

AAI Review of Human Security

ActionAid International

Review of Human Security

# **AAI in relation to the Humanitarian Context**

**Tony Vaux**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This report is part of a wider Review of AAI's Human Security theme which includes evaluations of the Tsunami and South Asia Earthquake responses and a study of organisational aspects of AAI's work. It is based on extensive interviews with AAI staff and stakeholders, visits and discussions in Kenya and Malawi, discussion with over 80 AAI staff assembled for the Africa Regional Meeting in Nairobi in October 2007 and a presentation and discussion of draft findings at the International Emergencies and Conflict Team meeting in Brighton UK, October/November 2007.

### External Context

The first section of the review examines trends in the external context for humanitarian action, notably-

- The Global War on Terror and increasing assertiveness of national governments;
- Increasing influence of regional superpowers;
- Increased incidence of natural disasters and impacts of climate change;
- Advances in communication technology;
- Unresolved tensions around accountability;
- Imbalances in the global allocation of humanitarian aid;
- Tighter controls and closer coordination by donors;
- Strategic Western approaches towards conflict and fragile states;

Among humanitarian actors, trends include-

- Advocacy directed towards Western institutions rather than national governments;
- Prominence of 'super-INGOs' in the humanitarian field;
- Neglect of disaster risk reduction and conflict sensitivity;
- Continuing gaps in the humanitarian system especially around protection and especially violence against women;
- Increasing upward accountability.

In relation to AAI this creates opportunities for-

- Developing an identity as a Southern organisation;
- Working closely with national governments;
- Focusing on disaster risk reduction and conflict sensitivity;
- More work on protection, especially in relation to women;
- Demonstrating and promoting downward accountability;

### Evaluation of AAI's Human Security work

## AAI Review of Human Security

AAI now operates on six global themes including Human Security and within this theme there are five specific objectives. AAI has made most progress in relation to the first and third objectives, which concern disaster risk reduction. AAI has emerged as a leading organisation in this field with a strong preventive focus in relation to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. AAI has developed good methods for analysing and responding to risk at the community level and has pioneered important work on risk reduction in schools. It has helped promote awareness of the impact of natural disasters and climate change on poor people and has been particularly successful at representing their voices. However, this work is somewhat patchy across the organisation, and it has not always developed into strategic relationships with national governments.

In relation to the second current objective, which concerns conflict, AAI has made much less progress. In a few cases AAI has extended its work on natural disasters to include conflict but this has not taken place in a systematic way. AAI has commissioned some commentary on conflict issues but this has not been absorbed into working practice. Similarly, in relation to the fourth objective, which relates to humanitarian protection, AAI has made little progress although it is moving forward on the issue of violence against women. The appointment of a global conflict adviser creates potential to address these issues more seriously but there is still some organisational uncertainty about AAI's position and role in relation to conflict.

The fifth current objective is to ensure basic services for people affected by conflict and emergencies. AAI has been highly inconsistent in its responses to disasters. National offices have responded to emergencies or not according to their own considerations. In some cases AAI has not even responded when its partners and areas of activity are directly affected by disasters. This undermines relationships and confuses outsiders. It makes donors unsure about AAI's commitment and this causes problems with fundraising. AAI's policy position on disaster response is reasonably clear but this has not been enforced by senior managers –possibly because it is too much regarded as a responsibility of the International Emergencies and Conflict Team (IECT). This reflects an overall organisational culture which lacks coherence. Mandatory responsibilities should be more clearly identified and assigned to particular staff.

## Key Issues

Other AAI themes (such as Food Security, Women's Rights etc) also contribute towards Human Security. This report suggests that Human Security should be regarded as the organisational goal rather than as a theme. There is still a need for special support in relation to emergencies and conflict but it would be better if the basic responsibility was regarded as a management responsibility falling particularly on Country Directors and enforced by Regional Directors. AAI's leadership should make clear that such basic disaster response is not an optional theme but mandatory. If necessary, agreements between AAI national offices should be amended to reflect this responsibility. The IECT should not be held responsible for disaster responses but should keep a watch to ensure

## AAI Review of Human Security

that ‘mandatory’ responsibilities are fulfilled by national offices. AAI may wish to extend this mandatory responsibility beyond disaster response to incorporate disaster risk reduction and conflict sensitivity in all programmes.

There has been much discussion within AAI about the need for a ‘niche’ in disaster response. Although AAI has developed skills in a number of specific emergency issues, such as psycho-social response, its distinctiveness really lies in the approach rather than in a ‘niche’. The approach is characterized not only as an emphasis on disaster risk reduction, but also a focus on national governments rather than Western institutions. AAI is the most ‘Southern’ of INGOs and should build on this unusual quality in order to develop frank and productive relationships with national governments. Beginning with disaster risk reduction, AAI should be able to extend this into more difficult issues such as conflict.

The IECT has three roles- support to national offices, managing the Human Security theme, and oversight of mandatory responsibilities as described above. The primary focus should be on support to national offices. Where necessary, IECT may need to manage programmes across the organisation, especially in relation to disaster risk reduction.

AAI’s small international advocacy team has done remarkable work. It should shift its focus towards supporting advocacy at national level and continue with its excellent work on disaster risk reduction and climate change. The team has moved ahead on conflict advocacy, notably in its reports on the UN, but the rest of the organisation now needs to catch up on conflict issues. This is now happening through the efforts of the Global Conflict Adviser but international advocacy should be kept ‘on hold’ until a clearer direction on conflict has been established. Some suggestions are made in the next paragraph.

## Moving Forwards

The Objectives of the current Human Security Strategic Plan are not well differentiated and this makes it difficult to assess what AAI is doing on specific issues. In particular, because conflict and emergencies are linked together, no clear objectives have been set in relation to conflict. This report proposes that AAI should separate out a clear objective on conflict. This would focus on conflict sensitivity and protection. AAI should develop the tools to test for conflict sensitivity in development and aid, starting with its own programmes and later engaging with national governments, donors and other aid agencies. In relation to protection, AAI should explore possibilities for supporting traditional or informal justice systems to provide protection, especially for women, in unstable situations. This may be presented as follows-

**Organisational Goal: Human Security**

**Core responsibilities of all staff:**

- DRR incorporated in all programmes;
- Disaster response according to needs especially where programmes and partners are directly affected;
- Conflict sensitivity in all programmes;
- Human rights protection of all those involved in AAI programmes;
- Proactive assertion of women's rights.

