrogate for real diplomatic or political involvement, or serving as a politically palatable vehicle for channeling limited state support that masks a real lack of substantive foreign policy involvement. Such threats impair the apolitical aims of humanitarian aid, undermine the delivery of effective assistance, and ignore the independent assessments and socio-economic criteria that are provided by non-partisan humanitarian organizations and that should inform international public policy.

Relief NGOs need to engage with a range of political actors to create conditions conducive to humanitarian interventions and values as well. To achieve this, relief NGOs

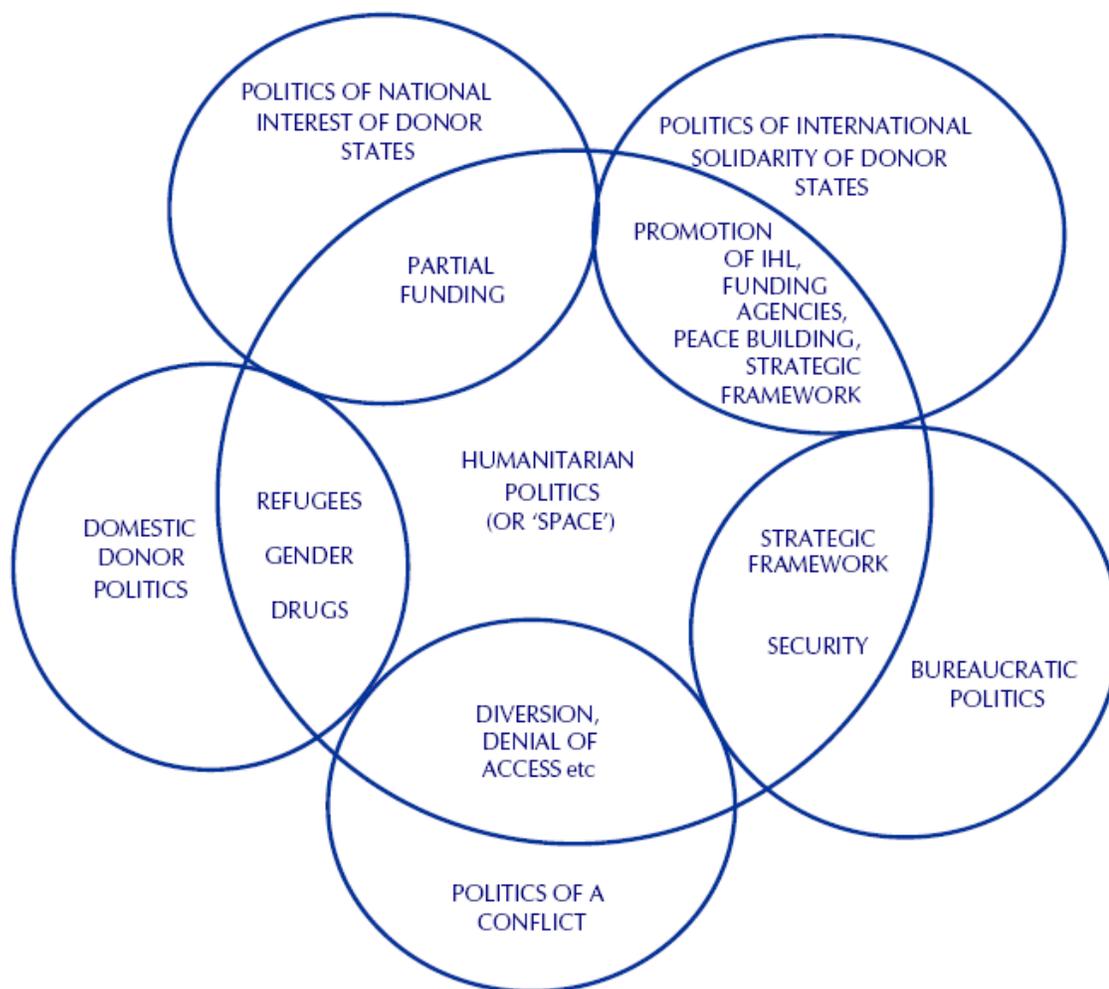
will have to continue “to assert that they are non-political while looking for ‘political’ opportunities to promote respect for IHL” (Leader 2000, 4). But where do these “political opportunities” lie? Where do humanitarian action and politics meet?

Humanitarian Action’s Political Framework

Dissecting the realm of “politics” can help us determine where humanitarian action and state politics come into contact. Some authors argue that there are three general political archetypes: (1.) *realpolitik*, or the “competition among actors in world politics for power, prestige and resources”; (2.) *partisan politics*, or the competition among groups within a nation for what is of value; and (3.) *world politics*, or the struggle to “to agree upon desirable international public policies within governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental arenas” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 56-57; Weiss 1999, 11).

Humanitarian action is rooted in the “world politics” archetype, but must also interact with the interests and dynamics represented by the *realpolitik* and partisan political realms. The graph below, borrowed from humanitarian analysts Joanna Macrae and Nicholas Leader, takes this concept further by identifying five political spheres with which humanitarian action routinely interacts, while refracting the three political archetypes across all sectors. This can also be thought of as a visual representation of the “framework of respect”—that composite of forces and actors that determine the level of respect for humanitarian action and values at any given time (Leader 2000, 8).

Figure 1. *The Intersection of humanitarian action and politics. Macrae and Leader 2000, 57.*



Understanding where humanitarian action overlaps with politics is key to assessing the points of leverage available to relief NGOs for influencing the overall “framework of respect.” The above graph reminds us that the securing of humanitarian space (i.e., influencing the “framework of respect”) “is contingent upon an active process of negotiating with other forms of politics within a particular conflict setting and internationally” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 56).

Table 1. "Forms of politics affecting humanitarian 'space.'" Macrae and Leader 2000, 58.

	National interest of donor states	International good citizenship	Domestic policies of donor states	Conflict politics	Humanitarian politics	Bureaucratic politics
Players	States Trans-national corporations (UN)	States, UN (NGOs)	Political parties	Warring parties, business (interested states)	Agencies, warring parties (UN, international community)	Agencies, donor ministries
Stakes	National power, wealth, survival	Peace, security, development, human rights	Government	The state, resources, people	Respect for IHL by warring parties	Empire building, policy implementation
Strategies/ policy instruments	Diplomacy, trade, war	Development assistance, conditionality, sanctions, 'humanitarian' war, 'coherence'	Re-distribution, regulation etc.	Ethnic manipulation, predation, human rights abuse, manipulation of aid	Persuasion, dissemination, assistance (condemnation)	Restructuring, donor funding mechanisms, security, bilateralisation
Arena	Embassies, regional alliances, Security Council, WTO	UN, World Bank and IMF Development ministries, DAC, beneficiary states	Parliament, media	Country, regional supporters (UN)	Agency/ warring party negotiations, UN, (the press)	CAPs, UN reform, Strategic Framework
Key developments	Retreat from 'non-strategic' states, shift from Cold War proxies to 'third-party' intervention, re-definition of national security, sovereignty 'softer'	Concentration on 'good' countries, reductions in global oda, separation of DFID from FCO	Joined-up government, 'Third-Way' politics, increasing hostility to refugees	Growth of 'war economies', failed states	Broadening and deepening of humanitarian agenda, 'coherence'	Accountability, growing bureaucratic freedom in non-strategic areas
Rules (legal and 'informal')	National interest supreme value, but: international law IHL	'Human security', peace and development good for all, 'long-term greater good justifies short-term compromises', human rights treaties, IHL	National Law		Conventionality: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, (discretion), but under threat from coherence agenda	Efficiency and effectiveness, financial regularity, 'Mandates rule'

Humanitarian analysts Joanna Macrae and Nicolas Leader further unpack and map the areas in which aid and politics interact. *Table 1* above, again, borrowed from

analysts Macrae and Leader, identifies the types of politics that affect humanitarian space, the key actors involved, the issues and institutional interests specific to each, and lists recent developments relevant to each area as well as what sets of rules govern each set of interactions. By mapping and monitoring the breadth of interactions between the humanitarian and political “spheres,” relief NGOs can better understand where they interact with political actors, assess where and how they might reinforce their engagements in these broader political arenas, and monitor the shifts in political interests as they present new threats or opportunities to humanitarian values and action.

Relief NGOs have a clear stake in shaping their relationship with politics. Investing systematically in their capacities for advocacy may be the only way to proactively monitor and engage the threats and opportunities that develop in any given political sphere. Pursuing field programs without this underlying political work will not safeguard humanitarian values. But before taking a more detailed look at specific interactions between aid and politics, the next section attempts to define humanitarian advocacy.

Advocacy: Defining Its Humanitarian Applications

The word “advocacy” is derived from Latin via Old French and at its most basic means to speak on behalf of or defend someone or something. Its contemporary connotation is as a catch-all term for issue-related activism and is often characterized as “persuasive communication and targeted actions in support of a cause or issue that seek

to change policies, positions, and programs” (Reproductive Health Outlook 2006). An internal document from the international humanitarian organization, Action Against Hunger (ACF), frames advocacy from a humanitarian perspective: advocacy is essentially a process designed to inform or influence stake-holders (e.g., governments, members of parliament, international institutions, public opinion) in order to obtain tangible changes in a context for the benefit of affected populations (Garelle 2006). Humanitarian advocacy must be based on the field expertise and core activities of groups like ACF (e.g., ACF’s programs in food security, nutrition, water-and-sanitation, and basic health care), as having an operational presence among populations in crisis ensures legitimacy for advocacy efforts that aim to improve “the situation for... vulnerable population[s] through information, mobilization and awareness raising activities based on operational or thematic experience and expertise” (European Food Security Group 2004, 4).

Defining Humanitarian Advocacy

For the purposes of this investigation, I have adapted a reading of advocacy used among child advocates in the U.S. because it illustrates the breadth of issues and activities that “advocacy” can encompass (Knitzer 1976). Adapting this definition to the realm of relief, *humanitarian advocacy* can be thought of as interventions designed to change systems, institutions, policies, or practices whose outcomes threaten human lives and self-sufficiency. These would be interventions designed to modify the less tangible *causes* as opposed to actual *outcomes*, which are the realm of relief programs—whether

treating severe acute malnutrition, ensuring access to water, or providing income-generating activities.

From a humanitarian perspective, life-threatening outcomes occur whenever a vulnerable population is denied access to the protections, material assistance, or other life-sustaining services they are entitled to under International Humanitarian Law (Mackintosh 2000, 3). Humanitarian advocacy, therefore, aims to address those institutions or systems resulting in:

- The life-threatening treatment of individuals or classes of individuals;
- The denial of needed services and resources;
- The undermining of a population's capacity for development and self-determination.

Target for Change: Policies, Practices, Ideologies. The target for change in humanitarian advocacy, therefore, is not the individual, but the policies, practices, and ideologies derived from the institutions and systems that hold sway over a population's survival. While relief and rehabilitation programs grapple with the immediate impacts a conflict has on human populations, humanitarian advocacy addresses the less tangible "causes" of hunger and insecurity by targeting the policies, practices, and institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to:

- Inadequate access to food from agricultural or market systems (e.g., malnutrition, hunger);
- Inadequate access to sufficient water resources and sanitation (e.g., disease, malnutrition, thirst);

- Inadequate access to health care (e.g., preventable diseases, treatable ailments);
- Legal regimes and laws that threaten lives or self-sufficiency (e.g., discrimination of minorities);
- Government decisions or policies that threaten lives (e.g., use of hunger as a weapon);
- Administrative or bureaucratic regulations whose legal interpretations result in life-threatening situations (e.g., national health protocols on the detection and treatment of malnutrition);
- Institutional practices and ideologies that threaten lives or self-sufficiency or that prevent the administering of help (e.g., official tolerance of military abuses, the denial of humanitarian access to politically persecuted populations).

Humanitarian advocacy is an essential counterpart to relief and rehabilitation programs, augmenting the relief community's ability to fulfill its humanitarian mandate: field programs deliver direct assistance to mitigate immediate suffering, whereas advocacy intervenes to address the systemic contributions to the crisis—outcomes resulting from a range of institutional policies and practices, systems, and ideologies. Both efforts are required of contemporary relief NGOs if humanitarian values and ends are to be upheld.

Unique Setting: Advocacy in Humanitarian Action. As already mentioned, humanitarian advocacy is beset by a unique set of constraints stemming from its operational imperative—gaining access to vulnerable people—which often limit what

activities can be openly pursued. Highly visible public campaigns that criticize political groups or armed factions can have drastic consequences for relief workers on the ground, and it is critical that relief NGOs find ways to minimize the risks of retribution when they are nonetheless obliged to report on unpalatable truths.¹⁴

As a quick contrast with humanitarian advocacy, human rights groups certainly face retribution when they criticize political actors, but it often results in a publicity war and seldom exposes their teams to bodily harm in hostile terrain.¹⁵ This is not to say that human rights groups are never at risk: many covertly collect on-the-ground testimonies that place staff in compromising situations, but humanitarian NGOs must by definition operate openly and under consent from a territory's ruling factions or regime. Below are categories that encompass key characteristics of humanitarian advocacy.

Public vs. Private Advocacy. Humanitarian advocacy takes place in and around its central constraints, running the gamut from private advocacy (confidential) to public advocacy (public record) efforts. *Public Advocacy* efforts are those interventions designed for public consumption, whether channeled through media campaigns, lobbying, public policy forums, or public education campaigns. *Private Advocacy* efforts are usually directed at specific stakeholders and not intended for the public record, such as confidential discussions without written documentation, the collection and

¹⁴ As a case in point, at the time of this writing, the government of Sudan arrested (and later released) two Doctors Without Borders (MSF) relief workers in apparent retribution for MSF's publication of a report critical of the Sudanese Government's tolerance of rape and violence in Darfur, Sudan (*BBC* [London], 31 May 2005. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4595911.stm>).

¹⁵ See U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recent response to human rights group Amnesty International's critique of the practices allegedly taking place at the U.S. military's facilities at Guantanamo Bay. This is a publicity war, and does not pose a threat to lives or well-being of Amnesty employees (*CNN* [Atlanta], 1 June 2005. Available from www.cnn.com/2005/US/06/01/us.gitmo).

dissemination of confidential documents for policy development, off-record discussions with journalists, communications aimed at leveraging the support of donor agencies or government involvement in delicate predicaments, and more.

Operational, Thematic, and Cause-Related Advocacy. Beyond the private-public distinction, humanitarian advocacy can also be divided into three distinct areas of focus (ACF-France 2004, 5). Conceptually, this is helpful in determining organizational roles and responsibilities for the different areas of advocacy, as well as in mapping what efforts take place, what activities need reinforcing, and what the parameters are for each.

1. Operational advocacy

Operational advocacy is understood as program- or country-specific interventions carried out in the field to ensure the proper functioning of humanitarian programs. These efforts are rooted in relief programs, are organized and carried out by field representatives (with headquarters support), and aim to address the immediate barriers or threats to a population's access to life-sustaining resources and services.

- *Example:* Confidential ACF communiqués designed to inform and request assistance from U.N. field representatives or donor agencies (like OCHA or ECHO)¹⁶ in pressuring a host regime to reign in soldiers whose unauthorized roadblocks and abusive demands on civilians prevent malnourished families from reaching ACF's nutrition centers.

¹⁶ OCHA is the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. ECHO stands for the European Community Humanitarian Office, a major player among institutional (governmental) donors and source of financial support for humanitarian relief programs around the globe.

2. *Thematic Advocacy*

Thematic advocacy refers to international interventions undertaken on sets of issues (e.g., policy, funding, strategy) vital to the securing of humanitarian values and the protection of humanitarian space.

- *Example:* ACF interventions designed to ensure that institutional donors (such as OFDA, ECHO, DFID, and CDI, to name a few)¹⁷ recognize needs-based funding priorities; receive critical input from NGOs when political priorities overwhelm needs-based criteria; and provide regular feedback to official government agencies and partners—typically achieved through proposal writing, program design, and face-to-face meetings to exchange field-based information, deliver field surveys, and so on.

3. *Cause-Related Advocacy*

Cause-related advocacy represents efforts undertaken to increase an issue's visibility, raise public awareness, create constituencies in support of certain goals, or orchestrate media attention and press coverage of specific issues. In contrast to its *operational* and *thematic* counterparts, *cause-related* advocacy strives to leverage public opinion to pressure actors to change their policies or practices, typically employing mass media strategies to enlist public support and shape popular opinion.

¹⁷ The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and the Canadian Development Institute (CDI).

- *Example:* ACF International’s annual efforts to raise awareness and increase the visibility of water issues on World Water Day (March 22nd). ACF attempts to package its water-specific field experience while drawing media attention to the fact that some 1.1 billion people lack access to safe sources of water for their daily needs. These campaigns are aimed at increasing ACF’s support base, increasing private donations, and enlisting support for specific public policy outcomes (e.g., the water and sanitation components of the Bush Administration’s Millennium Challenge Fund).

Defining the Aims of Humanitarian Advocacy: Micro-Level vs. Macro-Level

Frames. Humanitarian advocacy may seem clear-cut—targeting the less tangible causes of hunger and severe malnutrition, for example—but defining which set of causes to address is not as straightforward as it might appear. Discussions are underway within ACF’s International Network on what sets of causes would be appropriate given their operational expertise and organizational resources.