On the above basis the Human Security objectives can then be reframed as follows-

**Revision of Human Security objectives**

Current Thematic Objective	Revised IECT Objective
1. To reduce hazards that threaten poor people;	2. To ensure that DRR is integrated into all plans and programmes;
2. To alleviate and address the causes of conflict;	3. To ensure that AAI programmes are conflict sensitive and spread conflict sensitivity to national development programmes and international aid;
3. To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies;	-
4. To generate pressure... to protect people in conflict and emergencies;	4. To ensure that AAI offers human rights protection to associates and develop skills in relation to violence against women in emergencies and conflict;
5. To assure....access to basic services during conflict and emergencies;	1. To support national offices in fulfilling their responsibilities for response to emergencies and conflict and monitor organisational performance on this;

## **Key Recommendations**

In relation to Human Security, AAI should-

1. Develop its identity and distinctiveness as a Southern organisation;
2. Make Human Security its overall goal and re-name the theme as 'Emergencies and Conflict';
3. Distinguish more clearly between mandatory basic responsibilities and optional activity as a theme;
4. Take steps to ensure that national programmes take the primary responsibility in relation to emergencies and conflict;
5. Ensure that disaster responses are more consistent;
6. Integrate disaster risk reduction throughout AAI's programmes;
7. Revise current objectives under the Human Security theme to focus attention on conflict;
8. Develop tests for conflict sensitivity and build capacity to advise and influence national governments and aid agencies;
9. Develop a role in relation to protection, especially for women, in unstable situations;
10. Restate the primary role of the IECT around support to country programmes rather than responsibility for disaster response;
11. Reduce direct programme management by the IECT as far as possible and instead develop the capacity to monitor and influence trends across the organisation in relation to emergencies and conflict;
12. Focus international advocacy on national rather than international level, particularly in relation to disaster risk reduction and emerging conflict priorities.

December 2007

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Humanitarian Activities

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## FULL REPORT

### Table of Contents

#### Introduction

#### **Section One: The Global Humanitarian Context**

- 1.0. Updating AAI's analysis
- 1.1. Geopolitical trends
- 1.2. The emergence of new economic superpowers
- 1.3. DRR and climate change
- 1.4. National governments
- 1.5. The humanitarian system
- 1.6. International NGOs
- 1.7. Advocacy and public policy
- 1.8. Accountability issues
- 1.9. Overview

#### **Section Two: AAI's Strategy and Practice**

- 2.1. Human Security as a global theme
- 2.2. Performance against objectives
- 2.3. Problems of the objectives
- 2.4. Strengths
- 2.5. Weaknesses

#### **Section Three: Strategic Issues**

- 3.1. Disaster Response
- 3.2. Disaster niches
- 3.3. Advocacy and Influence
- 3.4. Violence, protection and conflict
- 3.5. Themes and issues
- 3.6. The role of the IECT

#### **Section Four: Moving Forward**

- 4.1. AAI's distinctiveness
- 4.2. Opportunities
- 4.3. Threats
- 4.4. Other Strategic Options
- 4.5. Reframing the Human Security objectives

#### **Section Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 5.1. Conclusions
- 5.2. Recommendations

<b>Annex 1</b>	<b>Terms of Reference</b>
<b>Annex 2</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
<b>Annex 3</b>	<b>Key Documents</b>

## Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
ALPS	Accountability, Learning and Planning System
CERF	Consolidated Emergency Response Fund (UN)
DAC	Development Advisory Committee (of the OECD)
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Rehabilitation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
INGO	International NGO
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN)
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme

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## FULL REPORT

# AAI in Relation to the Global Humanitarian Context

## Introduction

This Review is part of a wider process which includes evaluations of AAI responses to the Tsunami and South Asia Earthquake, as well as a separate report on AAI's Human Security work from an organisational perspective. The key question in the Terms of Reference is- 'How does AAI's human security work fit in the broader emergencies/conflict context?' It examines AAI's policies and work on the Human Security theme and strategy over the last three years. The Terms of Reference are attached as Annex 1.

The Review has benefited from two interactive events: the Africa Regional Meeting in Nairobi and the International Emergencies and Conflict Team (IECT) meeting in Brighton UK, both in October/November 2007. Because other parts of the Review will focus more on Asia, the field visits for this part of the Review were directed towards Africa. Discussions were held with staff and partners from the Kenya programme and a 4-day visit was made to Malawi. This may give the report an element of Africa bias although efforts have been made to correct this by other interviews, mainly by telephone -for a list of interviews see Annex 2. Many external stakeholders qualified their comments by saying that they had only a partial or localised knowledge of AAI.

The Review has also drawn on general studies of the humanitarian system, notably the UN Humanitarian Response Review<sup>1</sup>, and also large-scale joint evaluations including those by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC)<sup>2</sup> and Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)<sup>3</sup>. Among AAI publications and policy papers, particularly important was the recent '*Food Crises and AAI Responses across Africa 2005-7: A Review of Achievements and Challenges*' –referred to as the 'Africa Response Review'. A list of the most important AAI documents is provided in Annex 3.

The report draws on other work by the author, especially studies of humanitarian trends for CAFOD<sup>4</sup>, the Development in Practice journal<sup>5</sup> and ALNAP<sup>6</sup>. The author was involved in some of the TEC evaluations and was team leader for the DEC evaluation referred to above. The author has not worked directly for AAI but, as a consultant, has provided inputs on conflict for the development of AAI's current strategy and later applied this in work with AAI teams in the Great Lakes and Sri Lanka.

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<sup>1</sup> UN (2005) *Humanitarian Response Review –an independent report commissioned by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator & Under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs*, OCHA New York: UN

<sup>2</sup> TEC (2006) *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*, London: TEC

<sup>3</sup> DEC (2005) *Independent Evaluation of the DEC response to the Tsunami Disaster*, London: DEC

<sup>4</sup> Vaux, T (2004) *Humanitarian Trends*, unpublished

<sup>5</sup> Vaux, T (2007) *Humanitarian Trends and Dilemmas*, in Eade and Vaux (Eds) *Development and Humanitarianism –practical issues*, Kumarian Press

<sup>6</sup> Vaux, T (2007) *Proportion and Distortion in Humanitarian Assistance* in ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action, London: ODI

## Section One: The Global Humanitarian Context

### 1.0. Updating AAI's analysis

AAI's current Human Security strategy<sup>7</sup> covers the period from 2005-2010. The analysis of the external context on which it is based remains largely valid but the following paragraphs draw out some trends that have particular importance for AAI today and may call for changes in strategy. On the whole AAI already has a good analysis and the focus of this report is more on consolidating the response.

### 1.1. Geopolitical trends

The end of the Cold War has led to more responsible policies by the international community and somewhat less bias in the distribution of aid. But after a period of relatively benign development, new biases have arisen, notably the 'Global War on Terror'. The American-led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have raised profound questions about the relationship between the West and Islam. For many governments around the world the more direct concern is what they see as a challenge to national sovereignty coming from the West, sometimes under the guise of human rights and humanitarian action.

'Global Security' has come to dominate Western policy and has profound effects on aid, which is now more closely linked with security and political concerns. The British government, for example, has linked aid from the Department for International Development (DFID) more closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, forming 'Conflict Pools' for joint funding and programming. The USA has tightened the political control of aid yet further.

This trend, already noted in AAI's strategic plan, has affected the global allocation of aid and also the use of aid within countries. Aid is not simply concerned with the security of affected people ('human security') but also with the security of the West ('global security'). This phenomenon, described by Mark Duffield as 'the securitization of aid',<sup>8</sup> has made the relationship of Western humanitarian actors and national governments more difficult. At the same time the scale and scope of these organisations has increased with further funding. National governments often suspect that humanitarian work is a cover for other Western interests.

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<sup>7</sup> AAI (2004) *Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies –strategic plan 2005-2010*, AAI

<sup>8</sup> Duffield, M (2001) *Global Governance and the New Wars*, Zed: London and New York

## **1.2. The emergence of new economic superpowers**

A particularly strong trend since AAI's Human Security strategy was developed in 2004 has been the emergence of China and other major economic hubs that are not aligned to the West and less concerned with its competing agendas of 'global security' and 'human security'. India, Brazil and South Africa are developing their voice in global debates and Russia is re-emerging as a global power that can challenge Western domination. These superpowers are largely focused on their commercial interests in relation to poorer countries. China's insatiable demand for raw materials draws it closely towards Africa and gives it a key role in African development. In Mozambique and DRC, for example, Chinese commercial projects function in the same sectors as Western aid projects. Roads and railways are built in exchange for primary commodities. This has introduced a new model of development that is beginning to challenge the Western paradigm. It is attractive to national governments not only because it comes with few questions but also because it reduces dependence on the West –a dependence that governments now dislike because of the 'global security' agenda which now adds to a history of grievances around fiscal controls, structural adjustment, patents, trade and aid.

The new superpowers are concerned with security, but mostly in their neighbouring countries. India is consolidating a dominant position in its region but Western advocacy about the conflicts in Nepal and Sri Lanka has tended to bypass India as the key player. Similarly South Africa's crucial role in ending the war in DRC and its continued political influence tends to be ignored as Western policy analysts constantly call for action by the UN, World Bank and Western governments. With its decentralized structure, and offices in China, India, South Africa and Brazil, AAI may be in a position to develop an advocacy focus on these regional superpowers.

## **1.3. Conflict**

The number of countries embroiled in civil wars increased up to 1994 but reduced since then, although the average length of civil wars (16 years) has remained similar.<sup>9</sup> Conflicts are now viewed in the West primarily from the perspective of 'global security'. In Nepal, for example, the Maoists were categorized by the US government as 'terrorists' and therefore American aid was directed exclusively towards the King and the Royal Nepal Army. Aid funding was geared towards the same strategy. Responses to conflicts in Sudan and Somalia have similarly been dominated by the role of Al Qaeda, resulting in overemphasis of security issues and a tendency to support the state regardless of rights and wrongs. Since most humanitarian work is funded by Western governments, aid agencies have not been able to maintain positions of neutrality or impartiality and as a result security threats against humanitarian workers have increased considerably. In their attempt to avoid bias, INGOs have avoided using conflict analysis, hoping that a focus on

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<sup>9</sup> For a recent overview of conflict statistics and discussions about causes see S Mansoor Murshed and Zulfan Tadjoeeddin (2007) *Reappraising the Greed and Grievance Explanations for violent internal conflict*, MICROCON Research Working Paper 2 on GSDRC website.

humanitarianism and good intentions will be enough. But the influence of back-donors makes this wishful thinking.

Western donors are much more willing than INGOs to analyse instability and conflict. Indeed, this is becoming a norm in their programmes in unstable areas. Their policies on conflict and fragile states have been evolving rapidly. The OECD-DAC, World Bank and others have developed extensive guidance and policy for engagement with 'fragile states'.<sup>10</sup> This is not only because 'fragile states' have been identified as a threat to 'global security' but also because they are the source of much of the world's deepest and most persistent poverty. There have been considerable developments in the use of conflict analysis as the basis for general and specific principles for conflict sensitive aid, including humanitarian responses. This tends to draw the focus of aid towards good governance, public accountability and the role of civil society in acting as a counterweight to abuses by government.

Western donors now tend to work through 'strategic frameworks' developed by the donors on the basis of conflict analysis and intended to increase their influence by more coordinated and coherent approaches. This further threatens the impartiality and neutrality of INGOs but it also opens the way for INGOs to act as a bridge between donors and governments on conflict issues and to work more directly with national governments and civil society to reduce conflict risk. This can be done by applying principles of conflict-sensitivity to national development programmes. But so far INGOs have tended to ignore or avoid this potential role and tried to keep to strategies of detachment rather than engagement.

#### **1.4 The concept of Human Security**

The concept of 'Human Security' was originally developed by Prof Amartya Sen and associates as a way of conceptualising the proper concern of outsiders in response to global poverty. It was defined in terms of the minimum freedoms that a person might reasonably expect. In the UNDP Human Development Report in 1994, Human Security was defined as 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Freedom from Want'. It was not specifically linked to disasters or conflict. The concept was later developed by the UN Commission on Human Security<sup>11</sup> and championed by Kofi Annan as UN Secretary General (who added 'Freedom to live with dignity'). A special unit to address Human Security was set up within OCHA. Canada became a leading proponent of the concept and the University of British Columbia publishes a global review from its Human Security Centre.<sup>12</sup> Despite pressure from the 'global security' agenda the UN has kept quite closely to the original concept but Canada and other Western governments increasingly mean 'global security'

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<sup>10</sup> Notably OECD-DAC (2007) *Principles for good engagement with Fragile States* (revised version) Paris: OECD

<sup>11</sup> See especially Amartya Sen's insert into the Commission on Human Security (2003) *Human Security Now*, UN New York pp8-9

<sup>12</sup> For the latest of these reports see [www.humansecuritybrief.info](http://www.humansecuritybrief.info)

when they talk about ‘human security’.<sup>13</sup> It is now important to recognise that ‘human security’ in its original concept represents a challenge to the dominant Western agenda and discourse.

It is also important to note that ‘human security’ was never intended to relate only to emergencies and conflict situations but also to describe the desired outcome of development. It is a comprehensive expression for the goal of humanitarian and development interventions, and an alternative to ‘poverty reduction’ or ‘human development’.

### **1.5. Disasters Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change**

AAI has been among the first INGOs to focus strongly on DRR. This came about because its work with poor people led AAI to the conclusion that they were mainly concerned about risk rather than poverty reduction or disaster response. For poor people, especially women, risk is an intrinsic part of existence and the greatest source of concern. It is also for this reason that Amartya Sen envisaged ‘Human Security’ in terms of ‘downside risk’ rather than the upward focus of ‘development’.

Climate change became a focus for AAI when it was realised that natural disasters seemed to be increasing. Governments are now more sensitive to such disasters because information spreads more rapidly. Mobile phones, digital cameras, blogging sites and websites project dramatic images and reports of disasters as they occur. Especially in Asia, networks quickly develop around disaster events and governments can be held more directly to account.

The Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>14</sup> has provided a clear focus for government action and has been widely accepted because it was negotiated through a consultative process by governments and is therefore not seen as a Western instrument. However, relatively few INGOs have given this issue their full attention. Most remain focused on disaster response and the related standards, techniques and niches. At the international level, there is still a need to focus climate change debates around poor people rather than on wider environmental concerns. But the key opportunity is at national level where governments are more willing to take action but lack support and expertise in DRR.

### **1.6. National Governments**

The above analysis points to national governments as the key level of change in the modern world. Work with Western institutions is limited by increasingly self-centred policies and the alienation that has arisen from the relentless pursuit of the Global War on

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<sup>13</sup> MacLean, Black and Shaw (2006) *A Decade of Human Security*, Ashgate

<sup>14</sup> Hyogo Framework for Action developed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters 2005-2015;  
<http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-declaration-english.pdf>

Terror and what are seen as Western double standards on issues such as climate change. National governments and local civil society are becoming more wary about international humanitarian aid, and especially the deployment of expatriate staff. But the real issue is not so much alienation from the West as willingness by governments to take more responsibility regardless of Western influence.