While the themes that *operational* and *thematic* advocacy encompass tend to have clear linkages with ACF’s field work, the application of *cause-related* advocacy may require a more strategic set of parameters for guiding the development of humanitarian advocacy. One thread that emerged from ACF’s internal discussion on advocacy—the “Barcelona Initiative’s” Working Group on Advocacy—was the distinction between the more *micro-level* conditions that contribute to hunger crises and the more *macro-level* causes. And while this distinction is fraught with issues that do not fit neatly into any one

category, it can help operational NGOs better understand where their advocacy strengths lie and where their resources could best be used (ACF International 2004, 1).

While this distinction blurs at times—indeed, it is only a conceptual tool—the *micro-level frame* can be thought of as the set of internal and external conditions that pose a more immediate threat to a population’s survival or well-being: obstacles to a community’s access to food, water, and basic health care; disruptions (new or long-standing) to a community’s food production, livelihoods, or coping mechanisms; violations of basic human rights; disease trajectories and public health issues as they relate to hunger and malnutrition (HIV/AIDS, TB, water-borne illnesses); the political dynamics of managing internal crises and violent conflicts (e.g., the international community’s response to periodic outbreaks of fighting, disruptive military campaigns, and the impact this has on a population’s self-sufficiency); the design and delivery of international assistance (whether focused on emergency relief, rehabilitation, or development); the dynamics of structural underdevelopment, basic needs, and cyclical forms of insecurity (like droughts, livestock decapitalization, crop losses, and poverty); and the orchestration of international involvement, public awareness, and funding priorities as they relate to these acute crises.

A *macro-level frame* would open up a number of other hunger-related issues centered on the broader engines behind global hunger and poverty: commercial and agricultural development; international trade rules, international debt relief, agricultural subsidies, and market access; the politics of multilateral lending, the IMF’s structural adjustment policies, and the impacts (and alternatives) to the World Bank’s political-

economic prescriptions; bilateral funding goals, priorities, etc. (and this is by no means an exhaustive list.)

Given ACF International's humanitarian objectives and operational expertise (focused on emergency relief, recovery and rehabilitation, and basic development), pursuing advocacy aimed at the *micro-level* issues associated with hunger and malnutrition would make sense; indeed, interventions already take place on many of these issues, but it is far from systematic and often lacks structural, budgetary, and strategic support. ACF seems well positioned to lead in advocacy on *micro-level* issues while making substantive field-based contributions to the coalition of actors engaged in addressing the *macro-level* contributions to hunger and poverty.

Humanitarian Advocacy as Humanitarian Politics. Key elements, therefore, distinguish humanitarian advocacy from other types of advocacy. Humanitarian advocacy not only runs the gamut from highly visible public education campaigns to extremely confidential interventions, but it also encounters a range of political actors and interests at the operational, thematic, and causal levels. Relief NGOs must develop expertise in all three types of advocacy if international humanitarian action is to be effectively deployed and its values upheld.

The following case studies help to illustrate these points.¹⁸ Each case study showcases a particular type of advocacy (operational, thematic, and cause-related) while underscoring the need for public or private advocacy interventions. These vignettes, based on Action Against Hunger's recent experiences, resonate with the definition of

¹⁸ These three case studies are drawn from my own personal experience working with Action Against Hunger.

advocacy outlined above, highlight areas where humanitarian and political action interact, and demonstrate how each intervention is indicative of the struggle to redefine the relationship between humanitarian action and state politics. The first case study assesses ACF's *operational* advocacy in the Congo. The second looks at an example of *thematic* advocacy when ACF submitted a critique of the World Food Program's 2005 strategic plan. The last case study assesses ACF's *cause-related* advocacy in conjunction with the ONE Campaign.

Action Against Hunger and Advocacy: Three Case Studies

- Case Study #1:** **Action Against Hunger in the Democratic Republic of Congo**
- Type of Advocacy:** *Operational Advocacy (Private)*—threat to the functioning of ACF's nutritional programs; ACF could not be seen as the whistleblower; need for confidentiality.
- Need for Advocacy:** Threat to the lives and livelihoods of local populations (ACF beneficiaries) from the impending deployment of undisciplined, abusive Congolese troops
- Target for Change:** *Immediate change*—the behavior of the Congolese Government's troops; *long-term change*—international pressure for a more professional, accountable military.

Political Sphere(s): The politics of international solidarity of donor states, politics of national interest of donor states, conflict politics, and domestic policies of donor states

Aid-Politics Issues: The securing of humanitarian space (the framework of respect) requires normalized political engagement on the part of influential states. Institutional norms and channels are lacking for coordinating a complementary approach.

Narrative

In August of 2004, Action Against Hunger's programs in Malemba, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, were caught in the middle of the ongoing armed struggle between the Congolese government's forces and local rebels known as Mai Mai. This was not the first time ACF and the local populations were faced with such a threat, as Congo has been at war with itself and other nations since 1998. In the past, Congolese troops have been periodically deployed to retake lands that are overrun by local militias, and one notorious division of the Congolese army, known as the "Sharks," is infamous in the region for their crimes against local populations—the very people the national army is supposed to protect. The Sharks' crimes typically range from widespread rape and summary executions to the extraction of local wealth through coercion—setting up arbitrary roadblocks and charging exorbitant fees for passage, stealing crops and foodstuffs, and otherwise creating disruption of the local economy. Many people simply flee when government troops are deployed in their area.

These disruptions, besides being deadly and the cause of widespread trauma in the region, were doubly damaging given the prevalence of malnutrition and insecurity in the area—the very issues Action Against Hunger hoped to address through programs in nutrition, water and sanitation, health care, and food security. The arrival of government troops disrupts the functioning of these life-saving programs.

The incursion of August 2004, however, was unique in that it presented Action Against Hunger with an opportunity for operational advocacy, a chance to organize to prevent or mitigate the impact that the arrival of government troops would inevitably have on an already vulnerable population. A small but significant window existed between the announced deployment of the Sharks and their arrival in Malemba. Action Against Hunger quickly acted on this information in contacting key political actors at their disposal so as to pressure the Congolese government to send more disciplined, better supervised troops to the area instead of the notorious Sharks.¹⁹

Type of Advocacy: Operational Advocacy (Private)

Action Against Hunger organized a series of confidential meetings with key audiences to address this threat to the functioning of their programs and the well-being of the local populations. ACF worked privately with local representatives of the U.N.'s Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), among other political representatives of the international community (embassies, consulates), because ACF could not be seen as the

¹⁹ Personal exchange with the ACF-USA Country Director in charge during this episode, Cathy Skoula, September 20, 2004.

whistle-blower: its own independence and political neutrality are required in order to maintain access to populations needing its own services.

Need for Advocacy

Routine threats stemming from official tolerance of military misconduct and predation on local populations has long been a problem in the Congo. Faced with a return of these threats, ACF worked to bring international attention (albeit localized and private) on the Congolese government's practices and their troops' behavior. Without explicit vigilance and outside pressure from the Congo's political allies (the U.S., the European Union), Malemba would have been a routine case of regime violence with no external engagement from political actors. ACF's operational advocacy ensured that voices were raised against the potential threats to the lives and livelihoods of local populations during the military deployment of the Congolese army.

This particular intervention qualifies as advocacy under our working definition in that it was an intervention designed to address an institution (the Congolese armed forces) that results directly in:

- The life-threatening treatment of individuals or classes of individuals;
- The denial of needed services and resources; and
- The undermining of the local population's capacity for development and self-determination.

Target for Change

The *immediate* targets for change were the behavior of Congolese troops, the government's tolerance of official military abuses, and the lack of external pressure from the international community. The *long-term* target for change should be the use of international pressure and incentives to transform the Congolese armed forces into an accountable, professional army capable of gaining trust from civilians, maintaining order, and supporting stability and the civil development of the Congo (a role, perhaps, better suited to *cause-related* or *thematic advocacy*).

Again, according to our working definition of advocacy, the targets for change are the policies, practices, and ideologies inherent in institutions and systems that influence a population's survival. In Malemba, therefore, the targets for change in this particular intervention were:

- The political decision-making processes at all levels of government (the government's decision to deploy specific troops); and
- The practices and ideologies of institutions that threaten lives, self-sufficiency, or deny access to assistance (the troops' threats to lives and livelihoods, the government's indifference to its soldiers' abuses, and the inability of humanitarian programs to function in such an environment).

Political Sphere(s)

Using the breakdown from *graph 1* on page 4, where exactly did humanitarian action in Malemba overlap and interact with political actors?

- (1.) *The Politics of International Solidarity of Donor States:* ACF implements life-saving programs funded by key international players (the U.S. Office of Disaster Assistance [OFDA] and the European Community Humanitarian Office [ECHO]) with keen interests in the effective use of international aid. The needless destruction associated with the deployment of the Congolese armed forces was a direct threat to the functioning of ACF's assistance programs and peace-building efforts, and ACF rightly called this to the attention of these institutional donors (funding agencies)—a clear case of complementary political work in coordination with humanitarian action to uphold IHL and guarantee humanitarian standards and values.
- (2.) *Politics of National Interest of Donor States:* In terms of other geopolitical interests, individual governments like the U.S. often provide bilateral military and development assistance to qualifying countries like the Congo. The U.S. has a clear interest in avoiding any negative associations between its transfers of military aid and the use of these resources in the repression of civilians. This sphere of politics was of only peripheral importance in the case of Malemba: ACF's advocacy with donor agencies was sufficient to mobilize enough support.
- (3.) *Conflict Politics:* according to IHL, national governments must allow entry to relief NGOs that meet the criteria specified in the Geneva Conventions. The threats from the Congolese government's internal military policies deny local populations access to needed assistance and protection by directly preying on these communities. In the case of Malemba, ACF had to remind key

representatives of the international community of their responsibilities to denounce threats such as the diversion of resources and the denial of access to vulnerable populations.

(4.) *Domestic Policies of Donor States*: Insecurity in eastern Congo often translates into Congolese refugees crossing into Rwandan territories—something the Rwandan government has a clear interest in monitoring. The political interests of bordering states is another political sphere that groups like ACF can reference and involve in their advocacy efforts.

Aid-Politics Issues

The Malemba case study also highlights where the relationship between humanitarian action and “high” politics needs further coordinating—an argument for greater complementarity on the part of humanitarians and government agencies. The “framework of respect” entails “all those factors in a given context that determine the extent of respect for applicable norms of international humanitarian and human rights law” (Leader 2000, 8). As we have seen, the securing of this framework is essential for effective humanitarian action. The “framework of respect,” however, requires normalized political engagement on the part of influential states. In the case of Malemba, these official resources (embassies, diplomatic infrastructure, official relationships between states, and the presence of donor state representatives) were available and were effectively engaged and responsive. Without ACF’s operational advocacy there would

have been no political engagement, and no pressure on the Congolese government to control or mitigate the abuses of its military.

Case Study #2: Action Against Hunger’s Critique of the World Food Program’s 2005 Strategic Plan

Type of Advocacy: *Thematic Advocacy (Public)*—threat to humanitarian values, local economies and livelihoods.

Need for Advocacy: The UN World Food Program’s (WFP) latest strategic plan seems to reflect the agricultural interests of industrialized nations, i.e., it is donor-driven and forgoes the needs-based criteria at the heart of humanitarian action. *Threat:* designing international aid to benefit donors at the expense of the intended beneficiaries.

Target for Change: The official rules and policies governing the procurement and delivery of *food aid*—guidelines that favor one type of assistance (the purchase and delivery of foodstuffs from the first world) for reasons unrelated to need humanitarian needs.

Political Sphere(s): Politics of national interest of donor states, the politics of international solidarity of donor states, and bureaucratic politics.

Aid-Politics Issues: The struggle between humanitarian values and political interests as expressed through the mechanisms of international assistance;

formalizing a role and voice for the relief community in the design of international public policy.

Narrative

The U.N.'s World Food Program administers the delivery of food aid to regions qualifying as emergencies. Typically the WFP is a conduit for surplus foodstuffs from industrialized nations, channeling these resources to areas of conflict or disaster in coordination with other relief agencies and NGOs (World Food Programme 2005). This food aid is generally doled out in targeted distributions based on estimates of what percentage of local food needs cannot be met without international donations of flour, oil, rice, etc. (World Food Programme 2005).

Action Against Hunger works in close coordination with the WFP as an “implementing partner” in a number of ways: using WFP foodstuffs in its own Supplementary Feeding Centers, and coordinating to ensure that there is general agreement in the field on where the needs are, what needs can be met by which agency, how programs can be coordinated, and how this fits into the WFP’s regional strategy. For example, ACF may implement nutritional programs for those suffering from severe acute malnutrition, while the WFP ensures that the broader population of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) has access to sufficient allotments of foodstuffs—rations of a corn-soy blend, oil, and sugar, for example.

As a trusted implementing partner, ACF, like many other relief organizations, has been involved in a range of WFP-related issues: from distribution and post-distribution

monitoring (in the field), to food basket monitoring; from on the ground coordination to providing policy-based commentary in the design of WFP aid guidelines; from proposed measures for analyzing and mitigating the impact of food aid on local markets and farmers, to calls for increased transparency and accountability in policy design, etc. ACF is a respected and reputable WFP partner whose field and nutritional expertise in relief settings is well known. On a range of related issues, therefore, relief NGOs like ACF are well-positioned to provide constructive feedback on the WFP's general operations, policies, and strategy proposals. Working with a cohort of colleague NGOs under the aegis of the European Food Security Group (EFSG), Action Against Hunger recently commented on a draft of the WFP's strategic plan—a good example of *thematic* advocacy.

Type of Advocacy: Thematic Advocacy (Public)

Action Against Hunger responded to the WFP's strategic plan (in coordination with the EFSG) not because of any perceived threat to the functioning of their field programs, but because the issues addressed in the plan directly relate to international humanitarian policy: the EFSG's *thematic* advocacy was designed to (a.) address a specific set of issues vital to humanitarian values (e.g., needs-based criteria); (b.) engage political actors on policy issues that have a clear impact on humanitarian action (e.g., where and how food aid money is spent); and (c.) address international policy from the interests and perspectives of the populations served by relief efforts (who have no voice in such a forum).

It is vital that relief NGOs involve themselves in the overall design of international assistance—food aid policy is a highly contested area of the aid-politics relationship—as their core values of humanity and impartiality work as important counterweights to unchecked state interests. It is this potential for upholding independent, impartial assessments and needs-based criteria that make “humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics” (Leader 2000: 3, 4).

Need for Advocacy

In significant areas, the World Food Program’s strategic plan reflects the agricultural interests of industrialized states (i.e., is donor-driven as opposed to needs-driven) as evidenced by its proposed rules governing food aid. Action Against Hunger’s joint response with the EFSG assesses the WFP’s strategic plan from a humanitarian standpoint and identified five specific points they hope to see amended:

(1) Food Aid as the Primary Response: The EFSG decried the lack of alternatives to food aid within the WFP document, especially given the relief community’s long-standing and vocal complaints on this issue. The EFSG’s statement questioned whether the WFP was “really committed to making progress in improving their analysis...of the likely impact of different types of interventions on poor households... and local and national markets” (European Food Security Group 2005, 1). Such an analysis would build capacity for demonstrating “*when and where food aid is most appropriate and has a comparative advantage in saving lives and livelihoods*” (European Food Security Group 2005, 1; emphasis in original). As the EFSG document points out:

While not contesting...[the] appropriateness [of food aid] in acute food crises and shortly after, the positive impact of food based programmes tends to decrease as the situation develops into the rehabilitation and development phase. In this context a careful analysis of actual needs in each given situation and the appropriate response, as well as possible exit points/strategies (of handover to local/national structures or other development actors) might be considered more deeply by WFP. (European Food Security Group 2005, 1)

Furthermore, according to the EFSG, the WFP plan contains no references to alternatives to food aid interventions, such as the provision of cash transfers as a safety net (especially in HIV/AIDS contexts), vouchers to spur local economic activity, or the purchases of goods in local or regional markets.

(2) Food Aid and Food Security as Objective Driven, Not Donor Driven: The EFSG claims that a needs-based approach would encourage locally- or regionally-focused food supply procurement instead of “international in kind donations.” The EFSG insists that the “local/regional purchase of food should be given preference whenever possible,” and that only as a last resort should “procurement from industrialised countries be considered.” Furthermore:

It is our view that by promoting production and markets in developing countries, Food Aid would contribute more efficiently to the global efforts of fighting hunger and malnutrition...We do understand the degree to which WFP responses are influenced by some donors who may be offering food-in-kind or nothing. However, it is clear that we do collectively have a responsibility to advocate for donors to provide the response most suited to the needs of the most vulnerable...We need to be confident that we can explain clearly to recipient governments, beneficiary communities and the general public that there are no circumstances in which food aid is creating more problems than it is solving. (European Food Security Group 2005, 2-3)

(3) Clarity of Objectives and Mandate: Concerns were also expressed over the perceived mix of strategic intentions expressed in the strategic plan. The EFSG brought attention to ambiguous passages hinting at the WFP's interest in expanding into development work in addition to their long-standing expertise in relief contexts. This raised budgetary concerns for the EFSG over the potential resource competition between emergency and development needs, and they asked for clarification. "From our perspective [the] WFP has its operational strengths clearly in the field of humanitarian response...Rather than getting involved in a range of objectives which are too wide, more efficient partnering and complementarity with other actors should be further emphasized" (European Food Security Group 2005, 3).

(4) Partnerships: The EFSG also had qualms with the "strange lack of reference to the [WFP's] operational partners (NGOs especially). This is even more dramatic considering the dependence and the importance of those partnerships for the implementation of the projects in the field" (European Food Security Group 2005, 3). As noted previously, the international deployment of assistance relies directly on partnerships with NGOs, given their operational capabilities in assessment, negotiation, resource mobilization, delivery of services, coordination, and strategic planning (Weiss 1996, 447-453). In the opinion of the EFSG, partnerships with NGOs also "give more effective results through needs assessments and shared analysis; whilst early programming increases transparency of the programs, facilitating greater involvement of the target groups" (European Food Security Group 2005, 3).