Thailand and India had both developed sophisticated disaster response structures and capacities before the Tsunami Disaster and sought to limit and control the influx of aid. The fact that they could do so only to a limited extent may encourage them to work even harder in future to avoid external interventions. Mozambique recently tried to limit foreign aid after floods on the basis that it had the capacity to deal with the problems on its own. Kenya has expressed similar determination. But until governments demonstrate their competence they may continue to be sidelined by the massive international response. This provides an important opening to support governments in their work on DRR.

These debates take a slightly different course in different regions. In Latin America class-based struggles and issues of land ownership have created a deeply politicised civil society which has tended to focus on pro-poor government rather than disasters. But the increasing frequency of natural disasters is beginning to change the paradigm towards a closer involvement of civil society in disasters and greater willingness to work with governments on DRR. In Asia, governments tend to see DRR as a means of protecting national sovereignty. In Africa changes may reflect the slow but steady advance of democracy.

Donors are ambivalent towards national governments, inserting 'global security' agendas into aid strategies but also trying to support national policy. Under 'The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness',<sup>15</sup> donors have committed to support national plans in a more coordinated way and offer budget support where possible. Aid budgets, especially for Africa, are increasing rapidly. National governments are beginning to turn to national civil society to help them develop the ideas and capacity to absorb this funding. Donors often want to involve civil society as a counter-balance to government. This opens the way for triangular relationships at national level and close collaboration between donors, government and civil society.

### **1.7. The Humanitarian System**

Over the last two decades, donor funding has increased substantially and allocations for humanitarian responses have outstripped allocations for long-term development. This has led to a huge increase in the scale of humanitarian responses and the emergence of large permanent departments in humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian aid has come closer to what Alex de Waal called a 'disaster relief industry',<sup>16</sup> with its own vested interests,

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/FINALPARISDECLARATION.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> De Waal, A (1997) *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, James Currey, London...

protective practices and competitive behaviour. INGOs as well as their partners in civil society have become heavily dependent on humanitarian aid.

This competitiveness may produce energy and strong motivation but it does not bring about a rational allocation of effort. There is no agreed method for comparing needs in different disasters and the allocation of aid bears little relationship to needs.<sup>17</sup> Disproportionate funding goes to high profile events such as the Tsunami while others are neglected, as in the case of DRC where nearly four million people died during the period preceding the Tsunami. The issue of imbalance was a major theme in the TEC and DEC reports on the Tsunami Disaster and of the recent ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action.<sup>18</sup> INGOs have conducted several studies of 'forgotten emergencies', including a study for AAI by John Cosgrave<sup>19</sup>, but there is currently no strong effort to address the problem in a systematic way. Some agencies try to give attention to forgotten emergencies. ECHO has devised its own vulnerability index for identifying neglected cases but this is used only by ECHO.<sup>20</sup> Under the 'Good Humanitarian Donorship' initiative, donors have pledged themselves to target aid according to needs but they have still not found a way of comparing or measuring needs.

The UN Humanitarian Response Review published in 2005<sup>21</sup> also notes this imbalance in aid allocations and urges donors to address it. In relation to sectors of the humanitarian system, perhaps the most important gap identified in this report is around humanitarian protection. It observes that UN agencies tend to take rather a legalistic view of their responsibilities while INGOs may have gone to the other extreme of very *ad hoc* responses. Until recently INGOs tended to regard protection as the preserve of human rights organisations but the Darfur experience has brought the issue to prominence because protection was clearly more needed than humanitarian relief. ALNAP recently published a Guide to Protection<sup>22</sup> but INGOs still tend to be inconsistent about this issue. Those with large operational programmes are unwilling to jeopardise their presence by taking a strong position. The most positive steps have been towards integrating protection issues into the planning of humanitarian operations and especially camp design and management. For example, refugee camps should be designed to reduce the risks experienced by women fetching firewood and water. Ideas for addressing protection now extend far beyond human rights, bringing the issue back within the scope of humanitarian aid. Indeed, it has become increasingly clear that all humanitarian aid influences protection. But practice still lags far behind this increasing understanding.

The UN Humanitarian Response Review makes a number of other points that may be relevant to AAI. It observes that the humanitarian system still lacks adequate 'surge capacity' although this has increased greatly in recent years. It argues that agencies

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<sup>17</sup> Darcy, J and C-A Hoffman (2003) *According to Need? Needs assessment and decision-making in the humanitarian sector*, HPG Report 15, ODI London

<sup>18</sup> Vaux, T (2006) 'Proportion and Distortion in humanitarian assistance' in ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action, ODI London

<sup>19</sup> Cosgrave, John (2004) *The Impact of the War on Terror on Aid Flows*, Action Aid London

<sup>20</sup> See ECHO website

<sup>21</sup> Adinolfi, Bassiouni, Lauritzen and Williams (2005) *Humanitarian response Review*, UN/OCHA

<sup>22</sup> Slim, H and A Bonwick (2005) *Protection –An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies*, ODI London

should keep more staff and resources dedicated to emergencies.<sup>23</sup> The report makes a number of proposals to better equip the UN for rapid response including the use of pooled funds. This has led to the Common Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which is administered by the UN but available to national and international NGOs as well as the UN. The report also led to the introduction of the 'Cluster Approach' to coordination which has been the subject of an AAI report on the first experiment with this system after the Pakistan earthquake.<sup>24</sup>

There is a danger that current trends will further strengthen the capacity of Western and multilateral agencies at the expense of national governments. There is also a danger that these trends will reinforce a focus on disaster response rather than risk reduction. This arises to some extent from the huge inertia generated by the current size of the humanitarian response system and its isolation from 'development'. The UN report does not address DRR because this is not the territory of OCHA but of a different, and much weaker, UN body, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). Many other organisations also separate DRR from humanitarian response, leaving DRR as a poor relation within development departments or an ill-fitting element within action-oriented response departments. The issues are often divided further by organisational structures and budgets.

### 1.8. International NGOs

INGOs have grown to huge size as a result of donor funding and public appeals in the West and are increasingly competitive. They have not found ways to work collectively on major challenges such as the imbalance in global humanitarian aid allocations. The Tsunami appeals provided INGOs with a scale of funding beyond anything before –seven times the amount raised in the previous highest DEC Appeal. This could have been used to improve the response dramatically by concerted action. In particular, a common approach to shelter would have helped avoid huge waste and inappropriate response. But nothing like this happened and even at the local level coordination was often poor. Having often criticised competitive behaviour within the UN, the INGOs showed that they could do no better even when they were in a dominant position.

Up to now, the Western media have joined in with the aid paradigm. Many newspaper and TV channels made their own public appeals after the Tsunami Disaster. This practice creates vested interests. The media want to reinforce their readers' beliefs. Budget cuts have made the media dependent on INGOs for access to disaster areas but the spread of mobile phones and blogging may bring about a more critical environment in which INGOs are held to account both by local people and by donors. The Reuters Foundation recently warned that the media may become tougher on INGOs. This trend is unlikely to

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<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive study of this issue in relation to INGOs see Houghton, R and B Emmens (2007) *Surge Capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector*, People in Aid

<sup>24</sup> AAI (2007) *The evolving UN Cluster Approach in the aftermath of the Pakistan Earthquake: an NGO perspective*, AAI



go far but perhaps indicates that the success of INGOs in terms of profile and size does introduce a level of risk for those that rely on the Western aid paradigm.