The EFSG asked that the strategic plan formally recognize the dependence of WFP capacity on its operational partners in the field—“their specific operational involvement, reactivity and flexibility”—and emphasized that “there is a real need to continue and intensify our collaboration together not only as implementing partners, but as partners throughout the entire project cycle from assessments to implementation” (European Food Security Group 2005, 3).

(5) Advocacy and Fundraising: The NGO perspectives represented in the EFSG’s Joint Response also took issue with the WFP’s blurring of distinctions between fundraising and advocacy initiatives. Whereas the EFSG accepted that the WFP might carry out advocacy activities in order to better address the needs of a population, “this does not naturally include the support of fundraising efforts or events”—especially where the WFP calls for greater efforts to seek private funds from foundations, corporations, and individuals (European Food Security Group 2005, 4).

The EFSG succinctly registered their opposition to the implications of the WFP’s call for greater private funding: “We firmly oppose this attempt, given the fact that WFP is funded by member governments’ contributions. It does not seem acceptable to us that WFP is using this position to compete with non-governmental organisations for private donations. We fully expect that the WFP will honour previous agreements on this issue, however, should this fail to take place we will be left with no alternative but to intensify the lobbying with our respective governments on this matter” (European Food Security Group 2005, 4).

Clearly, the EFSG's Joint Response advocates that specific policy positions represent the operational viewpoints and values of the humanitarian sector. Action Against Hunger and its colleague organizations are working to redefine the type of relationship these NGOs have with political partners like the UN's World Food Program. By engaging with their political counterparts, they are attempting to influence the formulation of international policy—policy that governs the impact that assistance has on vulnerable populations. These relief NGOs are clearly defining the division of labor they expect to have with political actors and striving to formalize these arrangements in their institutional relationships.

Target for Change

This particular intervention qualifies as advocacy under our working definition in that it was designed to address an institution (the World Food Program) that could result in the undermining of a local population's capacity for development and self-determination. The *immediate* targets for change were the official rules and policies governing key aspects of international assistance (i.e., food aid and its officially recognized alternatives). The EFSG felt the strategic plan did not sufficiently represent the needs and interests of the vulnerable populations it was ostensibly designed to address. The *long-term* targets for change encompass issues central to *thematic advocacy*: ensuring that NGO perspectives, values, and expertise are officially incorporated into the design of international public policy.

Political Sphere(s)

Using the breakdown from *table 1* on page 67, where exactly did humanitarian advocacy overlap and interact with political actors in the case of the Joint Response to the WFP?

- (1.) *Politics of National Interest of Donor States*: There are clear instances where national interests appear to outweigh needs-based criteria within the WFP strategic plan: many of the strictures on the procurement and delivery of food aid (as well as the lack of alternatives to food aid) can be read as international public policy catering to national economic interests. (This was also documented in a *Wall Street Journal* article on the lobbying efforts of the transport and agricultural interests that stand to lose from any changes in food aid policy.²⁰) The positions outlined in the WFP draft, as the EFSG pointed out, were “influenced by some donors who may be offering food-in-kind or nothing”—a reference to the political pressures that ultimately undermine needs-based criteria (European Food Security Group 2005, 2). These are important areas of the aid-politics relationship in which humanitarian and political interests often collide.
- (2.) *The Politics of International Solidarity of Donor States*: Nation-states have an interest in “international good citizenship” and invest time and resources in the

²⁰ Transport costs alone should justify buying emergency foodstuffs locally: USAID has pointed out that one third of the food aid budget is spent solely on transport costs. Yet recent proposed policy changes were seen as threatening to a number of groups, including many relief NGOs, agricultural interests, and transportation concerns—constituencies with powerful lobbies in Washington. This is a case where interests in the status quo clash with conflicting interpretations of humanitarian values (*Wall Street Journal* [New York], 26 October 2005, “Meal Ticket: Farmers, Charities Join Forces to Block Famine-Relief Revamp.”)

design of international public policy in areas such as peace-building, conflict resolution, and emergency and development assistance. Clear policy positions must be created and negotiated for dealing with realities such as nutritional emergencies, internal insecurity, impending conflicts, and development needs. The WFP's strategic draft is one example of these efforts. The design of public policy is rarely devoid of competing national interests, and the dynamic between what states are willing to push in their national interests often clash with the stated goals of international public policy. Relief NGOs, as the EFSG example shows, must push donor states into supporting the goals of effective, needs-based humanitarian policies.²¹

(3.) *Bureaucratic Politics*: Bureaucratic politics is often where the multiple personalities of the politics of “International Solidarity” are synthesized. The policy positions officially taken by UN agencies like the World Food Program are under pressure from major powers like the United States to write humanitarian policies that also accommodate their interests. These pressures often mean that issues of importance to humanitarian actors (like the WFP, implementing NGOs, and donor agencies) are excluded from official policy statements. As the EFSG pointed out in its response to the WFP, despite the “advances made in the different working groups...and the lobbying efforts of several NGOs, the current

²¹ This implies there is a single, universally accepted interpretation of “humanitarian values.” Obviously, this is not the case, as exemplified by the title in the *Wall Street Journal* article cited in the previous footnote: many international relief NGOs are also opposed to changes to the rules governing food aid—they either benefit from the status quo or have concerns that any change in the system will undermine commitments to other humanitarian causes. It is not only farming and shipping interests.

draft strategy seems to promote food aid as **the primary response** by WFP to any, and all, food (in-) security situations” (European Food Security Group 2005, 1; emphasis in original). Relief NGOs must reinforce their capacities to influence bureaucratic politics while working for official recognition of their perspectives in the policy process (i.e., thematic advocacy).

Aid-Politics Issues

The key issues that emerge from this example of *thematic* advocacy have to do with the struggle between the interests that a humanitarian NGO like ACF supports (needs-based criteria, cost/benefit analysis of the different forms of food aid vs. cash aid, etc.) and the political interests of industrialized nations as embodied in the World Food Program’s strategic plan. The aid-politics struggle, once again, shows up in the push to have competing sets of values represented in the official policy record that guides the WFP’s delivery of assistance throughout the year. *Thematic* advocacy, as we have seen, refers to interventions undertaken on issues vital to securing humanitarian values and space—from engagement on policy issues that affect relief efforts to addressing international bodies from the vantage point of the populations served by relief efforts.

The EFSG engaged in the WFP’s policy process to safeguard humanitarian values and the interests of those on the receiving end of assistance: sufficient evidence has been documented showing that food aid is not always the best option, that it can often be detrimental to local farmers and economies, and that it is a costly and inefficient use of

resources in terms of transportation costs. Yet few of these concerns were present in the WFP's draft, and the EFSG asked for an explanation of this neglect.

This *thematic* advocacy effort serves as an example of how relief NGOs can package their operational expertise and field experience to hold political actors accountable to the people they are supposedly serving. Without monitoring and engaging the WFP, the strategic draft would have equated international humanitarian policy with food aid from industrialized nations. Action Against Hunger (through the EFSG) worked to ensure that humanitarian values inform (and critique) official policy positions. Without investing in their capacities to monitor and respond to a range of policy issues, relief NGOs cannot fully serve their humanitarian missions. Thematic advocacy is essential to humanitarian action.

Case Study #3: Action Against Hunger and the ONE Campaign

Type of Advocacy: *Cause-Related Advocacy (Public)*—to generate popular support for increasing U.S. funding for solutions to global poverty, hunger, and disease.

Need for Advocacy: Thousands of lives could be improved (and thousands of deaths prevented) with a modest increase in funding for global health, education, and development initiatives around the world.

Governments have officially committed 0.7% of their respective GDPs toward these goals, but in reality give far less. The ONE

Campaign aims to generate popular pressure to fulfill these commitments.

Target for Change: *Immediate change*—generate public understanding and support for proven, cost-effective, life-saving initiatives in health, education, and basic services; generate public support for increasing official financial commitments; *long-term change*— generate real budgetary increases in official funding for international initiatives.

Political Sphere(s): Politics of national interest of donor states, politics of international solidarity of donor states, domestic policies of donor states.

Aid-Politics Issues: The struggle to gain domestic support for humanitarian objectives and values despite competing political agendas; the securing of humanitarian space (the framework of respect) requires the political engagement of influential states, which, in turn, can be influenced by building public support for international initiatives in the areas of public health, education, global hunger, and poverty.

Narrative

The ONE Campaign is an effort by a coalition of U.S. relief and development NGOs, celebrities, and other groups interested in generating American support for combating extreme poverty, global hunger, the AIDS/HIV epidemic, and a host of other preventable afflictions affecting millions of people each year. The ONE Campaign aims to rally Americans to “raise their voice as ONE against...[global emergencies]...so that

decision makers will do more to save millions of lives in the poorest countries” (The ONE Campaign 2005).

The ONE Campaign aims to unite Americans of diverse backgrounds—“students and ministers, punk rockers and NASCAR moms”—in support of allocating a full one percent of the U.S. budget toward funding for humanitarian initiatives in health, education, clean water and nutrition—basic investments that “would transform the futures and hopes of an entire generation in the world’s poorest countries” (The ONE Campaign 2005). The campaign hopes to achieve this through awareness-raising efforts in the U.S.

The underlying assumptions behind the ONE Campaign’s efforts are that few people understand the realities of international assistance, that effective solutions do exist for addressing global poverty and hunger, and that if properly informed and engaged, the U.S. public would support funding increases for successful global initiatives. The ONE Campaign holds that contrary to popular perception, less than one percent of the federal budget is actually earmarked for international assistance (whereas surveys tell us that many Americans think it is well over 15%) (World Opinion 2001), that overseas development assistance can support efficient micro-projects that offer cost-effective solutions to global hunger, poverty, and insecurity; and that dedicating one percent of the U.S. budget would generate \$25 billion annually for investments in basic health, education, and economic infrastructure. These investments would in turn be made through transparent partnerships with “honest governments, private charities and faith-

based organizations,” providing each with the “tools and resources they need to really make a difference” (The ONE Campaign 2005).

If the U.S. were to devote an additional ONE percent—one cent for every dollar spent by the federal government—to helping the world’s poorest people help themselves, America would demonstrate a commitment to the Millennium Goals, an internationally agreed upon effort to halve global poverty by 2015. With an additional ONE percent of our budget we can help prevent 10 million children from becoming AIDS orphans; We can help get 104 million children into grade school; We can help provide water to almost 900 million people around the globe; We can save almost 6.5 million children under 5 from dying of diseases that could be prevented with low-cost measures like vaccinations or a well for clean water, and We can build a better, safer world for all. (The ONE Campaign 2005)

Action Against Hunger and the ONE Campaign. The ONE Campaign’s *cause-related* advocacy attempts to address both the *acute* and *chronic* sources of global poverty and hunger, bridging the micro and macro through the breadth of expertise of its coalition partners. Because its member organizations encompass a range of causes and programmatic goals, the ONE Campaign can promote an array of effective solutions from across the spectrum of emergency and development work: whether calling for immediate increases in funding for AIDS/HIV programs, emergency funding for chronic and acute malnutrition, projects providing improvements in water and sanitation, or investments in basic health care, the ONE Campaign strives to increase support for emergency measures while promoting longer-term solutions to structural underdevelopment, crippling national debts, exclusion from the benefits of international trade, entrenched corruption, etc.

Action Against Hunger joined the ONE Campaign’s coalition with the aim of contributing its unique operational perspectives to this collective effort. As an operational NGO with ample field experience in a variety of emergency, rehabilitative, and

developmental contexts, ACF is well positioned to help take the lead in advocacy on the *micro-level* contributions to global hunger and poverty while making substantive field-based contributions to the coalition of actors already engaged in the *macro-level* issues behind global hunger, poverty, and insecurity.

As a ONE Campaign partner, ACF aims to provide a wealth of information to help with the ONE Campaign's messaging and advocacy on hunger issues, water and sanitation funding, projects mitigating structural poverty, and so on. ACF's field expertise therefore informs the ONE Campaign's efforts through concrete case studies where humanitarian projects have enhanced the well-being of vulnerable communities the world over, as well as first-hand knowledge of unmet regional and global needs.

This partnership offers mutual benefits: ACF's participation lends field-based legitimacy to the ONE Campaign's outreach and funding recommendations, and the ONE Campaign provides a broader set of channels and outreach opportunities for amplifying ACF's advocacy on *micro-level* causes of hunger and poverty. The ONE campaign ultimately strives to present the U.S. public with a more coherent, positive interpretation of the role that international assistance plays in reducing global poverty and hunger—and this serves the interests and values that underlie humanitarian action, as well as the needs of vulnerable populations.

Type of Advocacy: Cause-Related Advocacy (Public)

ACF's participation in the ONE Campaign can be classified as *cause-related* advocacy as it represents efforts undertaken to increase the visibility of effective

international assistance; raise public awareness on issues of global hunger and poverty; contribute to collective understandings that cost-effective solutions exist for addressing a host of current problems; create broader constituencies in support of increased international investments in health and education initiatives; and orchestrate media attention to leverage public support and secure government commitments to addressing global hunger and poverty. In contrast to its *operational* and *thematic* counterparts, *cause-related* advocacy aims to engage public opinion (typically through mass media strategies) to muster popular support for changes in specific institutions, practices, or policies. This does not rule out the use of *operational* or *thematic* advocacy, but *cause-related* advocacy hinges on gaining public approval and support for its public policy goals.

Action Against Hunger's *cause-related* advocacy with the ONE Campaign qualifies as advocacy within our working definition as it represents interventions aimed at the less tangible causes of hunger: the *micro-level* threats to a population's well-being or survival. Furthermore, ACF's partnership with the ONE Campaign (1.) suits humanitarian advocacy's need to assert "they are non-political while looking for 'political' opportunities to promote respect for IHL" (Leader 2000, 4); and (2.) offers the relief community a politically palatable point of departure for its *cause-related* advocacy—i.e., to secure government involvement in humanitarian affairs the relief community must sustain its engagement in all advocacy channels (public and private; operational, thematic, and cause-related) if it is to safeguard humanitarian values, develop its politics, and support for vulnerable groups.

Action Against Hunger's partnership with the ONE Campaign is a new development in ACF's relationship with cause-related advocacy, and the proof that this relationship can offer mutual benefits in the long-term remains to be seen—especially as its activities evolve toward ever more political recommendations, policy positions, and greater public visibility. Up to this point, ACF has been only tangentially involved in the ONE Campaign's general calls for increased funding for international assistance. As ACF expands its capacity to engage with the ONE Campaign in pursuit of mutual goals, the tensions inherent in this micro-macro *mélange* will have to be managed.²² Chapter Three examines the dynamics of this relationship further and attempts to recommend concrete ways in which ACF might better pursue its cause-related advocacy in conjunction with the ONE Campaign.

Need for Advocacy

The ONE Campaign and its coalition partners address a set of public perceptions with real implications for the design and delivery of overseas assistance: there are sizeable gaps between the goals and values that the majority of U.S. citizens hold regarding international assistance, the popular perception that their government is committed to similar ends, and the more nebulous realities that constitute an

²² This relationship is, of course, fraught with tensions as ACF is a non-political organization and would not otherwise publicly support many of the ONE Campaign's macro-level assertions or political economic prescriptions (i.e., taking unsupported positions on issues deemed outside ACF's mandate, or staking ACF's reputation on issues unexamined by ACF personnel, such as legislation on "fair" vs. "free" trade arrangements, for example, or how the WTO should be structured on agricultural subsidies, etc.). These tensions—not to mention the lack of internal consensus on what ACF's humanitarian advocacy should look like—are of real concern at ACF, but as with any coalition, compromises are made and internal mechanisms exist for addressing areas of discord.

administration's positioning on international commitments to reduce global hunger and poverty (World Public Opinion 2001). Without the types of engagement that the ONE Campaign and its coalition bring to the public domain, little would be done to challenge commonly held assumptions or increase public support for cost-effective humanitarian programs. By striving to address a range of attitudes from across the U.S. political spectrum, the ONE Campaign's *cause-related* advocacy aims to create a broad-based set of constituencies capable of pressuring their government to make substantive commitments (financial and political) to end global hunger and poverty. Given the realities confronting humanitarian action in the early 21st century, Action Against Hunger has a clear interest in pursuing *cause-related* advocacy with the ONE Campaign as it offers another channel for leveraging the political action that is ultimately needed to resolve humanitarian crises the world over.

Target for Change

Action Against Hunger's *cause-related* advocacy with the ONE Campaign targets constituents in the U.S. and attempts to orchestrate popular support for increased international assistance. The *longer-term* targets for change are U.S. public policy and its official commitments to alleviating poverty and hunger. The rationale underlying ACF's involvement with the ONE coalition is that governments must be politically engaged if humanitarian ends are to be achieved, and that ACF's *cause-related* advocacy can help shape popular opinion, which, in turn, plays a role in determining the U.S.'s official stance on aid.

Political Sphere(s)

Using the breakdown from *table 1* on page 67, where does humanitarian advocacy overlap and interact with political actors in the case of ACF's *cause-related* collaboration with the ONE Campaign?