The current increase in droughts and floods may put financial pressure on INGOs. Localised disasters do not provide a basis for public appeals and donors will not respond in all cases. INGOs have become used to using external funds for disaster response rather than their own resources but this may have to change. Public supporters and donors may come to question why such large organisations cannot respond on their own. But the real challenge is more likely to come from national governments than from Western institutions and donors.

### **1.9. Advocacy and Public Policy**

Advocacy (or public policy) has become a major source of profile for INGOs, backed by extensive staffing and research capacity. The linkage of advocacy with institutional profile and funding tends to strengthen what is already a strong focus on Western institutions. This is not necessarily because such institutions can deliver the necessary changes but because the audience is Western and not much interested in the role of national governments. This leads to a public discourse in which Western donors, INGOs and supporters constantly reinforce each other's (potentially racist) belief that everything depends on Western actions, such as debt relief, trade and aid. Images and accounts of disaster relief reinforce this view, stating or implying that it is only through foreign help that anything useful happens.

The main theme of INGO advocacy is that the West should do more and give more. INGOs have sometimes shown a willingness to challenge Western commercial interests but have avoided anything that challenges the aid paradigm itself. Food aid presents a particularly blatant example. Staff in INGOs know that food aid tends to undermine local markets, but they continue to engage in handling food aid, arguing to themselves that it will take time to develop strong local markets. After so many years, this argument has worn very thin.<sup>25</sup> Part of the problem is that INGOs have been unwilling to challenge the corruption and abuse that surrounds food aid at national level. This may be one of the reasons why governments still call for food aid. In Ethiopia and Kenya, for example, trucking operations provide lucrative sources of income for politicians and political parties. In Sudan, politicians control airfreight and air transport operations to Darfur. The food aid issue was recognised in AAI's contextual analysis for the Strategic Plan but has still not been taken up vigorously, even by AAI. But food aid is one of the issues on which the Western aid paradigm most urgently needs to be challenged.

Most INGOs have developed international networks based in Western countries rather than in Southern ones. Motivations include access to funding from Western countries and the ability to share international campaigns addressing global targets. AAI is one of very

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<sup>25</sup> One of the first major critiques of food aid, Tony Jackson's '*Against the Grain*' was published by Oxfam in the mid 1970s. The 'food availability' myth was deconstructed by Amartya Sen in 1981 in his '*Poverty and Famines – an essay on entitlements*', OUP Oxford

few to have developed as an association of partly-independent Southern organisations based in the countries where it works. This gives AAI a natural focus at national level and thereby ability to fill a major gap identified in this analysis.

### 1.10. Accountability Issues

The UN Humanitarian Response Review describes problems of accountability in the humanitarian system as follows- *'The major challenges are to reconcile different, sometimes contradictory imperatives, to define the appropriate limits of accountability and to ensure that the accountability agenda is driven by the humanitarian principles and the needs of the beneficiaries.'*

This observation reflects a fundamental dichotomy of humanitarianism, contrasting its charitable roots with its rights-based approach. This leads to two different directions for accountability. Under the Red Cross Code organisations should be accountable both to their donors and to their beneficiaries, but the Code offers no advice what to do if these point in different ways. Donors have strengthened upward accountability mechanisms especially through the use of Results Based Management (RBM) systems, notably log-frames. MDGs and strategic themes also tend to strengthen upward accountability. They provide donors with a focus but reduce the ability of local people and national governments to set their own priorities.

One way of balancing such competing interests is through the explicit use of values or humanitarian principles. Here too there is a problem because most of the generic sets of principles, such as the Red Cross Code and Sphere's 'Common Standards', have been developed in the West. National governments and civil society may feel uneasy about holding INGOs accountable to a standard that the INGOs themselves have set. In practice, INGOs have made little use of general principles and standards. For some time DEC evaluations used Red Cross principles as a yardstick for assessing performance but the DEC has now dropped the practice of independent evaluation, at least in practice. INGOs tend to use Sphere Technical Standards rather than the general principles of the Common Standards.

Downward accountability remains a subject of considerable debate. A group of large operational INGOs recently published *'The Good Enough Guide to impact measurement and accountability in emergencies'*.<sup>26</sup> This seeks to integrate accountability into organisational systems. With its Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS) AAI has been well ahead and is regarded as one of the best proponents of downward accountability in practice.

Some organisations are going a step further by making downward accountability a standard for upward accountability. The Humanitarian Accountability Project

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<sup>26</sup> CARE, CRS, IRC, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision (2007) *The Good Enough Guide*, Oxfam Publications

International (HAPI) has introduced an international certification system covering downward accountability, and it urges donors to ensure that INGOs comply.<sup>27</sup>

### **1.11. Overview**

The humanitarian system has evolved around Western funding and Western perceptions. These perceptions include an emphasis on disaster response rather than risk reduction and a belief that problems of poverty can be addressed by Western action. The system exaggerates the importance and power of the West rather than that of national governments and local people. AAI is in an unusual position as an organisation crossing over from a Western to a Southern identity. How far can it go? Can it establish a position focused on national governments instead of Western institutions? Can it challenge Western perceptions? The next Section explores AAI's policy and experience. It evaluates performance and begins to identify the strategic issues.

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<sup>27</sup> See HAPI website

## Section Two: AAI and Human Security

### 2.1. Human Security as a global theme

AAI's overall strategy for the period 2005-2010 is governed by the paper '*Rights to End Poverty*'. This centres on power relations and is divided into six priority themes-

1. Women's rights;
2. The right to education;
3. The right to food;
4. The right to human security during conflict and emergencies;
5. The right to a life of dignity in the face of HIV and AIDS;
6. The right to just and democratic governance.

The way in which these themes are pursued, and the values underlying them, are embedded into planning and management systems through a comprehensive system called ALPS.

The key 'Actions' relating to the fourth theme, Human Security, were specified in the global strategy as<sup>28</sup>-

- Relief, recovery and disaster mitigation;
- Gather knowledge and evidence of poor people's experiences;
- Advocacy for the rights of women and girls;
- Risk reduction, especially for the most vulnerable;
- Support to civil society for conflict resolution and peace-building;
- Support for human rights.

These 'Actions' were modified into 'Objectives' in the Human Security strategic plan ('*Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies 2005-2010*')-

1. To reduce the hazards that threaten poor people;
2. To alleviate and address the causes of conflict;
3. To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies;
4. To generate pressure on governments, armed opposition groups and institutions to uphold their responsibility to protect people in conflict and emergencies;
5. To assure... basic services in conflict and emergencies.

These objectives overlap considerably (notably 1&3, 4&5), and programmes often address several objectives. This makes it difficult to judge performance against specific objectives. It is also difficult to judge overall performance because there is no prioritization. In particular emergencies and conflict are grouped together. The following paragraphs will perhaps make this problem clearer. (Note that a separate Review will cover organisational aspects of AAI's performance in more depth.)