(1.) *Politics of National Interest of Donor States*: In undertaking its *cause-related* advocacy ACF intends to create public support for greater national involvement in international assistance, but it must do so by framing its arguments as in the best interest of the nation. ACF's *cause-related* advocacy must show that increased overseas assistance makes sense vis-à-vis conceptions of national security, sovereignty, and economic prosperity: that the nation's security will be enhanced through productive political engagements and good will initiatives, that it is sensible to address global problems through international forums, that transnational agreements on public policy issues can enhance national sovereignty, and that investing in the long-term stability of vulnerable nations can return dividends in terms of the stability and prosperity of international markets. In other words, ACF's arguments for enhancing commitments to international assistance must pass muster from the perspectives of *realpolitik* and transnational corporations.

(2.) *The Politics of International Solidarity of Donor States*: To build greater support for increased U.S. humanitarian assistance, ACF's *cause-related* advocacy must be framed in ways that resonate with values dear to the U.S. populace (i.e., their

arguments cannot be framed simply in terms of moral obligations). Recent studies have shown that the U.S. public values long-term measures that help families help themselves, such as investments in education (especially for girls) and in skills transfers that can lead to self-sufficiency (Global Interdependence Initiative 2005)—areas that humanitarian assistance and development programs are designed to deliver.

Additionally, to bolster measures that enhance “international good citizenship” over the “politics of national interest,” advocacy efforts should again emphasize the global good that can derive from enhanced overseas assistance (like greater security, international goodwill, economic productivity, peace and stability, and preventative collaborations in public health). The benefits of preventative action (in health) and investments (in education and training) should be recognized as the shared responsibility of the community of nation-states. ACF’s *cause-related* advocacy must also ensure transparency in measuring outcomes and defining successes, as well other confidence-building measures that can help sustain the support of their constituents.

(3.) *Domestic Policies of Donor States:* ACF’s ability to engage the opposing worldviews in the rhetorical divide of domestic partisan politics will be a key test of its success in domestic donor politics (i.e., that realm of public discourse where the humanitarian program espoused by the ONE Campaign will be tested against other political agendas). ACF and the ONE coalition will have to gauge whether their messaging and bridge-building efforts can successfully penetrate the pall of

politics-as-usual: from engaging with the Republican-Democrat divide to contending with claims of “big government,” from the campaign to disregard the U.N. (and thereby stymie all international efforts) to overriding focus on terrorism that often renders other agendas moot.

Studies show that the public supports the poverty-fighting measures championed by the ONE Campaign, but effectively packaging and framing these initiatives—not to mention managing the routine attacks from political opponents—requires time, money, expertise, and political capital. *Cause-related* advocacy must be seen as an investment in the relief community’s ability to navigate domestic partisan politics and successfully orchestrate support from the public.

Aid-Politics Issues

The key issue emerging from this example of *cause-related* advocacy is the tension between public support for humanitarian goals and the secondary status that humanitarian objectives receive in the official list of political priorities. *Cause-related* advocacy, therefore, can be thought of as interventions undertaken to create and sustain public support for humanitarian values and priorities, and long-term strategies must be in place to manage the disparity between what the public supports and what governments actually have on their agendas.

Action Against Hunger and the ONE coalition are organizing to safeguard humanitarian values by positioning their solutions as smart, effective, and pragmatic responses to global hunger and poverty—enlisting the public’s support to improve official commitments to humanitarian assistance (and therefore the chances of survival for those on the receiving end of the international community’s assistance). To ensure that their life-saving programs are ultimately effective, the relief community must insist in reestablishing an appropriate division of labor with governments so that there is an explicit sense of collective responsibility in guaranteeing the well-being and security of the communities affected by internal conflicts. If humanitarian crises cease to improve and government involvement falters, the relief community must be able to draw on its public support and professional reputation to ensure public pressure for political solutions. *Cause-related* advocacy through the ONE Campaign offers humanitarian NGOs another channel for enlisting public support and building constituencies favorable to increased investments in solutions to global hunger, poverty, and disease.

Conclusion

Humanitarian action is political by nature, and humanitarian advocacy is synonymous with humanitarian politics: devoting organizational resources to the management of the aid-politics relationship—whether at the operational, thematic, or cause-related levels—means engaging with political actors to promote humanitarian principles, a needs-based agenda, the interests of powerless communities, the restricted

use of state power to safeguard IHL and resolve crises, and the relief community's ability to influence all points of convergence between humanitarian action and politics.

While acknowledging the political framework in which it operates, the relief community cannot lose sight of “the core values of humanity and impartiality that make humanitarianism a distinct and valuable form of politics” (Leader 2000, 4)—the very concepts that legitimize their foray into politics. By identifying where humanitarian action overlaps with politics, relief NGOs can assess what points of leverage might be available for influencing the “framework of respect,” which is ultimately “contingent upon an active process of negotiating with other forms of politics within a particular conflict setting and internationally” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 56). Developing internal capacity for advocacy must be based on a clear-eyed assessment of what areas of overlap are crucial to cover, which offer the best chances for securing support for humanitarian ends, and what organizational resources will allow.

In briefly examining the three case studies on Action Against Hunger's experience with the three different levels of advocacy, we were able to apply our working definition of advocacy to concrete situations, show where humanitarian and political action interact (highlighting potential points of leverage or entry for humanitarian politics), and demonstrate how each intervention is indicative of the effort to redefine the relationship between humanitarian action and state politics. If the relief community wants to improve international commitments to humanitarian values, it must reinforce its ability to influence political actors and processes at every point of intersection.

But how do these various advocacy levels differ? And what challenges, threats, and opportunities do these three case studies suggest for humanitarian advocacy in general? In assessing the case study on operational advocacy, we can outline a number of challenges, threats, and opportunities. (1.) *Challenges*: Operational advocacy is often field-based and carried out in an ad hoc, reactive fashion as unexpected circumstances arise. In such emergency applications of operational advocacy, there may not be sufficient preparation, reaction time, ongoing surveillance and monitoring, or even staff training to ensure desired outcomes. Other applications of operational advocacy may require longer-term relationship-building in the field, which is challenging given that there is often a high turnover in senior-level field staff. (2.) *Threats*: Operational advocacy could compromise the security of an NGO's field teams and their access to the vulnerable communities they are trying to help—compromising humanitarian action's central imperative (and core constraint): gain access to vulnerable populations to relieve suffering. Humanitarian NGOs often carry out confidential advocacy programs in certain countries, given their on-the-ground presence; these efforts could be discovered or exposed despite efforts to conceal these programs, threatening field staff (with government harassment, deportation, or worse) and threatening access to communities with dire humanitarian needs. (3.) *Opportunities*: It is important to note that there are a range of activities that fall under the operational level of advocacy, and not all of them deal with in-country emergencies. There are wide ranging applications of operational advocacy that package field experience and expertise for influencing decision-makers internationally, like ACF's behind-the-scenes work in Zimbabwe that became an

influential report and was used both privately and publicly; or their still-confidential report and behind-the-scenes efforts on the fundamental issue of land access in Darfur, Sudan. Much of the scope of operational advocacy is therefore not *ad hoc* and as such should be planned for and incorporated into longer-term country strategies.

In assessing the case study on *thematic* advocacy, we can outline a number of challenges, threats, and opportunities as well. (1.) *Challenges*: As with the EFSG example, thematic advocacy that safeguards humanitarian values is often the product of a broad coalition of like-minded NGOs. But successful coalitions require longer-term strategies and ongoing coordination, which are difficult to come by in the nonprofit world with current funding constraints. It would be challenging to build the type of internal advocacy capacity needed through foundation funding, and it may also be difficult to justify the staff and resources needed to have a real impact on thematic advocacy issues; timeframes are often longer, signs of success are less obvious, and this may be difficult to explain to donors. (2.) *Threats*: Without the capacity to monitor and engage with political actors, humanitarian advocacy may not be capable of documenting and evaluating its own successes in compelling ways, threatening further investments in this political work. Political actors opposed to the growing influence of the relief community may also threaten the ability of humanitarian NGOs to carry out more political work, creating crises for these organizations and their limited abilities to lobby political actors as tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. (3.) *Opportunities*: As highlighted throughout this paper, the points of overlap between humanitarian action and politics are many, and groups like ACF have invested very little in learning how to use them as points of leverage for

humanitarian ends. Sustained engagement through thematic advocacy should allow humanitarians greater influence over the design and implementation of international assistance once they successfully build the proper infrastructure for operating in broader political arenas. Related to these somewhat untapped opportunities, private foundations seem to be moving towards greater funding for advocacy efforts (one only has to observe ongoing discussions in key forums on philanthropy to see healthy dialogue on promoting new evaluation frameworks for understanding, funding, and supporting longer-term advocacy efforts amongst nonprofits) (Egbert and Hoechstetter 2006).

In assessing the case study on *cause-related* advocacy, we can also outline a number of challenges, threats, and opportunities. (1) *Challenges*: A key challenge in pursuing cause-related advocacy is that it is often organized toward long-term constituency-building, and in the U.S. marketplace of ideas, there is already so much message saturation and so many factors that simply cannot be controlled that a key ingredient in a successful cause-related campaign is simple luck and fortuitous timing. Similarly, it may be challenging to sustain the type of attention and support needed from U.S. constituents long enough to achieve any real pressure on political actors. As something that cannot be fully planned for, these elements of constituency-building presents clear challenges for cause-related advocacy. Another challenge lies in the need to form successful coalitions of like-minded partners, which can be slow-moving, can present internal rifts, and can expose political and philosophical differences that may be difficult to manage. (2) *Threats*: Funding issues are definitely a key threat, as sustaining advocacy may require relationship-building with private foundations, which could

undermine advocacy efforts by threatening the funding base, whether initially or over time. Another potential threat may lie in the relief and development community's ability to maintain their non-political organizational status while simultaneously pushing for specific policy recommendations. This is a core tension that will have to be addressed and could potentially undermine broader political efforts supported by cause-related advocacy. (3) *Opportunities*: Again, private foundations seem to be changing in both their willingness to form longer-term partnerships with coalitions of NGOs (e.g., the Gates Foundation's support of the ONE Campaign) and their willingness to realign their grantmaking to accommodate the unique funding needs of advocacy programs (which tend to be longer-term, typically present less orthodox signposts of success, and whose success must be evaluated in very different manners than direct service programs.). Likewise, much has been learned in recent years about what the U.S. public is willing to support (witness the ONE Campaign's experience) as well as the types of messaging and constituency-building tools that are most effective in translating this underlying, broad-based support into concrete, digestible policy proposals with the potential for realigning substantial resources and official commitments to lifesaving international initiatives around the globe.

Whether focused on operational, thematic, or cause-related advocacy efforts, humanitarian advocacy is designed to engage with political actors and processes, leverage its principles, expertise, and field-based research to influence the points at which the humanitarian and political spheres collide. As we have seen, the resulting compromises and agreements that define the relationship between humanitarian action and the politics

of nation-states (the aid-politics relationship) are being rewritten, and the relief community must actively engage in these political conversations to safeguard its values. As such, humanitarian advocacy is the very embodiment of humanitarian politics.

The next chapter lays the groundwork for a multi-part advocacy campaign involving all three advocacy levels—operational, thematic, and cause-related—for a proposed Action Against Hunger advocacy effort in 2007. I develop a planning framework for a combined advocacy and program strategy designed to expand water-and-sanitation improvements to communities in dire need.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN: EXPANDING GLOBAL WATER-AND-SANITATION SERVICES

That 2.6 billion people around the world are forced to defecate in plastic bags, buckets, open pits, agricultural fields, and public areas in their communities should generate a collective outcry for immediate, concerted efforts to expand access to improved sanitation facilities.

[The] chief role of governments must no longer be to deliver solutions, especially in the case of sanitation, but rather to facilitate community-based action.

UN Millennium Project Task Force Report on Water and Sanitation:
Health, Dignity, and Development: What Will it Take?

It is estimated that 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water while a staggering 2.6 billion (or 42% of humanity) lack basic sanitation. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), devised at the U.N.'s Millennium Summit in 2000, propose halving these numbers by 2015. Of the 14 targets defined within the scope of the eight MDGs, the water-and-sanitation improvements are known as Target 10.²³

Advocacy Proposal: Action Against Hunger Campaign to Tackle Target 10

A massive, sustained effort must be undertaken if the water-and-sanitation improvements envisioned in the Millennium Development Goal's "Target 10" are to

²³ The goal of extending water and sanitation services—Target 10—underlies all other MDGs, according to the Millennium Development Project. The eight MDGs consist of 14 targets which collectively propose to: halve poverty; reduce hunger; increase primary education; ensure gender equality; reduce child mortality; slash maternal mortality; halt and reverse major diseases (HIV, malaria, etc.); ensure environmental sustainability; and prioritize the targeting of slum dwellers (and other precarious human settlements) (U.N. Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 19-20).

become a reality: to halve the 1.1 billion people without drinking water and the 2.6 billion without sanitation would mean extending water supply services to some 800 million people and basic sanitation to 1.8 billion by 2015—a total of 2.6 billion people, factoring in population growth. This means extending services to an additional 290 million people *each year* over the next 9 years at an estimated annual cost of USD \$11.3 billion dollars (WHO/UNICEF 2005, 13-14; U.N. Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 3-5).²⁴

The obstacles are daunting, the numbers astronomical, the financing uncertain, and the process painstaking. Developing and extending water-and-sanitation services involves much more than just technology and infrastructure: to increase access to water and sanitation, a massive network of community-centered micro-projects must be established in coordination with the participation of local populations so that appropriate skills are transferred, community-based water committees are formed, maintenance structures, schedules, and responsibilities are firmly in place, and adequate income-generating activities exist to support the upkeep using locally available materials.

And while the scale of the MDGs might easily be dismissed as abstract fantasy, Target 10 does provide a global assessment of the needs as well as a universally recognized set of indicators for improving the lot of poor communities—populations whose lack of clean water leaves them vulnerable to daily indignities and appalling rates of death and debilitation. The scale may be daunting, but the problems associated with unsafe water are fully preventable.

²⁴ Calculations based on figures from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation.

A Role for ACF: Linking Humanitarian Action with Humanitarian Advocacy

Program Legitimacy. The humanitarian NGO Action Against Hunger (ACF) is internationally recognized for its water-and-sanitation expertise (in addition to its well-established expertise in the treatment of malnutrition). ACF has more than a quarter century of expertise in relief and development, and its well-known water-and-sanitation programs have been a central feature in the success of its interventions.²⁵ Yet beyond relief and development programs, how might ACF extend its water-and-sanitation know-how to help meet the MDG's Target 10 objectives?

To answer that question, we need to know more about the communities in need of improved access to water and sanitation: who are they, where do they reside, the nature of their needs, what solutions would be suitable, what financing arrangements are possible, and how much of this can legitimately be achieved by a group like ACF? Ultimately we want to know what portion of Target 10's 2.6 billion people ACF might realistically target.

Link with Advocacy. In addition to gauging the potential scope of ACF's Target 10-related water-and-sanitation activities, we also want to know what role humanitarian advocacy will play: how might ACF invest in and deploy its advocacy resources (at all levels) to ensure the success of its Target 10-related water-and-sanitation interventions? Target 10's proposed expansion of water-and-sanitation services highlights a number of factors that would have to be managed if Target 10 interventions are to succeed, and many of these relate as much to advocacy as to the direct implementation of the programs

²⁵ For an example, see the following opinion from one of the U.N.'s World Food Program's directors in Uganda: www.actionagainsthunger.org/who/opinion_wfp.html

themselves. Such an undertaking would require just the sort of coordination between field programs and humanitarian advocacy proposed throughout this thesis: that humanitarian NGOs need to incorporate a broader array of “political work” to expand the scope of their humanitarian activities, ensure complementarity between government and civil sector responses, partner with global water agencies, operational NGOs, the UN system, institutional donors, etc.—all while delivering effective water-and-sanitation programs in the field. Crucially, ACF will have to concern itself with building the structural and institutional supports needed to guarantee the success of an undertaking like Target 10—a set of tasks requiring the close coordination of both humanitarian action and advocacy.

The next section details what must be in place if Target 10 is to be achieved and how ACF’s water-and-sanitation expertise could provide the operational know-how needed to reach the objectives. This is followed by a discussion of the role that advocacy must play in taking on and managing Target 10’s goals.

Unmet Water-and-Sanitation Needs: The Global Scenario

Much has already been done to map what needs to take place if Target 10 is to be achieved. The Millennium Development Project (MDP),²⁶ a private consultancy, was commissioned by the U.N. to come up with a set of action plans for each of the MDG targets. The MDP then assigned Task Forces for each of the eight Millennium

²⁶ The Millennium Project was commissioned by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2002 to develop a concrete action plan for the world to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people. Headed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the Millennium Project is an independent advisory body and presented its final recommendations, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* to the Secretary-General in January 2005. (UN Millennium Project 2005).

Development Goals with the aim of assessing the requirements specific to each MDG target. The Task Forces explored the extent and nature of the problem and its importance for human development; the range of roles and responsibilities needing fulfillment; an accounting of the major constraints, as well as the characteristics needed for successful interventions; and identifies in general terms the types of financial arrangements needed to achieve each goal.²⁷ Here is what the Task Force's findings tell us about global water-and-sanitation insecurity.

The Threat

The MDP's report on Target 10 provides an accounting of the horrors and hardships that plague poor communities faced with *water scarcity*, *poor water quality*, and *inadequate sanitation*—hardships that assail human health and well-being with increased rates of mortality and morbidity, higher incidences of preventable diseases, diminished economic productivity and losses of livelihoods, higher rates of chronic and severe malnutrition, higher numbers of missed school days and the subsequent loss of future educational opportunities, higher burdens of financial debts with fewer economic prospects, and more.

The importance of safe drinking water and basic sanitation to the preservation of human health, particularly among children, cannot be overstated. Water-related diseases are the most common cause of illness and death among the poor of developing countries. According to the World Health Organization, 1.6 million deaths per year can be attributed to unsafe water, poor sanitation, and a lack of hygiene. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 16)

²⁷ The MDP's final report was delivered to the United Nations in January of 2005, just as the world's attention was absorbed by the drama of post-tsunami Asia.

If we take one particular indicator associated with poor water-and-sanitation—diarrhea—we can see just how much of an impact water-and-sanitation improvements could make in the lives of the poor. The incidence of diarrhea and its impact on the health of children under five years of age is staggering. In the developing world, some 90% of all diarrhea-related deaths affect children under five—the direct result of poor hygiene, sanitation, and water quality. So how much would improvements to drinking water reduce these water-related diseases? A recent study estimates the following health impacts:

- Improved water supply reduces diarrhea morbidity by 25%
- Improved sanitation reduces diarrhea morbidity by 32%
- Hygiene interventions including hygiene education and promotion of hand washing reduce cases of diarrhea by 45%
- Improvements in water quality through household water treatment—such as chlorination at point of use and adequate domestic storage—reduce diarrhea by 39% (Fewtrell, quoted in WHO/UNICEF 2005, 13).

Diarrhea represents just one of the many problems that result from insufficient access to clean water.²⁸ Water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation cause massive health and social impairments, but basic solutions are well within our reach. In addressing the impacts of diarrhea alone, improved “drinking water and

²⁸ The WHO/UNICEF report analyzes the impacts of poor water and sanitation by demographic cohorts (children under 5 years of age; 5-14 year olds; and those in the 15-59 age bracket). For the 0-4 year olds, improved access to safe water and sanitation should have a direct impact on at least two of the leading causes of death: neonatal causes (37%) and post-natal diarrhea (17%), which together represent over half of all deaths in this cohort. Clean water and better hygiene and sanitation could bring about considerable reductions in these categories alone (WHO/UNICEF 2005, 13).

sanitation services and better hygiene behaviour especially by mothers are crucial in cutting child mortality” (WHO/UNICEF 2005, 10).

Returns on Investment

It is estimated that the annual cost needed to reach Target 10 is USD \$11.3 billion. The benefits of achieving this are already apparent in terms of improvements to human health and well-being, but some studies have also tried to monetize the benefits that could be derived from such sustained investment.

According to a recent World Health Organization (WHO) study, reaching Target 10 would bring substantial economic gains in addition to health benefits: “each \$1 invested would yield an economic return of between \$3 and \$34, depending on the region,” which includes health-related savings estimated at \$7.3 billion a year, along with productivity increases and more adult working days bringing an additional \$750 million each year; lastly, increased access to safe water and improved sanitation implies situating these services closer to human settlements, resulting in time-savings valued at \$64 billion if Target 10 is fully achieved (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 16). In sheer back-of-the-envelope monetary terms, an investment of USD \$11.3 billion a year over the next 9 years—just under \$102 billion dollars—would result in gains of roughly \$1.9 trillion dollars.²⁹

²⁹ Calculation based on an averaging of the projected Target 10 benefits: a return of between \$3 and \$34 for every \$1 invested, averaged at \$18.5, equals \$1,887 billion based on the \$102 billion investment. Total benefits “of such service improvements will vary across regions, as they depend on the existing levels of water supply and sanitation coverage,” among other factors (U.N. Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 16, 29).

The Global Distribution of the Unserved: Where Are the Needs Greatest?

While the oft-cited global figures are important benchmarks for understanding Target 10's objectives (the 1.1 billion people without water, and the 2.6 billion without basic sanitation), the Millennium Development Project (MDP) points out that if we want to "reach those in greatest need, what matters is massive country-by-country expansions of service into unserved remote rural areas and densely populated urban slums" (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 21). A country-by-country assessment is needed to ensure adequate regional representation because "progress in China and India alone... could achieve the global target—without there being any progress at all in Sub-Saharan Africa" (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 21). In mapping global water-and-sanitation needs, the MDP Task Force distinguishes between populations without access to water from those without access to sanitation as well as by where they are relative to the poverty line in both poor-and middle-income countries:

Table 2.1. “Distribution of the global population without access to safe water supply. Figures in millions.”
Source: UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 22.

	Living in low-income countries	Living in middle-income countries	Total
Living below the poverty line	320	96	416
Living above the poverty line	30	259	289
Total	350	355	705

Table 2.2. “Distribution of the global population without access to basic sanitation. Figures in millions.”
Source: UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 22.

	Living in low-income countries	Living in middle-income countries	Total
Living below the poverty line	540	93	633
Living above the poverty line	565	730	1295
Total	1,105	823	1,928

While tables 2.1 and 2.2 above give us a sense of the extent of the needs—backing up the oft-cited global figures—how are these numbers regionally distributed and where are the needs greatest in both absolute and relative terms? Tables 2.3 and 2.4 below begin to divvy these figures up regionally:

Table 2.3. “Access to improved drinking water sources by region, 2002.” Source: UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 23.

Region	Number of people in region lacking access (millions)	Share of regional population lacking access (percent)	Share of all unserved living in indicated region (percent)
Eastern Asia	303	22%	28%
Sub-Saharan Africa	288	42%	27%
South Asia	234	16%	20%
Southeast Asia	115	21%	11%
Latin America & Caribbean	60	11%	6%
Western Asia	23	12%	2%
Eurasia	20	7%	2%
Northern Africa	15	10%	1%
Developed economies	15	2%	1%
Oceania	3	48%	<1%
TOTAL	1,076	na	100%

Table 2.4 “Access to improved sanitation by region, 2002 Source: UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 23.

Region	Number of people in region lacking access (millions)	Share of regional population lacking access (percent)	Share of all unserved living in indicated region (percent)
South Asia	938	63%	36%
Eastern Asia	779	55%	29%
Sub-Saharan Africa	437	64%	17%
Southeast Asia	208	39%	8%
Latin America & Caribbean	137	25%	5%
Eurasia	50	17%	2%
Northern Africa	40	27%	2%
Western Asia	38	21%	1%
Developed economies	20	2%	1%
Oceania	3	45%	<1%
TOTAL	2,620		100%

The above tables tell us two things about the regional distribution of needs. In terms of access to drinking water, *coverage rates* appear to be lowest in Oceania (52%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (58%)—i.e., regions with the largest percentages of their populations without water—whereas Asia has the lowest rates of water coverage in *absolute numbers* (with 61% of the global 1.1 billion without water) (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 23-24). If we look at access to basic sanitation, coverage rates are lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (36%) and South Asia (37%), even though Asia weighs in at 73% when it comes to absolute share of the 2.6 billion, with Sub-Saharan Africa a distant second with 17% of the global population without sanitation (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 24).³⁰

³⁰ Interestingly, over half of the global population lacking basic sanitation (1.5 billion individuals) lives in two countries: China and India (U.N. Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 24).

If we then *rank regions by coverage rates*, we see that of the 27 countries with the lowest rates of sanitation coverage—“those in which no more than a third of the population have access to improved sanitation—the majority (18) are in Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Asia (6)” (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 24). A similar pattern emerges when we look at coverage rates for water supply: of the 25 countries “identified as lagging behind in their progress toward the Millennium Development targets for water supply and sanitation, 13 are in Sub-Saharan Africa and 4 are in Asia. Those two regions will need considerable attention to make the dream of universal access to improved water supply a reality” (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 25). A regional perspective such as this reminds us again that we need country-by-country objectives, as progress in China and India alone would make a huge impact in absolute terms, but would be insufficient in addressing the most acute needs around the globe.

Of equal importance, therefore, are the *national* and *sub-national* distributions of needs, with most unserved populations residing in *rural areas, congested urban slums, and squatter settlements*. And while each of these three represents underserved populations, the disparities between the rural unserved and their urban and semi-urban counterparts are significant: of the 2.6 billion who lack basic sanitation, for example, nearly 2 billion of them live in rural areas (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 25). What these rural and urban settlements share is that they are both inhabited by the poor, whose health, livelihoods, and vulnerability levels are disproportionately affected by contaminated water because they “lack a political voice in priority-setting and resource allocation within countries” (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 18, 25).

Financing

Inasmuch as the report on Target 10 considers finance, it discusses the political nature of most international assistance and proposes different financing arrangements for poor- vs. middle-income countries (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 28-29). Essentially, poor-income countries do not have the resources needed to achieve Target 10's goals, and must therefore receive external financial support from the international community. Middle-income countries, however, are defined loosely as those nations where "sufficient financial resources exist to provide universal coverage, but their concentration among wealthier households leaves a substantial proportion of the populations unserved"; for these countries, expanding water and sanitation coverage will require "enacting the policy and institutional reforms necessary to redirect internal resources to benefit the poor" (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 29).

Across all countries, meeting the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation requires adequate resources for extension, rehabilitation, and operation of water supply, sanitation, and wastewater treatment infrastructure, as well as for hygiene promotion and public education programs. The financing strategy to be adopted by each country to meet the costs of achieving an often dramatic expansion of water supply and sanitation coverage—including who will foot the bill and how—depends principally on a country's income level and whether the majority of the unserved is above or below the poverty line. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 29)

Ensuring Sustainability:
Action Against Hunger's Community-Centered Programs

How might Action Against Hunger's water-and-sanitation expertise be expanded in support of Target 10's objectives? For one, Action Against Hunger's International Network (ACF International) has both global reach (with operations in more than 40 countries) and a long-standing commitment to the types of comprehensive, community-centered water-and-sanitation solutions required to meet Target 10: ACF's interventions are designed to address a range of social, organizational, technical, and resource concerns that collectively determine whether water improvements will be sustainable in the long-run. The Target 10 report unequivocally states that only such community-centered approaches will ensure that the MDG's water targets are met by 2015.

Given "both the massive scale of the [water and] sanitation crisis, and the fact nearly everyone in a community must be using improved sanitation for health benefits to start to accrue, focusing attention at the community level, with the community as a whole assuming the responsibility for mobilizing households within their boundaries, is likely to result in faster progress toward target 10" (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 27). ACF's global reach, along with its community-centered, participatory approach, make its water-and-sanitation programs an ideal vehicle for fulfilling Target 10's objectives.

A Recipe for Success: ACF's Well-Suited Water-and-Sanitation Interventions

Action Against Hunger's water-and-sanitation programs provide a range of life-critical services when vulnerable populations lack clean water and basic sanitation. The table below provides a summary of low-cost water-and-sanitation improvements—along with a comparative list of unimproved resources—that contribute substantially to both a community's well-being and to the objectives of Target 10. All of the techniques listed are used in ACF's global water-and-sanitation programs, and while each “fix” seems simple, it involves an inordinate amount of expert planning and oversight in engineering, geophysics, cultural and resources analyses, outreach and needs assessment surveys, community participation and organizing, and management and technical training:

Figure 2. Source: WHO/UNICEF 2005, 6.

IMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES		UNIMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES	
Improved sources of drinking water	Improved sanitation facilities	Unimproved sources of drinking water	Unimproved sanitation
Piped water into dwelling, yard or plot	Flush/pour-flush to:	Unprotected dug well	Public or shared latrine
Public tap/standpipe	piped sewer system	Unprotected spring	Pit latrine without slab or open pit
Tubewell/borehole	septic tank	Vendor-provided water	Hanging toilet or hanging latrine
Protected dug well	pit (latrine)	Tanker truck water	Bucket latrine
Protected spring	Ventilated improved pit latrine	Surface water (river, stream, dam, lake, pond, canal, irrigation channel)	No facilities (so people use any area, for example a field)
Rainwater collection	Pit latrine with slab		
Bottled water*	Composting toilet		

* Bottled water is considered an “improved” source of drinking water only where there is a secondary source that is “improved”.

Action Against Hunger's International Network assists an estimated 5 million people every year in more than 40 countries. As mentioned already, ACF's programs are able to ensure the sustainability of their water improvements because they focus on a broad set of criteria that go beyond the narrow application of technological solutions like water source protections, borehole drilling, point-of-use interventions, or water treatment

technologies. To ensure the success of its technical solutions, ACF's programs place painstaking emphasis on community participation, on training local management teams (e.g., water boards and sanitation committees), on ensuring that populations have the means and the know-how to maintain their newly improved water-and-sanitation resources, and on ensuring that communities are properly invested in the projects (i.e., understand the value and purpose behind the improvements, know what is needed to develop and maintain the infrastructure, and acknowledge their own role in enhancing the public health of their communities).

Many of the most effective interventions at the community level meld economic and social development with spiritual growth and bonds of communal solidarity. They also clearly balance rights on the one hand with responsibilities on the other; indeed, experience has shown that the most sustainable community-level interventions are characterized by significant community investment of labor, other in-kind resources, and user fees in the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 15)

Indeed, the MDP's report explicitly states that after three years of Target 10-related research they are convinced that no water-and-sanitation improvements can take place without the deliberate development of activities designed "to create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities...[and without the]...deliberate recognition that basic sanitation in particular requires an approach that centers on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization" (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 11). In other words, Target 10 cannot be achieved by drilling boreholes alone; community development and capacity-building must complement any technical solution—a much

broader and more complicated set of development objectives than simply installing a spigot. “Efforts to reach the water and sanitation target must focus on sustainable service delivery, rather than construction of facilities alone” (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 12). And this is exactly what ACF International excels at achieving.

A Field Example: Action Against Hunger’s Water-and-Sanitation Programs in Malemba, Eastern D.R. Congo. By way of example, Action Against Hunger’s water-and-sanitation programs often deliberately pursue supremely low-tech solutions precisely to awaken a community’s sense of ownership and capacity. In 2003 in Malemba, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, ACF’s water-and-sanitation program set up a small side-project in which it motivated a particular community to hand-dig a bore-hole—no small feat considering the physical demands involved and the sense of purpose that must keep the community motivated during the development of the project.

While there were certainly humanitarian needs in Malemba, ACF lacked the institutional funding to justify a formal water-and-sanitation project in the area. Nevertheless, because the needs were critical, ACF’s teams were able to expand their outreach activities to communicate to community members that they could develop a drinking well by themselves with minimal input from ACF—i.e., they could produce a well by hand, without the need for more elaborate, external technology (like a mechanized drilling rig, for example).

Once the community understood that this was possible and the members committed themselves to the project, the result was precisely the type of mobilization of local resources and solidarity that the MDP report alludes to: not only did the community

have to work together to support the project (selecting and clearing the land, providing food and support for those doing the digging, collectively purchasing the materials needed to construct and reinforce the borehole, etc.), but they all share in the benefits that accrue from access to improved water sources: savings in health care expenditures, in physical well-being, in time spent collecting water, and more.

Of equal importance, in the minds of ACF's water-and-sanitation teams, the community learned that it had the capacity to make fundamental enhancements to its own health and infrastructure, and that it had this capacity regardless of the presence of international NGOs. This was the lesson that ACF hoped the people in Malemba would take to heart, inspiring other villages to take action along the way. These are the types of community-level "improvements" that are needed if Target 10 is to be achieved.³¹

For over a quarter century Action Against Hunger has tailored smaller-scale, community-centered water-and-sanitation programs that have proven adept at dealing with the complexities inherent to improving water resources for vulnerable communities: a lack of local institutions or under-performing government agencies; inadequate technical capacities at the national or local level; a lack of functioning infrastructure; issues of ownership and "perverse" incentive structures; recurring instability and displacement; a lack of transparency and accountability in government agencies; ill-suited technological solutions that are mismatched to local contexts, etc. (UN Millennium

³¹ The documentary film, *The Heart of the Congo*, details this very experience along with the longer-term impact that NGOs like Action Against Hunger can have on vulnerable communities. For more information, see www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/heart.html.

Project Task Force 2005, 27). But what would happen if ACF were to massively expand its programs in coordination with the Millennium Development Goals?

Expanding Action Against Hunger's Reach:
Targeted Water-and-Sanitation Improvements for the Rural Poor

In committing itself to tackling Target 10, Action Against Hunger will have to clarify where its water-and-sanitation expertise can have the greatest impact, estimate what portion of the global poor its interventions could legitimately target, as well as demonstrate its scalability—can its programs manage the resource load associated with a 5-10 fold increase in budget size and program scope? A number of program-related issues will have to be addressed before ACF can commit to taking on Target 10.

Defining the Target: Rural Poor, Low-Income Countries, 161 Million a Year

Action Against Hunger has largely forged its water-and-sanitation expertise in rural contexts, focusing its resources on unserved communities in emergency and post-emergency scenarios. ACF has only recently begun investigating the programmatic requirements of water development in urban and semi-urban settlements. As such, ACF's pursuit of Target 10's objectives should focus on the *rural communities* that represent the bulk of the unserved in any country-by-country assessment (again, nearly 2 billion of the 2.6 billion people lacking sanitation live in rural areas) (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 25).

As we saw at the opening of this chapter, to achieve Target 10, water supply services would have to be extended to some 800 million people and basic sanitation to some 1.8 billion by 2015—a total of 2.6 billion people (i.e., half of the 1.1 billion people lacking water and half of the 2.6 billion needing basic sanitation, adjusted for population growth). Distributed annually, this would mean extending services to some 290 million people a year through 2015.

The estimated annual cost for reaching this additional 290 million people a year is \$11.3 billion, or \$39.00 per person per year (WHO/UNICEF 2005, 3-5).³² If the \$39.00 figure is used as the estimated per capita cost of expanding Target 10's water-and-sanitation services, we see that even if ACF could absorb an increase of \$100 million in extra financing, its programs would still only reach an additional 5.5 million people a year (or just over 1% of the annual Target 10 goal)—hardly significant in light of the annual target of 290 million.