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<sup>28</sup> Op cit p15

## **2.2. Performance against Objectives**

### **Objective 1: To reduce the hazards that threaten poor people**

AAI is now among the foremost INGOs addressing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). In terms of European profile AAI is second only to Tearfund, which has allocated much greater resources to this issue. AAI seems to have wider activity at community level even than Tearfund. This may be a reason why AAI was recently awarded a Sasakawa Certificate of Distinction by the UN for integrating DRR into its activities and programmes. In some countries AAI has been active in promoting the Hyogo Framework, engaging closely with governments. These achievements will now be examined in more detail.

AAI has successfully reduced risk in many communities. Much of this work has been done under the Food Security theme rather than Human Security. This tends to somewhat limit AAI's engagement. In the Salima District of Malawi, for example, communities have developed alternative sources of employment to reduce their dependence on farming. These communities have not been able to address risks such as floods that originate from outside their area and from causes such as deforestation that are difficult for a small group of communities to tackle. In Malawi, AAI has long focused on food security but is only recently beginning to convert this into a wider focus on DRR and the Hyogo Framework. In many countries, AAI activity at community level remains isolated and the potential for work on DRR and the Hyogo Framework at national level has not been realised. To some extent this arises from the division of activity between themes. AAI's work on DRR is pioneering but patchy. Arguably it should now become a basic responsibility in all AAI's work. Two ways forward may be identified.

Firstly, AAI should integrate DRR into all programmes and DRR should be treated as a general responsibility rather than as an objective under the Human Security theme. Even where AAI is engaged with HIV/AIDS, for example, it should integrate a DRR perspective.

Secondly there is a strong argument that AAI should promote the Hyogo Framework in all countries where it works. AAI should monitor and learn from its experience of working with national governments. There are different models ranging from close involvement with governments to build their capacity and at the other extreme, standing outside government with civil society and asserting rights. AAI's work has been focused on work with communities and DRR in schools. More work should now be done to develop engagements with governments as the crucial long-term actor in DRR.

### **Objective 2: Alleviate and address the causes of conflict**

AAI has developed PVA as a tool for analysing risk relating to natural disasters but has not adapted this for conflict. PVA has sometimes been used in conflict situations but the language needs considerable adjustment for use in such cases. The fact that this

## AAI Review of Human Security

adjustment has not been made reflects the low priority given to conflict under the current Plan. A decade ago AAI was more engaged with conflict, especially through its work on traditional forms of peace-building but this experience has been largely lost.

Such activity as there is appears isolated and non-strategic. AAI has worked with CAFOD and CARE on publishing a study of the UN Peace-Building Commission. It is difficult to discern much impact from this study and there has been some doubt about the engagement of at least one of the AAI offices. Similarly AAI has published studies of UN peace-keeping operations in Haiti, DRC and Burundi. The quality of the studies is high but engagement of national offices has been limited. This suggests that AAI has not yet developed a proper organisational focus on conflict.

AAI has commissioned a considerable amount of general comment and guidance on conflict, including a Conflict Pack and briefing papers by the UK-based and part-time Senior Conflict Adviser, Liz Philipson (*'Human Rights Based Approaches to working in and on conflict'*). These papers may have served to expose the complexity and difficulty of the issues but have not led to much practical action.

Given the enormous impact of conflict on poverty and its dominance of all other issues in many countries where AAI works, this lack of any attention to conflict is surprising. In relation to the IECT the explanation may be that attention has been focused on DRR and is only now being directed towards conflict. It could also be that, like other INGOs, AAI finds the challenge to 'alleviate and address the causes of conflict' too difficult and delicate. The recent appointment of a global conflict adviser has only just begun to provide enough capacity to take the issues forward. The possibilities for a more strategic engagement with conflict are examined in the next Section.

### **Objective 3: Build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies**

Through its DIPECHO programmes and elsewhere AAI has built up considerable experience of DRR and coping strategies in relation to natural disasters. The challenge now is to move towards more strategic approaches and to integrate conflict. There are not many cases where a community working alone can develop resilience to violence and conflict. AAI has experience to draw upon. For example, AAI has worked in Somaliland for many years and evolved ways of working with local community structures and informal authorities in a way that not only reduces conflict risk but also develops the resilience of those structures to external pressure. But developing resilience to conflict implies an understanding of causes and interactions on a very large scale. AAI needs to build comprehensive methods for analysing conflict.

Having done this the way is open to shape aid programmes in a conflict sensitive way. AAI works in many different conflict environments and should make sure that all its programmes are conflict sensitive. There is also an opening in the humanitarian system for advice on conflict sensitivity and opportunities to work with national governments to

introduce conflict sensitivity into national development programmes. AAI is in a better position than almost any other INGO to do this.

**Objective 4: To generate pressure on governments, armed opposition groups and institutions to uphold their responsibilities to protect people in conflict and emergencies.**

Stakeholders commonly observe that AAI is very good at introducing a people's perspective into debates. It was widely appreciated that AAI introduced representatives from Bangladesh into the discussions at Kyoto that led to the Hyogo Framework. Other INGOs may invest more in strategy and policy analysis but AAI draws attention to what the people say. This can also be demonstrated from many of AAI's global publications, such as the study of climate change in Malawi which gives many interesting cases of the way the issue has affected local people.

In international debates, it is good that the people's voice is heard. But AAI has an even greater potential to exert pressure at national level. In relation to disasters, AAI is widely respected for such work as the People's Commissions in India, which held government to account. All this is based on AAI's strong commitment to downward accountability and finds its best expression in the use of Public Audit, which is widely used in AAI programmes under the ALPS.

There is now an opportunity to use 'public audit' to improve levels of conflict sensitivity and humanitarian protection. AAI may be able to use such hearings to establish whether aid and development programmes, as well as humanitarian interventions, are considered to add to conflict risk and exacerbate problems of protection. This is examined further in the next Section.

**Objective 5: To assure poor people access to appropriate assistance and access to basic services during conflict and emergencies**

It is impossible to review AAI's direct responses across the whole organisation and dangerous to generalise from a few cases. But one strength and two issues stand out.

Strength: AAI is particularly good at identifying and searching out the very poorest people. AAI has come to realise that this is not a matter of asking community leaders who are poorest but of identifying poor areas through risk mapping methods and then conducting detailed surveys to identify the poorest among the poor. Because poor people tend to be excluded they can easily be invisible to aid agencies. AAI has earned a very good reputation for 'going the extra mile' (literally sometimes) in its responses. This appears to be corroborated by the current evaluations of the Tsunami and South Asia responses.

## AAI Review of Human Security

First issue: AAI has been extremely effective in some of its disaster responses but performance has been highly inconsistent. The most serious concern is that in some cases AAI has not even provided basic support when partners and communities are affected. This problem has been identified in the Africa Response Review and is widely reported by Human Security Advisers. This is one of the most serious issues encountered during this review.

Second issue: AAI has also been diverse in its responses, ranging from livelihood support, through psycho-social issues to basic distributions of essential items. There is much debate whether AAI should develop any special skill or niche in relation to disaster response. Some have suggested that specific skills, such as psycho-social, could be developed across the organisation and become the characteristic ‘niche’ for AAI response.

Both these issues are examined in the following Section.