But if we recall a key distinction between poor- and middle-income countries, a different scenario arises. If we revisit the numbers from tables 2.1 and 2.2. above, we remember that poor-income countries will require external financial support from the international community to ensure water and sanitation improvements, whereas middle-income countries will require policy and institutional reforms “to redirect internal resources to benefit the poor” (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 29).

³² If we use figures from ACF's programs in the Congo as a benchmark, we see that ACF spends approximately \$18 a person per year to deliver life-sustaining humanitarian services—or half the estimated \$39 per capita cost for achieving Target 10 (this is derived from ACF's \$8 million budget divided by the 450,000 Congolese who directly benefit from ACF's programs). (2006 budget for programs in the Congo, ACF-USA.). For this investigation, the figures cited in the WHO/UNICEF report will be used.

If ACF were to target the water-and-sanitation needs of *poor-income countries alone* (while working separately with middle-income countries to support policy and financing), it could combine its expertise in fundraising, program design, coalition-building, and advocacy to secure the external funding and support needed to meet Target 10's objectives for poor-countries—the 1.45 billion people (350 million for water, 1.105 billion for sanitation) needing water-and-sanitation improvements in poor-income countries. This would mean delivering improvements for *161 million* additional people a year rather than the 290 million required to bring both poor- and middle-income countries in line with Target 10. At \$39.00 a person, the annual cost for targeting the 161 million people in poor-income countries would be roughly \$6.3 billion. If Action Against Hunger could target one third of this 161 million—some 54 million people at \$2.1 billion a year—it could then coordinate with a broader coalition of partners to ensure an organized approach in delivering water-and-sanitation improvements to the other two-thirds (107 million).

Implicit in this arrangement is the need to partner with a number of global water agencies, relief and development NGOs, inter-governmental bodies, the UN system, and a host of public and private donors to ensure commitments to and investments in current and future capacity for reaching a 161 million a year. Beyond providing actual service improvements to millions of vulnerable people, ACF would have to concern itself with building the structural and institutional supports needed to guarantee the success of an undertaking like Target 10. Action Against Hunger's capacity for advocacy will play a central role in ensuring “buy-in” from a mind-numbing array of stakeholders at every

step of the process. We now turn our attention to the promise of humanitarian advocacy and the forms it might take under Target 10.

Enter Advocacy: Building Capacity, Coordination, & Coalitions

After three years of study, the Millennium Development Project's Target 10 Task Force was unanimous in its view that the MDG for water-and-sanitation would not be reached unless:

- There is a **deliberate commitment** by donors to increase and refocus their development assistance and to target sufficient aid to the poorest low-income countries
- There is a **deliberate commitment** by governments of middle-income countries that do not depend on aid to reallocate their resources so that they target funding to their unserved poor
- There are **deliberate activities** to create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities
- There is a **deliberate recognition** that basic sanitation in particular requires an approach that centers on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization...
- There is **deliberate planning and investment** in sound water resources management and infrastructure. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 11-12)

Bullets 3 and 4 above relate almost entirely to the design and delivery of water-and-sanitation programs themselves, emphasizing the key attributes required to properly expand and sustain water-and-sanitation improvements. All other points highlighted above have less to do with program implementation and more to do with capacity building, funding priorities, policy coordination, influencing key stakeholders and institutions, and generating public support for Target 10's goals. This is the domain of advocacy.

Different types of advocacy (public, private; operational, thematic, and cause-related) will be employed throughout the development of a Target 10 campaign. Below we identify the types of advocacy that might apply to the various segments of a broader Target 10 campaign—advocacy areas like capacity building, funding priorities, policy coordination, influencing key stakeholders and institutions, and orchestration of public support.

Within each area I select a handful of key components unique to each advocacy area, whether trying to identify target audiences, discuss stakeholder analysis, or consider a basic framework for the advocacy strategy at each level. Here is a list of criteria useful for analyzing multiple segments of the larger Target 10 advocacy campaign:

- Advocacy Area:** Capacity building, funding priorities, policy coordination, influencing key stakeholders and institutions, or orchestration of public support
- Type of Advocacy:** Public or private; operational, thematic, or cause-related
- Target for Change:** Specific objectives (for each segment of the larger campaign), immediate and long-term changes sought
- Target Audience(s):** Identify key influencers and stakeholders who can bring about such change
- Basic Framework:** Develop appropriate advocacy strategies for reaching targets and objectives
- Coalition Partners:** Identify potential allies for coordination and greater impact

- Resource Analysis:** Identify organizational, financial, and staff commitments needed
- Political Sphere(s):** The politics of international solidarity of donor states, politics of national interest of donor states, conflict politics, and domestic policies of donor states
- Aid-Politics Issues:** Where international assistance and humanitarian action coincides with politics
- Evaluation:** Criteria and tools for evaluating the impact and gains of specific advocacy efforts

To summarize, Target 10's ultimate Millennium Development Goal is to deliver water-and-sanitation improvements on a country-by-country basis to some 300 million people a year for each of the next 9 years (or at least improvements to 161 million people a year to poor-income countries while securing the financing and commitment to deliver similar improvements to the remaining 139 million people a year in middle-income countries). In order to achieve these water-and-sanitation targets, the Target 10 Task Force has highlighted the five guiding principles mentioned above: that there must be deliberate commitments, recognition, and investment and planning to achieve Target 10's goals. I have distilled these guiding principles further, identifying three areas that must be addressed through targeted advocacy campaigns—areas that underlie and determine whether there is sufficient commitment and momentum for achieving the MDGs: (1.) capacity building among the Target 10 coalition's operational partners; (2.) the funding priorities, development policies, and institutional giving among government

administrations and agencies; and (3.) the orchestration of broader commitments among governments and populations in prioritizing investments in water and sanitation.

Advocacy Area 1: A Deliberate Commitment from *Private* Donors:
Building Capacity through Partnerships between Private Foundations and Civil Society

- Advocacy Area:** Capacity building
- Type of Advocacy:** Private (but not confidential) thematic advocacy
- Target for Change:** Immediate goal: convince foundations to fund coalitions of international NGOs to target the MDGs; long-term goal: stable, long-term partnerships with foundations
- Target Audience(s):** Private foundations: Policy makers at The Gates Foundation, the Howard Buffett Foundation, and other mega-financiers of international initiatives
- Basic Framework:** Develop concrete business plan for presentation by the coalition's senior staff
- Coalition Partners:** International NGOs with operational and/or policy expertise in water-and-sanitation issues: Oxfam, CARE, World Vision
- Resource Analysis:** Two full-time staff members, monthly commitments and involvement of senior staff, financial commitments from coalition members (\$25,000 each)

Political Sphere(s): Not applicable to nation-state politics, realm of private fundraising priorities

Aid-Politics Issues: Not applicable to nation-state politics, realm of private fundraising priorities

Evaluation: Criteria for evaluating the impact and gains of specific advocacy efforts

Advocacy Area: Capacity building

One thing is certain: Action Against Hunger's programs are designed to deliver the types of water-and-sanitation improvements touted by the Task Force on Target 10, but like so many other operational NGOs, ACF lacks the scale and capacity needed to have a significant impact on the 161 million people needing water improvements each year. Relief and development NGOs play an important role in the international division of humanitarian labor, but they could do so much more if they could leverage their collective capacity and coordinate on special initiatives like Target 10.

The type of support needed for building both coalitions and capacity is not readily available, but it may now be indispensable in meeting the Millennium Development Goals: ACF's expertise in delivering sustainable, community-centered programs amounts to very little in a Target 10 campaign if it cannot bolster its organizational capacity to properly scale-up and expand the reach of its programs. Yet, who else could carry out this kind of work over the long-run?

An explicit commitment is needed, therefore, from private foundations to create this capacity amongst the relief and development community. Private foundations must find new ways to partner with relief NGOs—beyond the traditionally short-term funding cycle, one-off grants, and narrow forms of evaluation—to ensure that initiatives like Target 10 receive the financial and organizational support they need to strengthen their capacity and build coalitions equal in scale to the problems being addressed.

Type of Advocacy: Private, Thematic Advocacy

Thematic advocacy, as we saw previously, refers to efforts undertaken on issues that are vital to securing humanitarian values and the protection of humanitarian space (humanitarian policies, practices, funding trends, political priorities, etc.). Advocating for a change in funding priorities by private foundations qualifies as thematic advocacy as NGOs new partnerships with foundations would enable a broadening of humanitarian projects aimed at delivering water and sanitation improvements.

Relief and development NGOs, let us remember, represent an important force as the “fifth pillar of the international community's humanitarian architecture” (Weiss, 1996: 437-39): As independent actors, their institutional memories are vital to the long-term success of international initiatives (i.e., political administrations, and their commitments, come and go); they bring outside perspectives and leverage private resources needed for mitigating crises; and, perhaps most importantly, they are able to operate in political spheres while maintaining the core values that make humanitarian action unique: their emphasis on independent, impartial, non-discriminatory assessments of human needs.

These are the values that should ground and inform international assistance—not the shifting agendas of political adversaries—and private foundations must recognize the energy and commitment that the relief and development community could bring to initiatives like Target 10 if properly supported. To capitalize on their collective enterprise and expertise, new types of arrangements must be established for partnering operational NGOs with private foundations where the financial wherewithal of private money is explicitly yoked to capacity-building strategies aimed at grand endeavors like targeting Target 10.

Members of the relief community must convince private foundations to move beyond the myopic time-frame of orthodox funding cycles and begin supporting broader coalitions, investing in a steering committee, for example, of the executives of a handful of major relief and development NGOs. Without a proper long-term funding base, the collective expertise and enhanced reach of a coordinated coalition of actors would be squandered, and only piece-meal progress would be made toward Target 10. What is needed is a rapid build-up of capacity in this sector, something that could galvanize the resources, relationships, and collective energy of these NGOs toward the massive MDG goals.

Target Audiences and Targets for Change: Convince foundations to fund NGO coalitions and create stable, long-term partnerships

Action Against Hunger must work with a handful of other partners like CARE, Oxfam, and World Vision, and others to push for the creation of a viable Target 10

coalition. The Target 10 coalition must put together a concrete business plan to convince private foundations that the only way to achieve the MDGs is through an arrangement of operational coalitions and long-term financing structures that enable groups NGOs to focus on building a more perfect union, rather than competing for funds. The proper emissaries from this coalition of actors must take this plan and systematically target their contacts at major foundations to begin the process of coordinating changes in their funding priorities. As a unified group, this coalition of reputable organizations will devise how to present clear goals and concrete “asks” to key influencers within the private foundations.

Prototype: the Better Safer World Pilot Project. Luckily, such arrangements are starting to take shape. In one novel partnership, an academic institution, a private foundation, and a coalition of relief NGOs formed the “Better Safer World” pilot campaign. Their efforts demonstrate that leveraging the collective resources and marketing expertise of a handful of well-known international NGOs can build political constituencies that support greater investments in poverty-reducing strategies abroad (Chawla 2005, 32-34).

The Better Safer World Campaign came about through a series of meetings initiated by the University of Washington’s Mark Lindenberg Center for Humanitarian Action and Global Citizenship and the CEOs of nine major international relief organizations.³³ They came together as a coalition to address the security concerns

³³ The nine international relief NGOs involved in the Better Safer World pilot campaign were CARE, the International Rescue Committee, International Medical Corps., Mercy Corps, Oxfam America, Plan US/Childreach, Save the Children, World Concern, and World Vision (*Advocacy for Impact*, 2005: 33).

confronting American citizens in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, striving to provide an alternative understanding of how to ensure security for the U.S. through international initiatives that make the world better and safer for others. The Better Safer World coalition piloted its campaign in Des Moines, IA, emphasizing the role that individuals can play in getting the U.S. to support global security through international development and peace-building.

While each international NGO contributed resources to the campaign's steering committee (some \$25,000 each plus a committed senior staff member), crucial support also came from a joint proposal to the Gates Foundation which sustained the coalition as it studied how best to engage the U.S. populace. Through market research and audience outreach, the coalition developed messaging and a marketing strategy aimed at building constituencies supportive of greater U.S. involvement in global efforts to build peace and stability by addressing poverty, hunger, and disease. After a three month pilot period, the Better Safer World campaign documented significant successes and "demonstrated that people can be mobilized around international poverty reduction and that regular folks in 'middle America' understand that a better world is a safer one for them" (Chawla 2005, 34).

The Better Safer World pilot campaign successfully leveraged the reputations of a trusted coalition of nationally known organizations to help frame public discussions on international security, relief, and development. This successful pilot project subsequently set its sights nationally and became the steering committee for the highly visible ONE Campaign. By advocating the same messaging around a simple policy

recommendation—adding an additional one percent of the U.S. budget to international initiatives—the ONE Campaign has continued to develop a collaborative model involving a broad coalition of international partners and private foundation support (e.g., the Gates Foundation pledged \$3 million in support of the ONE Campaign’s coalition).³⁴

If the Gates Foundation had engaged these NGOs individually, making more traditional contributions instead of choosing to fund a broader coalition, the ONE Campaign could not have developed as it has: each member NGO would otherwise concern itself first and foremost with funding its own programs, leaving few internal resources for supplementing coalition-building and broader advocacy capacity in the U.S. for the long-term. New arrangements with private foundations are key to overcoming the structural myopia that has made coalition-building difficult to achieve, let alone the capacity-building needed to reach the scale of the Millennium Development Goals. New types of partnerships with private foundations must increase if Target 10 is to become a reality.³⁵

Prototype: The Howard Buffet Foundation’s Water-and-Sanitation Coalition.

Another promising model currently under development has been spearheaded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Howard Buffett is the son of the legendary investor, Warren E. Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc., and his foundation recently received a pledge of 350,000 shares of Berkshire stock, equivalent to roughly \$1 billion dollars

³⁴ An announcement of Gates’ support in 2004 is available on the Internet at <http://www.interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=3508> (accessed 6 November 2006).

³⁵ Changes in the philanthropy sector may be afoot given Warren Buffet’s \$31 billion pledge to the Gates foundation. There may now be more impetus—even urgency—for funding longer-term capacity-building among NGO coalitions as the Gates Foundation has to give away some \$3 billion a year, a truly formidable increase in foundation-generated funding (Wilhelm 2006).

(doled out annually in 5% payments) (Buffett 2006). This has added substantial momentum to the foundation's shift toward funding humanitarian initiatives, and water-and-sanitation projects in particular.

At the time of this writing, Action Against Hunger has been working with the Howard G. Buffett Foundation—in collaboration with a core of five other organizations³⁶—to design appropriate long-term strategies for delivering water-and-sanitation improvements to regional targets around the world. The initiative is only in its infancy for the time being, but the model holds much promise as an example of the types of partnerships needed if we are to reach Target 10.

Over a long weekend in Omaha, NE, the Howard Buffett Foundation's senior staff met with ACF's water-and-sanitation experts and their counterparts from the five other international NGOs to discuss the possible direction of the Foundation's water-and-sanitation funding. While much remains to be defined, the broad outlines of an exciting coalition have taken shape: the five operational and policy NGOs—with water-and-sanitation expertise that bridges emergency response, rehabilitation, development, resource management, and conservation—have received a long-term commitment of financial and programmatic support in partnership with the Buffett Foundation. The foundation is poised to pledged some \$60 million a year to work with these five organizations to develop a series of integrated, large-scale, regionally-focused projects targeting unserved populations in Africa and Central America. The Howard G. Buffett Foundation seems to understand that its financing and good intentions are useless unless

³⁶ The participating organizations will remain anonymous for the time being as this is a matter of some sensitivity to the Buffett Foundation.

it partners with experienced water-and-sanitation NGOs that can deliver successful, sustainable programs in the field. At the same time, the foundation realizes that it is vital to invest in a coalition's organizational capacity so that these NGOs can ramp-up the scale and reach of their projects and still remain effective. This partnership moves into new terrain with the type of arrangement it proposes: long-term, exclusive support for a capacity-building initiative that will allow this coalition of experts to collaborate in addressing a daunting set of issues like Target 10.³⁷

While still a semi-confidential development at the time of this writing, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation's initiative could eventually serve as a model approach for investing in the capacity of a coalition of NGOs capable of tackling broad initiatives like Target 10 in the near future. This may be especially relevant as other mega-philanthropies like the Gates Foundation (which received an astounding \$31 billion in pledges from Warren E. Buffett) and others gear up for a new era of large-scale problem solving.

Evaluation: Impact and Gains

The Target 10 coalition must work with foundations to develop a "simple evaluation framework based on advocacy experience," a framework that would be more "manageable for most nonprofits than complex evaluation requirements that unduly tax already sparse resources, particularly staff time" (Egbert and Hoechstetter, 2006: 3-4). The Target 10 coalition must emphasize two sets of criteria when evaluating their impact: (1) actual results delivered in their field programs—measuring units of service, numbers

³⁷ Personal conversations with Action Against Hunger's Program Director, David Blanc.

of people benefiting from water improvements, the evidence that humanitarian programs of scale are more effective than isolated projects; and (2) progress with the intangibles of policy and political work—the big-picture gains, areas of strengthened advocacy capacity, administrative and organizational gains, and obstacles overcome in coordinating coalition members.

In conclusion, a key area for humanitarian advocacy within the Target 10 campaign lies in forming new types of collaborative arrangements with private foundations. The Target 10 coalition must convince foundations that business as usual will not ensure sufficient water-and-sanitation improvements, and if 161 million people are to receive improvements each year (let alone the 290 million in total), then special investments will have to take place to build coalitions with adequate capacity in the civil sector. Without this crucial advocacy area, the requisite field programs will never achieve the scale needed to make significant inroads in the MDGs.

Advocacy Area 2: A Deliberate Commitment from *Public* Donors:
Engaging Public Institutions on Funding Priorities and Development Policy

- Advocacy Area:** Funding priorities, development policy, and institutional engagement
- Type of Advocacy:** Public and private thematic advocacy
- Target for Change:** Immediate goal: convince institutional (public) donors to fund
Target 10 coalitions; long-term goal: partnerships for concretely tackling MDGs
- Target Audience(s):** Key influencers in bilateral and multilateral development assistance, regional development banks, country donor agencies, and stakeholders who can influence institutional funding and policy
- Basic Framework:** Develop appropriate goals and strategies for reaching targets and objectives
- Coalition Partners:** Target 10 coalition members, key representatives of government agencies, senior staff at UN agencies, politically aligned individuals in (inter)governmental bodies
- Resource Analysis:** 10 advocacy staff (within the coalition) to cover key political epicenters (Geneva, Washington, Brussels, the UN), 3-5 year budget for advocacy efforts

Political Sphere(s): The politics of international solidarity of donor states, politics of national interest of donor states, conflict politics, and domestic policies of donor states

Aid-Politics Issues: The struggle between humanitarian values and political interests as expressed through the mechanisms of international assistance; formalizing a role and voice for the relief community in the design of international public policy; emergency vs. development funding; political involvement in crisis resolution, etc.

Evaluation: Criteria and tools for evaluating the impact and gains of specific advocacy efforts

Advocacy Area: Funding Priorities, Development Policy, and Institutional Engagement

Beyond harnessing the private wealth and support of major foundations, relief NGOs will have to influence the direction of official government funding for emergency situations and overseas development. If there is insufficient public funding available for achieving the Millennium Development Goals—goals that governments have set for themselves—the Target 10 coalition will have to engage political actors to ensure that Target 10's water-and-sanitation objectives receive the support they need.

As we have seen, advocacy enables avowedly non-political organizations like ACF to operate in broader political arenas while maintaining the core values that make humanitarian action unique: independent, impartial, non-discriminatory, needs-based assessments of conditions on the ground. Devoting organizational resources to the

management of the aid-politics relationship—whether at the operational, thematic, or cause-related levels—means engaging political actors to promote humanitarian principles, socioeconomic or needs-based criteria, the interests of the affected communities, and the relief community’s ability to influence all points of convergence between humanitarian action and politics.

Type of Advocacy: Public and Private, Thematic Advocacy

By identifying where humanitarian action overlaps with politics, relief NGOs can assess what points of leverage might be available for influencing humanitarian outcomes (like Target 10), which, as we have seen, are ultimately “contingent upon an active process of negotiating with other forms of politics within a particular conflict setting and internationally” (Macrae and Leader 2000, 56). Developing internal capacity for advocacy must be based on assessments of what areas of overlap are crucial to cover and which offer the best chances for securing support for humanitarian ends.

Thematic advocacy (both public and private)—the securing of humanitarian values and the protection of humanitarian policies, practices, and funding priorities—will be required for monitoring Target 10-related issues and engaging with the following national and international political actors:

- *Government Departments*: Major western powers with influence over budget allocations for overseas development assistance and emergency assistance
- *Political Actors*: States administrations, congressional and parliamentary representatives

- *Interagency Groups*: existing coalitions of NGO partners like InterAction and the British Overseas Agency Group
- *Institutional Agencies*: UN agencies such as the UN Commission of Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (OCHA), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, etc.
- *Regional Governing Bodies*: Political organizations like the African Union, the Organization of American States, the European Union, etc. (Mason 2004, 19).

Target for Change: Immediate and Long-Term Goals

While private foundations can help the Target 10 coalition build capacity, the political priorities of governments and international bodies must be engaged to ensure coordination across all countries and regions, as without the official support and national and international policies, little can be done. A critical mass of international support must exist in order to achieve Target 10's objectives in both poor- and middle-income countries as a country-by-country assessment, as we have seen, is necessary to ensure progress across all regions.

As expanding water and sanitation coverage will require enacting the policy and institutional reforms necessary to redirect international and national resources to benefit communities needing water and sanitation improvements, the following convictions will have to be successfully conveyed to the key influencers of bilateral and overseas

development assistance, and the stakeholders with decision-making authority over funding priorities for international initiatives:

- (1.) Sufficient funding and institutional support must be made available for Target 10 initiatives that create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities;
- (2.) Public institutions must recognize that basic sanitation in particular requires specific approaches centered on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization, and that without explicit funding from governments, sustainable water-and-sanitation improvements will not be achieved;
- (3.) Public institutions must be convinced of the need to coordinate their political work with the operational expertise of water-and-sanitation NGOs, forming long-term, complementary partnerships that explicitly address Target 10 and the MDGs.
- (4.) Public institutions must commit to engaging the governments of middle-income countries to ensure the proper policy and institutional reforms needed to redirect resources to the benefit of communities needing water and sanitation improvements

In the MDP Task Force report, the following short-term goals are highlighted as priority actions for bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies:

- Increase current aid in the water and sanitation sector to levels commensurate with the costs of attaining the water and sanitation target in the poorest countries.
- Redirect aid to the poorest countries and, within countries, toward programs that provide basic services for poor households.
- Prioritize investments in basic sanitation and hygiene.
- Reform aid procedures, so that aid supports policy reforms and infrastructure investment simultaneously, thereby enhancing institutional and policy frameworks while expanding services.
- Increase funding to Joint Monitoring Programme and refrain from setting up parallel structures. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 177).

Relief and development NGOs must work to remind political actors that their operational expertise constitutes a crucial part of the spectrum of activities that collectively make up international development—activities that complement the efforts and assets wielded by governments. As such, Target 10’s water-and-sanitation problematic must be approached as one such partnership in which NGOs are empowered to create massive networks of community-centered micro-projects that collectively underpin human development in rural and urban areas. These efforts are different from—yet complementary to—the other layers of “development” typically associated with government investments in the types of commercial infrastructure that facilitate national and international trade (roads, bridges, hydroelectric dams, institutional supports).

As outlined previously, the small-scale micro-projects that groups like Action Against Hunger oversee are explicitly called for in the MDG task force’s report because they focus on community involvement, local ownership, sound incentive structures, and behavioral change. Only interventions that can merge the delivery of appropriate water technologies with community empowerment can achieve sustainable, long-term improvements in water and sanitation service delivery. Unless NGOs are properly funded

and empowered, these key micro-solutions—solutions that assess and map regional needs, link communities with the appropriate technology, materials, and training, and support the development and capacity of local institutions—will continue to have only a cursory effect, devoid of the scale of life-sustaining water-and-sanitation improvements required by the MDGs. It would behoove public donors to work with NGO coalitions to reach these goals, but this is hardly the default position held by public institutions—and it therefore falls to humanitarian advocacy to ensure that public institutions lend real support to tackling humanitarian crises. But what political actors are we talking about, and how might relief NGOs engage with them to achieve substantive changes in current international commitments to Target 10’s objectives?

Target Audience(s): Key influencers and stakeholders

Understanding where humanitarian action overlaps with politics is key to assessing the points of leverage available to relief NGOs working to influence funding priorities and development policy. The Target 10 coalition’s advocacy team will have to immerse itself in stakeholder and audience analysis:³⁸

- Determine which stakeholders and audiences are relevant to water-and-sanitation issues, ranking them in importance, level of involvement, and identifying their worldviews

³⁸ A stakeholder analysis assesses all actors with a role to play in water-and-sanitation funding priorities and policy; an audience analysis assesses the groups and individuals to whom key advocacy messages must be delivered (Mason, 2004: 14).

- Map each stakeholder and audience in terms of power, roles and responsibilities, challenges and constraints, relationships with other actors, political and institutional motivations and commitments, policy interests and agendas, the functioning of each institution, etc.
- Determine the personalities within each stakeholder and audience institution
- Audience analysis: what do they know about the issue? How do they make decisions? Who will they listen to? (Mason, 2004: 14).

Target audiences and stakeholders will differ depending on the political epicenter (e.g., Geneva, Washington, Brussels, the UN, etc.), but a sample listing from the U.S. context provides a sense of the breadth and complexity involved in assessing targets, involving a host of stakeholders, and prioritizing entry points into political decision-making:

The Advocacy Landscape in the United States

The United States Government (Washington, DC)

- Executive Branch: the Bush Administration
 - President's Cabinet
 - Department of State, Secretary of State
 - Key international initiatives on HIV/AIDS, involvement international security issues

- Congress
 - Staffers of members with interest in international development and assistance, water and sanitation issues, global hunger, poverty, and security
 - US Ambassadors to UN agencies
 - Congressional Hearings
 - Congressional research, field representatives of Foreign Affairs and the House Appropriations Committees
- Congressional Caucuses: the Human Rights Caucus, the Caucus of Black members of Congress
- Independent Agencies and Government Corporations
 - United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
 - Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
 - Dept. of Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
 - Central Intelligence Agency (CIA): section that monitors humanitarian issues

NGO Forums and Working Groups

- Interaction: a consortium of relief and development NGOs, liaises and arranges meetings between the relief community and various U.S. agencies, manages working groups on humanitarian issues

- Advocacy Network for Africa: network of NGOs working at the policy level on peace, food security, and conflict issues
- Food Management Group: made up of a number of international NGOs (CARE, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, etc.) to monitor and address international issues of hunger

The United Nations (New York)

- Secretary General's Office
- UN Security Council
- NGO Working Group
- Arria Formula: In addition to the NGO Working Group on the Security Council series, Council members meet jointly or individually with NGOs to discuss policy questions.³⁹
- Various UN Agencies:
 - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
 - High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
 - United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Mason 2004, 32-33)

The above (partial) listing offers a mind-boggling array of individuals, political actors, and agencies with a stake in international public policy, hunger issues, and

³⁹ For more on the Arria Formula, visit www.globalpolicy.org/security/mtgsetc/brieindx.htm

development goals like the MDGs. A target 10 coalition would have to invest in strategies for engaging in all of these areas and more if it hopes to make tactical gains and galvanize sufficient support for water-and-sanitation improvements. And such efforts would have to be replicated in a range of political contexts: if we look at institutional donors alone such as OFDA (the US), ECHO (the EU), DFID (the UK), and CDI (Canada), to name just a few,⁴⁰ there are a range of international relationships on multiple continents that must be fostered and sustained in order to address funding priorities, ensure critical input from NGOs, meet to exchange information and perspectives, etc.—a daunting set of relationships, institutional cultures, political alliances, and worldviews to manage, let alone change. Convincing a range of agencies and institutions to support the policy and institutional reforms necessary to redirect resources for expanding water and sanitation coverage will require constant investments in the Target 10 coalition’s advocacy expertise.

Advocacy Area 3: Fostering Broader Commitments for Deliberate Planning and Investment in Sound Water Resources Management and Infrastructure

Advocacy Area: Foster broader commitments from a coalition of leading national governments to prioritize planning and investments in water and sanitation infrastructure.

Type of Advocacy: Public, cause-related advocacy

⁴⁰ The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), and the Canadian Development Institute (CDI).

- Target for Change:** Immediate goal: build national constituencies to push for broader governmental commitments to international water priorities; long-term goal: coordinate international commitments and initiatives to deliver on Target 10 goals
- Target Audience(s):** (1.) Coalition partners—coordinate with other water NGOs for broader impact; (2.) target constituencies likely to be receptive to goals and likely to be politically active (i.e., willing to contact their representatives); (3.) key influencers and stakeholders within current administrations
- Basic Framework:** Expand ONE Campaign to next level: concrete water and sanitation outcomes
- Coalition Partners:** Other water (relief and development) NGOs, celebrities.
- Resource Analysis:** 5 advocacy staff (within the coalition) to coordinate each political epicenter (Geneva, Washington, Brussels, the UN), 3-5 year budget for advocacy efforts
- Political Sphere(s):** The politics of international solidarity of donor states, politics of national interest of donor states, and domestic policies of donor states
- Aid-Politics Issues:** Expanding commitments to humanitarian values over political interests (expressed through international assistance and coordination); formalizing the relief community's role in designing international public policy (the MDGs)

Evaluation: Criteria and tools for evaluating the impact and gains of specific advocacy efforts

Type of Advocacy: Cause-Related Advocacy

Although closely linked to funding priorities and development policy, I envision this advocacy area as addressing the broader commitments that must be in place if planning and investment are to be coordinated in meeting Target 10—commitments that go beyond the default budget allocations routinely earmarked for overseas development. Without a broader commitment from the leading nations, there will be insufficient drive to coordinate, plan, and invest in water resource management and sanitation infrastructure at the scale required to deliver water improvements to some 290 million people a year. A critical mass is therefore needed internationally to create momentum and pressure other governments to commit the internal resources needed to ensure the country-by-country expansion of services that is essential to meeting the MDGs in water and sanitation.

As a first step, a broader commitment is needed on the part of individual governments and their stakeholders to ensure that the water and sanitation crisis is at the top of their agendas. In representative political systems like those found in the U.S. and Europe, an administration often needs to be convinced that there is broad-based public support for a particular issue (in addition to international momentum) before it feels compelled to commit significant resources to public policy goals like Target 10. To generate this broad-based support and rally public opinion in support of water and

sanitation goals, the Target 10 coalition will need to invest in *cause-related advocacy* campaigns capable of generating the political constituencies and harnessing public pressure to promote significant government involvement in international initiatives like the MDGs for water and sanitation.

The core challenge of the [Millennium Development] Goals lies in financing and implementing the interventions at scale...Scale-up needs to be carefully planned and overseen to ensure successful and sustainable implementation. Scaling up works...But a close reading of success reveals that scale-up cannot begin without political leadership and clear government commitment. This is an absolutely necessary (though far from sufficient) condition. (MDP Overview 2005, 31)

Target for Change: Build National Constituencies, Coordinate Initiatives Internationally

The Millennium Development Goals were established as development goals that governments committed themselves to achieving by 2015. However worthy the MDGs are on paper, no concrete progress will be made without sizeable investments in the planning and delivery of water-and-sanitation benefits to communities who need them; and no sizeable investments will take place without sustained political activity in support of such goals (advocacy and constituency-building). Poor communities around the world typically have little or no voice over the political priorities of their own national governments, and as such international movements must work to create the momentum needed to persuade all governments to prioritize water and sanitation issues for all vulnerable communities.

Without popular pressure in support of public policy goals, representative governments typically prioritize their own domestic political objectives; organized constituencies, however, can bring considerable pressure to bear on the types of public

policy outcomes and international initiatives that an administration ultimately pursues. This has to be the starting point for cause-related advocacy.

Again, the ONE Campaign serves as a successful model for building a national constituency based on core commitments to a greater U.S. role in international efforts to reduce poverty, hunger, and preventable disease. Its messaging is simple, with easily grasped, common sense goals, it aims to create an all-inclusive support base that eschews orthodox political affiliations (Republican and Democrat, blue state and red state) in favor of smart, pragmatic, cost-effective investments in global health, education, and stability that correspond to values held by the American populace. “The good news is that many research studies show that the American public’s core values and expressed preferences are consistent with the idea of a more engaged, cooperative U.S. role in the world well beyond the current security engagement that dominates our foreign policy. The challenge is to catalyze these latent sympathies and to turn quiet support into active engagement” (Global Independence Initiative 2006).

Basic Framework: Expand ONE Campaign to the Next Level, Deliver Concrete Water-and-Sanitation Outcomes

I would propose working with the members of the ONE Campaign to make the Target 10 water and sanitation goals one of the Campaign’s central pillars of basic development: in addition to building a constituency that supports investing an additional one percent of the U.S. budget in global health and poverty-reduction initiatives, the ONE Campaign could go one step further in outlining how its growing constituency could help

deliver actual water-and-sanitation improvements by asking its government to work with the Target 10 coalition, the UN system, private and public donors, and the relevant U.S. agencies to make concrete investments toward Target 10.

The Target 10 coalition (through the ONE Campaign) could build the water-and-sanitation-campaign as a major undertaking with a “command center” for tracking, assessing, and reporting on the state of current expenditures, new investment pledges, and lifesaving outcomes. This public effort could highlight the various components of the campaign (the coordination of public and private efforts) and show how each is contributing toward Target 10 so that progress can be charted against the campaign’s objectives.

The Millennium Development Project’s Task Force report calls on international networks and operational partnerships to prioritize precisely these types of actions:

- Raise public awareness of the deficits in coverage and quality of water supply and sanitation services through public statements, articles, events, celebrity endorsements, and other innovative strategies.
- Test, refine, and publicize effective strategies for water and sanitation service delivery to the poor that have the potential to yield results at scale.
- Collectively strengthen and rationalize efforts and align them towards the achievement of the Goals while at the same time taking steps to ensure accountability to the communities of the developing world.
- Use accurate information—the end product of reliable monitoring efforts—as a powerful advocacy tool for change. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 178)

A ONE Campaign-type platform would serve to highlight neglected areas (e.g., which government agencies could reinforce their efforts, which goals require greater investment, etc.), and identify areas where greater public pressure could help generate

more support while creating expectations for transparency and performance-based reporting—highlighting how many people currently benefit from the effort, projections of how many more will benefit, what the returns on investment are, and a sense of the cost savings from achieved through service delivery (preventative health benefits, economic and productivity gains, etc.). The key would be to ensure that there is a real sense of momentum, that progress is underway, and that there is an effective framework for evaluating the effort so that the public continues to see the benefit of sustained investments in water and sanitation improvements.