### **2.3. Problems of the Objectives**

The demarcation between objectives under the Strategic Plan is not easy to understand and there is considerable overlap. As a result it is difficult to identify AAI’s Human Security focus and difficult for the IECT and Human Security Advisers to take a strategic view. It is also difficult to measure performance because activities can be shifted around between the objectives. Hazards can be reduced (Objective 1) by alleviating and addressing the causes of conflict (Objective 2) and also by building people’s resilience (Objective 3). This can be achieved by generating pressure (Objective 4) and by providing services (Objective 5). The logic is that hazards (external shocks) are separate from vulnerabilities (internal capacities or qualities) and together they lead to ‘risk’. But because they interact and overlap the objectives become muddled with each other. It becomes difficult to say which are ‘means’ and which are ‘ends’. Similarly, there is an interaction between the objectives and other themes and lack of clarity about what is a basic responsibility and what is optional.

The underlying problem is that Human Security is a comprehensive concept which includes food security, women’s rights etc. Once this is established as the organisational Goal rather than a theme, the logical framework of AAI’s themes, objectives and responsibilities can be better addressed. Detailed proposals for resolving some of the key issues are made in the next Section. But before leaving this short evaluation of performance against objectives it may be useful to summarize the analysis in terms of organisational strengths and weaknesses.

### **2.4. Strengths**

1. AAI’s decentralised structure allows it to speak with governments without being considered ‘foreign’ or a tool of foreign interests.



## AAI Review of Human Security

2. AAI bases its policies and advocacy on the perceptions of poor people and of its partners.
3. AAI seeks out the very poorest, most excluded and most neglected people.
4. This leads AAI to focus on vulnerability, risk and prevention.
5. AAI's work on Disaster Risk Reduction is especially valuable because it is neglected by other INGOs.
6. AAI's work on the Hyogo Framework has focused strategic attention on governments;
7. AAI has put downward accountability into practice, notably through public audit.
8. The IECT has gained an excellent reputation for its support to country offices.
9. AAI's small international policy team has given AAI remarkable profile in relation to the resources available.

### **2.5. Weaknesses**

1. AAI has not yet made best use of its identity as a Southern organisation;
2. AAI is not always strategic enough in connecting work at community level into sustainable change at national level;
3. AAI has not extended its work on DRR into conflict;
4. AAI has failed to support the communities and partners it works with in times of disaster;
5. AAI's image in disaster response is confused because of its inconsistency and failure to project its preventive approach;
6. AAI's Human Security objectives are poorly differentiated;
7. AAI is not clear about the distinction between thematic programmes and organisational responsibilities;
8. The IECT has sometimes taken on responsibilities which should lie squarely with national offices;
9. IECT has taken on too much international advocacy in relation to the available resources;

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## Section Three: Strategic Issues

### 3.1. Disaster Response

The humanitarian system operates as a complex environment in which different organisations find different niches. It has become increasingly competitive and specialised. In many disasters, the same organisations are active and occupy the same niches. Indeed, the basic response to a disaster is usually assured by the presence of the ‘super-INGOs’ that retain large-scale capacity for disaster response and have global reach. These include CARE, CRS, IRC, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision and the Red Cross movement.

AAI has not positioned itself in the category of ‘super-INGOs’ for disaster response. Instead it has focused on risk reduction. But it cannot and should not seek to escape from the basic moral responsibility to respond to disasters that affect the partners and people it works with. Beyond that it can either extend into larger operations where local capacity allows, or develop special capacity in particular sectors. The Human Security Strategy specifies that AAI will normally respond where it has the capacity to do so and where the people and partners it works with are affected.<sup>29</sup> But AAI has not always met this minimal responsibility and there has even been debate as to whether AAI should respond to disasters at all.<sup>30</sup> This causes confusion among AAI staff and stakeholders, including donors.

The inconsistency may arise because disaster response appears under a theme rather than as an organisational norm. AAI has not yet made sufficiently clear that disaster response (within the scope of the HS policy) is a fundamental moral responsibility which applies to all offices and staff, whichever theme they adhere to. This reflects the finding from a recent study of ‘Surge Capacity’ by People in Aid- *‘Developing an effective surge capacity requires a whole organisation approach, and is as much about mandate, structure, culture and effective leadership as it about concrete inputs and processes.’*<sup>31</sup> The basic response should not be dependent on support from the IECT or availability of funding from external donors. And if this responsibility is ignored, it should be a management responsibility to enforce the policy, not the role of the IECT.

In consequence, national offices must make provision for predictable needs especially in relation to the areas where it works. This is recognised in the Emergency Alert, Review and Response Mechanism (EARARM) but it is not taken as seriously as it should be and the buck seems to pass from line managers to the IECT advisers. There is even a perception in some cases that offices not engaged in the Human Security theme do not

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<sup>29</sup> Op cit p12

<sup>30</sup> Africa Response Review

<sup>31</sup> Houghton, R and B Emmens (2007) *Surge Capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector*, People in Aid

need to address the EARARM or respond to disasters. This issue requires vigorous attention from senior managers especially Regional Directors.

There are also strong indications from the Africa Response Review and from interviews for this Review that decision-making processes in cases of disaster can be very slow and uncertain. AAI must ensure that funds can be released rapidly with minimal bureaucracy. This will entail clear demarcation of roles between the budgets of national offices and those of the IECT so that there should be no delay because of uncertainty about which budget to use. AAI will need to engage with its partners on this issue to ensure that they understand AAI's position and participate in the necessary preparation.

This is not to argue that disaster response should be a central focus for AAI or that substantial capacity should be built. The issue is simply to define a fundamental and minimum obligation to respond. There will be marginal cases when a disaster affects an area in which AAI is not working. These may have to be considered individually, but the fundamental responsibilities should be made very clear. It may even be better to have arbitrary limits that are clear rather than flexibility that leads to inaction. In practice senior managers should monitor disasters closely and be ready to step in and direct the level of response according to organisational norms and requirements.

As a member of the UK-based Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) AAI is under pressure (although not under absolute obligation) to respond wherever the DEC launches an Appeal. In some cases this may take AAI outside existing areas of work. Apart from its obligations to the DEC, AAI should also consider whether it has anything special to offer in the particular disaster. For example, the DEC monitoring report on the Tsunami response argued that AAI's presence would have added to the response in Aceh. This was because other INGOs became totally immersed in service delivery and an element of the rights-based approach was needed. But such cases should be regarded as exceptional. AAI is best placed to develop response capacity in the countries where it already operates.

The key point is that responsibility for disasters must be collective. Instead of relying on the IECT to raise funds globally, country teams should take more responsibility for funding and develop relationships with local representatives of the donors so that they can go beyond the basic responsibilities and mount significant disaster response programmes based on their local expertise and capacity.

### **3.2. Disaster niches**

AAI does not have a specific 'niche' in relation to disaster response in the way that MSF specialises in health or Oxfam in water/sanitation. AAI takes a rights-based approach but this is not always recognisably different and cannot be developed into an expertise that all others would acknowledge. AAI could be drawn into legalistic approaches that would take it away from its roots among poor people. AAI has developed local competences such as psycho-social response which can be transferred to other countries (e.g. to the

Iran earthquake in Bam) but this is mainly focused in the South Asia region and a number of other agencies such as the IFRC and Save the Children already claim expertise in this sector.