Evaluation: Criteria and Tools for Evaluating Advocacy Impacts and Gains

To ensure the success of the Target 10 coalition / ONE Campaign’s constituency-building efforts and policy commitments, several areas must be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Internally (for the steering committee of the advocacy campaign), tabs will need to be kept to properly assess (1.) whether progress is being made toward the stated advocacy goals—the stepping stones toward real policy change—when “compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards,” and (2.) whether certain elements of the overall advocacy strategy need to be strengthened or improved, i.e., evaluation as “a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy” (Weiss, quoted in Global Interdependence Initiative 2006).

A third area arises in the campaign’s need for public accounting in service delivery: (3.) the tracking and reporting on the returns on investment and outcomes of the programs themselves—qualitative and quantitative assessments of the water-and-

sanitation improvements, both planned and delivered, to poor communities around the world. These three areas of evaluation should keep the campaign on target while providing valuable assessments to the public on the success of the campaign, its growing support and expansion. To implement a large, multi-stage national campaign and coordinate it with efforts in other political epicenters (Geneva, Brussels, for example), a minimum team of five advocacy staff will be needed along with a budget for 3-5 years—in addition to the staff pursuing separate advocacy tracks in areas one and two (private donors and foundations, and public, institutional donors, respectively).

Staying on Target: Developing Benchmarks for Assessing and Reporting Progress.

A framework for evaluation must be planned, developed, and deployed prior to undertaking any advocacy efforts, and it must be performed throughout the life of an advocacy effort. Without a formal set of goals, a defined set of measurements and indicators, and a plan for ongoing assessments of the campaign's progress, the overall effort will contribute little to anyone's understanding of how or why a particular campaign was successful and how it might be strengthened or modified. According to a new online resource produced by the Aspen Institute's Global Interdependence Initiative—a resource titled “Continuous Progress: Better Advocacy Through Evaluation”—here is what this process requires (Global Interdependence Initiative 2006).

(1) Plan for evaluation from the beginning of your advocacy work. Before the work begins, progress benchmarks and success indicators must be defined to clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities within the Target 10 advocacy coalition.

Continuous Progress suggests defining evaluation goals that answer the questions “What do we want to learn?” and “What do we want to track?” In the case of Target 10’s cause-related advocacy, what would we want to learn and track, and what could we consider as signs of progress?

As stated throughout this chapter, to achieve Target 10’s ultimate goal—deliver water-and-sanitation improvements on a country-by-country basis to some 300 million people a year for each of the next 9 years—the Target 10 coalition must launch targeted advocacy efforts that address three general areas: (1) capacity building among the coalition of Target 10’s operational partners; (2) funding priorities, development policy, and institutional giving among government administrations and agencies; and (3) the orchestration of broader commitments among governments and populations in prioritizing investments in water and sanitation. These underlying areas determine the momentum towards achieving the MDGs.

In the third advocacy area, what specific goals should a cause-related campaign strive towards—and how would we measure and assess both our efforts and the campaign’s contributions to the broader Target 10 goals—if we want to foster political commitments among governments and populations so that water and sanitation improvements become a top priority? The mix of advocacy efforts must be tracked in terms of:

- **Goals:** Long-term accomplishments that will advance the organization’s [Target 10’s] mission
- **Strategies:** Administrative, legislative, nonpartisan election-related and legal approaches to accomplishing a goal

- **Outcome benchmarks:** Specific activities or accomplishments that demonstrate success in reaching objectives for each strategy undertaken
- **Progress benchmarks:** Specific activities or accomplishments that demonstrate significant progress towards reaching desired outcomes. (Egbert and Hoechstetter 2006)

(a) *Target 10 Outcomes for Area Three's Cause-Related Advocacy.* Below is a partial list of goals that could contribute to more deliberate planning and investment in sound water resources management and infrastructure—key outcomes that Area Three's advocacy should strive to deliver: The following bullet points are a sample of actor-specific goals highlighted in the Target 10 Task Force publication, *What Will It Take?*, which could serve as a partial list of objectives for an Area Three advocacy campaign:

- Prepare an operational plan that outlines what they will do during the period 2005–15 to help achieve target 10 and the development and management of water resources for the Millennium Development Goals.
- Use the action target set by World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg for countries to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency strategies by 2005 as an opportunity to infuse Goals-planning processes with consideration of water resources.
- Develop a coherent approach toward deciding on the investments in water resources infrastructure and management needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals.
- Strengthen UN country team efforts to provide technical and capacity-building support to governments.
- Effectively coordinate actions at the country level, including harmonization of procedures and joint programs, both within the UN system and with development banks and bilateral donor agencies.
- Support the Joint Monitoring Programme as the key global mechanism for monitoring sustainable access to water and sanitation and provide it with the necessary resources to carry out its work. (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 177-179)

I would add the following constituency-building goals to the list of advocacy goals for Area Three:

- Build a national constituency with support in every state that favors massively scaling-up investments in water-and-sanitation deliverables
- Create a coherent partnership with this national constituency emphasizing a clear, reciprocal relationship with the Target 10 coalition/ONE Campaign’s public accountability, framing the partnership as a long-term relationship through which the U.S. population could collectively help to address the nexus of water-and-sanitation problems around the world.

(b) Indicators and Measures of Tactical Success: The goals listed above would be the advocacy outcomes assigned to Area Three’s cause-related advocacy efforts and would fit fairly well under the ONE Campaign’s general efforts to build national support for international initiatives. The benchmarks and indicators of success should then be defined for each of these goals, clarifying expectations, roles, and responsibilities, and designing tactics and timelines for the Target 10 advocacy coalition. The actual tactics and strategies for obtaining Area Three outcomes can then be regularly evaluated against the stated benchmarks and indicators of success, providing the Target 10 coalition with a reference point for judging its efforts in delivering advocacy outcomes—benchmarks and indicators that inform whether they are getting closer to their defined goals.

While the above listed goals are necessary outcomes, they are probably too policy-oriented and too “wonkish” sounding to be used as rallying points for building constituencies. The Target 10 coalition/ONE Campaign must therefore play the middle man, drumming up support among the U.S. populace, on the one hand, using messages

and language suitable to generating individual political action, while on the other hand translating this broad political support into readily available policy formats that satisfy policy-makers' needs. The Target 10/ONE Campaign's advocacy work must convincingly connect the political values of a broad swath of Americans with real policy outcomes that can deliver results, all without being too simplistic or too complex when dealing with both sets of audiences.

For example, the first bullet point above, the preparation of a Target 10 operational plan, must take place according to the plans laid out by the Millennium Development Project, but rather than broadcast this particular need as an advocacy hook for engaging the public, the Target 10 coalition should focus on using easily graspable messages emphasizing the good that could be done if the American people chose to prioritize cost-effective, pragmatic solutions to global water and sanitation problems. While garnering general support for increased U.S. participation in water initiatives, the coalition's advocacy team would also coordinate among policy stakeholders to make sure an operational plan was indeed produced. These two pieces together would then be mutually reinforcing: the Target 10 coalition could simultaneously demonstrate that the U.S. populace wants their government to do more about water and sanitation, while presenting a draft operational plan (with broad stakeholder support) for linking this popular support with ongoing national and international efforts.

As such, here are a few proposed benchmarks and tactics for both generating public support and engaging the policy and administrative establishment for gaining ground in Area Three's advocacy goals:

- Benchmark:** Generate 500,000 signatures, and 1 million online emails, from a cross-section of states, demanding increased funding and political commitment for water programs
- Tactics:** Outreach events, concerts, email marketing, celebrity involvement, clear messaging and asks to individuals, national polling, street canvassing, etc.
- Benchmark:** Translate public support into highly visible campaign to get the U.S. administration to commit 10 times as much money as they currently give to a specific water-and-sanitation MDG development account
- Tactics:** Develop deliverable policy prescriptions with bipartisan support (in coordination with other advocacy areas on development policy) and frame as broadly popular, smart, effective, practical approach to funding international water initiatives (coordinated with private funding, existing MDG efforts).
- Benchmark:** Develop an operational plan, link it to international efforts, and get the President to attend its inauguration at the U.N., publicly committing to support the effort

Tactics: Campaign (publicly and privately) on the Bush Administration’s progress in meeting the MDGs, in funding its own Millennium Development Account, and in responding to growing U.S. popular support for scaling up U.S. involvement.

(2) Monitoring and documenting progress, and correcting your course as necessary. Establishing a baseline of measures ensures that the Target 10 coalition is properly informed of its advocacy progress and can assess its influence over time. “Evaluating incremental progress towards your goal helps you test your early assumptions, determine whether you are on the right track, and change tactics when necessary. From a grantmaker perspective, it can ensure more ‘bang for the buck’ as advocacy initiatives become more effective over time” (Global Interdependence Initiative 2006).

Defining benchmarks and tracking progress indicators throughout the life of an advocacy campaign enables groups like the Target 10 coalition to show movement towards their stated goals, track their own capacity-building efforts, monitor their progress in developing advocacy skills, and measure the expansion of their support base—all of which facilitate meeting the overall advocacy and program goals. “Knowing intermediate results obtained from your evaluation can help you communicate progress to your grantmakers, staff, colleagues, board and other key stakeholders, keeping them engaged and motivated for the long run” (Global Interdependence Initiative 2006).

(3) Conducting a summative evaluation at the end. The Global Interdependence Initiative's *Continuous Progress* resource emphasizes the need for conducting a summary evaluation at the end of the campaign, but warns that often times organizations *only* provide a summative evaluation, neglecting to put together a framework for evaluating progress during the campaign. Producing a final summary will be much easier “and more accurate if you have been monitoring progress during the implementation phase” (Global Interdependence Initiative 2006).

Conclusion

The estimated 1.1 billion people lacking clean water and the 2.6 billion who lack basic sanitation will continue to suffer unless a massively scaled-up international effort is launched and sustained in support of the Millennium Development Goals for water-and-sanitation improvements (Target 10). To halve these global statistics would mean extending water supply services and basic sanitation to an additional 290 million people each year over the next nine years at an estimated annual cost of USD \$11.3 billion dollars.

As we have seen, developing and extending water-and-sanitation services involves much more than just supplying technology and infrastructure: to increase access to water and sanitation, a massive network of community-centered micro-projects must be established in coordination with the participation of local populations so that appropriate skills are transferred, community-based water committees are formed,

maintenance structures, schedules, and responsibilities are firmly in place, and adequate income-generating activities exist to support the upkeep using locally available materials.

And while the scale may be daunting, the fact that the problems associated with unsafe water are fully preventable grounds the project and obliges action. But the international NGOs that *can* deliver community-centered, sustainable water-and-sanitation programs—programs that engage the local citizenry in creating real, collaborative development opportunities—lack the capacity needed to deliver programs at the scale required by the MDGs.

Success in meeting Target 10's objectives, therefore, hinges on whether a grand coalition can be cobbled together of public and private donor organizations, national governments and international agencies, private companies and civic institutions, operational NGOs and the U.N. system. Linking and engaging with all of these sectors is itself daunting, but there is no way to address this nexus of actors and issues except through multi-level advocacy strategies (public, private; operational, thematic, and cause-related). Without clear commitments toward building capacity, reshaping official funding priorities, improving policy coordination—as well as strategies aimed at influencing key stakeholders, institutions, and public constituencies—Target 10 will simply be another empty promise. And while all of this represents a highly political endeavor, it is an essential role of humanitarian advocacy.

Humanitarian advocacy enables self-described non-political organizations like ACF to operate in broader political arenas while maintaining the core values that make humanitarian action unique: independent, impartial, non-discriminatory, needs-based

assessments of conditions on the ground—the values that should ground and inform international assistance. In highlighting where humanitarian and political action interact, relief NGOs identify potential points of leverage for humanitarian politics. If the relief community wants improved international commitments to humanitarian values like expanded water-and-sanitation coverage as proposed by Target 10, it will have to work through political channels to champion these values and have them incorporated into national and international public policy.

As we have seen, advocacy in humanitarian action is the very embodiment of humanitarian politics. Without political engagement on the part of relief NGOs committed to delivering water-and-sanitation improvements, there will be no commitment by donors to increase and refocus their development assistance and to target sufficient aid to the poorest low-income countries; no commitment by governments of middle-income countries that do not depend on aid to reallocate their resources so that they target funding to their unserved poor; insufficient support for activities to create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities; no recognition that basic sanitation in particular requires an approach that centers on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization; and insufficient planning and investment in sound water resources management and infrastructure (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005, 11-12).

Humanitarian action can no longer pursue relief programs without also attending to the political contexts in which these activities take place. Working toward a humanitarian mandate requires a capacity for advocacy as much as for service delivery.

Humanitarian advocacy, as humanitarian politics, must engage the political world without losing sight of its unique values, but it can no longer wait passively for the political outcomes needed to carry out its work.

As a humanitarian organization, Action Against Hunger's mandate is to improve the lives of communities trapped in humanitarian crises—helping families get back on their feet through our nutrition, water-and-sanitation, food-security, and health interventions. But if the larger political context undermines a population's health and well-being or prolongs a vulnerable community's exposure to life-threatening conditions, then ACF is compelled to address the setting in which their humanitarian programs takes place. This is an essential role for humanitarian advocacy, and humanitarian advocacy has become essential to humanitarian action in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this thesis I have charted a set of discussions that currently haunt the humanitarian community at this historical juncture: the tensions inherent in carving out political work for avowedly non-political organizations and the necessity of applying a more developed concept of advocacy to the field of humanitarian action. My aim has been to document these discussions and contribute to the development of humanitarian action through an assessment of political advocacy.

I have argued that powerful linkages exist between the seemingly mundane task of defining advocacy goals for a humanitarian NGO like Action Against Hunger and the unresolved tensions that stem from the aid-politics relationship in general—that larger set of tensions resulting from the ambiguity between the roles and responsibilities assigned to both humanitarian and political actors. These tensions have long existed at the heart of the aid-politics relationship, and advocacy in the humanitarian field has been of secondary importance to relief NGOs whose central imperatives are access (to populations in need) and security (of one's teams in the field).

This international division of humanitarian labor has undergone various incarnations, especially during the latter half of the 20th century and early in the 21st, forcing both the relief community and political actors alike to reconsider their relationship with one another. And while political actors are well-equipped for political engagement, the unique position of historically non-political humanitarian groups has left

relief NGOs terribly unprepared for the sorts of engagement with political actors that is required of them today—despite their unique qualifications as operational partners with first-hand knowledge of conditions on the ground. This study has argued that humanitarian advocacy, as an acceptable form of humanitarian politics, is now indispensable to humanitarian action, and that the relief community must learn to see advocacy as a vehicle for “operating in broader political arenas.” The relief community can no longer limit itself to service delivery alone: investing in advocacy is the only way to safeguard humanitarian values, effectively engage political actors, and ensure humanitarian outcomes for vulnerable populations around the world.

I have traced the forces that have shaped and continue to shape this evolving aid-politics relationship while highlighting the threats and opportunities that result from the need to coordinate to resolve political crises and the humanitarian emergencies they engender. Again, the linkages between the need to define advocacy’s political terrain and the larger need for more effective political engagement on the part of the humanitarian community (i.e., advocacy) has formed the crux of my investigation. In focusing my analysis on this discussion of humanitarian advocacy, I have presented an understanding of the tensions inherent in the aid-politics dynamic, highlighted potential solutions available to the relief community, and developed an action plan for an Action Against Hunger advocacy strategy. My aim was a focused discussion of how the relief community is already involved in politics while arguing for investments in advocacy to enhance their influence over the direction of the political process as it relates to humanitarian ends.

As a humanitarian organization, Action Against Hunger works to improve the lives of vulnerable communities through integrated programs in nutrition, water-and-sanitation, food-security, and basic health care. With recent geopolitical changes, relief NGOs like ACF are realizing that the larger political context can often undermine a population's health and well-being, prolonging a vulnerable community's exposure to life-threatening conditions. Under such conditions, humanitarian groups like ACF are compelled to address the setting in which their humanitarian programs takes place through humanitarian advocacy.

As noted earlier, humanitarian advocacy enables self-described non-political organizations like ACF to operate in broader political arenas while maintaining the core values that make humanitarian action unique (their independent, impartial, non-discriminatory, socio-economic assessments of conditions on the ground)—values that ought to underlie international assistance. The relief community can only ensure that these values are reflected in the international public policy of nations if they have the resources and the strategies in place to get their perspectives on the political agendas of nation-states. Only in this way can relief NGOs be sure of sufficient commitment by political actors to increase and refocus their development assistance according to humanitarian needs (not political agendas), to work fully to resolve internal conflicts and crises, and to plan and invest in longer-term humanitarian outcomes for the world's unstable regions.

I have tried to build a strong case behind my assertion that humanitarian advocacy must now reside at the center of humanitarian action. Given the political climate in which

the relief community finds itself in the early 21st century, neglecting to invest in its own political infrastructure would amount to abdicating all power to the often questionable agendas of powerful states. In order to ensure that humanitarian values survive in an ever-changing political world, the relief community must invest in its capacity for advocacy.

Relief NGOs have a clear stake in securing a political framework conducive to their values and commitments. Beyond delivering assistance, relief organizations must devote organizational resources to the reshaping of the aid-politics relationships in support of humanitarian values, greater respect for International Humanitarian Law, and political commitments to ending humanitarian crises. Humanitarian advocacy—that set of strategies enabling relief NGOs to engage with political actors—is the very embodiment of humanitarian politics. Indeed, humanitarian advocacy *is* humanitarian politics, and represents a conceptual broadening of the humanitarian mandate.

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