Another 'niche' under discussion within AAI is cash responses to disasters. Many organisations are now making much more use of this approach. AAI might be able to demonstrate a wide range of practice but it is doubtful whether AAI would be able to differentiate itself significantly.<sup>32</sup> Involvement with cash responses would become much more significant if coupled with a campaign to tackle the food aid issue referred to above. This would require a major organisational commitment and would lead to a direct challenge to powerful parts of the 'disaster relief industry'. AAI would also have to sort out the relationship of the Human Security and Food Security themes. Having done this, local work on cash programmes and ongoing work on food security could feed into a wider campaign to challenge the dominance of food aid.

This would be a positive step, but there may be no real need for an international niche in disaster response. AAI may do better to develop the niche that it already has in disaster risk reduction. This could become a more deeply integrated and recognisable feature of all thinking and programmes. This would be more true to AAI core values (perceptions of the people) and would avoid developing what might seem a rather arbitrary attempt to gain international recognition at the expense of local capacity and skills.

### 3.3. Advocacy and Influence

In relation to international advocacy, AAI is most well known for its work on DRR establishing a position in Europe second only to Tearfund. But stakeholders note that AAI is already stretched to keep this position. This suggests that with current resources AAI probably has a big enough task around DRR and climate change without venturing into other issues. AAI's hard-working international advocacy team has also focused on the UN. As noted in Section Two, AAI has reviewed UN peace-keeping operations and the new UN 'cluster' approach to coordination. It is monitoring the new UN arrangement for pooled funds (CERF). AAI's work has been of high quality but it is neither deeply rooted in countries nor particularly specific to AAI. The resources are too limited to take a consistent lead. Moreover, these issues do not seem to relate very closely to AAI's core values and concerns.

If AAI is to develop its strength as a Southern organisation then the main roles for international advocacy should be to support advocacy in the south and to promote Southern concerns internationally. AAI's international advocacy is well respected because it is based on evidence from national programmes and the voices of poor people. For example, the IECT is becoming more involved with the issue of violence against women but this has already been the subject of many publications and papers at the international level. More distinctive roles for advocacy can be found at the national level,

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<sup>32</sup> Oxfam has published a fairly comprehensive account of current practice- Creti, P and S Jaspars (2006) *Cash-Transfer Programming in Emergencies*, Oxfam Publications

especially where such violence is still condoned or ignored. Here AAI's rights-based approach is particularly appropriate. Mobilising local people around national objectives may be more effective than Western forms of advocacy through research and lobbying.

Currently the voices of Southern governments are poorly represented in international debates. As AAI develops relationships with governments over issues such as the Hyogo Framework it may be well placed to help project those voices through international advocacy.

The external analysis suggests that there is also an opportunity to develop advocacy in relation to the new economic superpowers, notably India, China, Brazil and South Africa. This may be particularly important in the case of conflict. As AAI develops better capacity for conflict analysis this could be further investigated, and might suggest a need for regional advisers to develop this role.

### **3.4. Violence, protection and conflict.**

As noted in Section One, protection has been a neglected issue in humanitarian practice. There is an opportunity for AAI to develop a role as a firm defender of human rights especially where the people and partners it works with are affected by violent conflict. This is parallel with the policy position on disaster response: AAI has a basic moral duty to protect against violence where its associates are threatened. Clear policies on this should be developed. If AAI is to take this forward in a more specialised way, violence against women or SGBV is an obvious path, as noted above.

Following AAI's general approach of reducing risk, AAI's approach in relation to violence and conflict should be primarily preventive. It should develop the PVA tool to analyse risks of violence that face communities and partners. In the case of violent conflict, such risks are likely to originate from outside and therefore AAI must ensure that it can link the PVA type of analysis to wider conflict analysis at national level and beyond, or develop other methodologies which are more 'macro' in focus..

Conflict analysis will provide AAI with the basis for guidance on conflict sensitivity. This could begin with AAI itself and extend to others over time. Ideally, AAI should strive to influence national governments towards conflict sensitive policies especially in relation to development. In some cases AAI may be able to link up with donors such as DFID which are already heavily engaged in conflict analysis focused around their own programmes. Donors may welcome the involvement of other organisations which can do more practical work with governments to make national development programmes sensitive to conflict.

In terms of conflict response, it may be useful to recall AAI's past experiences. In several African countries AAI supported local peace-building through traditional structures, especially in the Great Lakes Region. The limitation was that unless linked to national efforts such work may have only limited impact. But informal justice systems, related to

these structures, do play a very valuable role when the formal justice system fails, as often happens in conflict. In DRC, for example, AAI has identified a need to support the traditional justice system to resolve disputes, especially relating to women. This could be developed to reinforce AAI's work on protection and violence against women.

AAI is also considering a focus on youth in conflict. The alienation of young people is often a major factor in conflict but it is difficult to address except through major economic inputs that create employment. Small scale projects rarely bring benefits that compare with those to be gained from engaging in the conflict or in illegal activities, such as growing drugs or smuggling gems that arise in the context of conflict. AAI may be able to develop local initiatives with youth, but the challenge will be to develop a strategic approach.

In conclusion, AAI's work on conflict should focus on developing its protection policy and capacity, especially in relation to violence against women, and on developing methods for testing and promoting conflict sensitivity in aid and development programmes.

### 3.5. Themes and Issues

AAI currently makes Human Security a theme within its total programme. But the concept was not developed as a theme. Instead it was intended as the ultimate goal - 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' in the UN formulation.<sup>33</sup> By using Human Security as a theme AAI has created confusion because it actually embraces all AAI's themes. This is a reason why AAI staff are not clear about their role in relation to disaster response. It may also explain why the team supporting the theme has called itself 'emergencies and conflict' rather than 'human security'.

Other aspects of AAI's conceptual structure are also unclear. In 'Rights to End Poverty' there are four 'Poverty Eradication Goals',<sup>34</sup> implying that 'Poverty Eradication' is AAI's ultimate goal. The four sub-goals do not correspond to the six objectives that became AAI's 'themes'. These problems of overlap and linkage in AAI's general structures go beyond the scope of this Review but they have serious consequences for the Human Security theme. By making the goal into a theme, the central focus becomes unclear and fundamental responsibilities which should be related to the Goal become options connected with a theme.

Because human security does not work well as a theme, financial allocations under the current themes do not provide useful management information. It makes little sense that only 5% of spending in Africa comes under the Human Security theme while Asia shows 38%. In reality, spending related to Emergencies and Conflict has been shifted around under different themes (in Africa a great deal comes under Food Security) and the

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<sup>33</sup> AAI's Human Security strategy (p3 see below) specifically endorses the definition used in the UN Commission on Human Security – *Human Security Now*.

<sup>34</sup> *Rights to End Poverty* p5

practice may not vary as much as the figures imply. As a result managers cannot use the budgets to monitor what the organisation is doing.

Some of these problems are referred to in AAI's Human Security Plan for 2007. They require changes that lie beyond the scope of the theme and the IECT. Following this Review, AAI should regularise its conceptual framework by setting Human Security as the organisational goal. Having done this there is still a problem of defining a theme in relation to emergencies and conflict, especially in terms of rights. AAI has addressed this by referring to 'rights to human security in the context of emergencies and conflict'. This correctly places the role of the IECT in relation to a context rather than a specific type of activity. It would be better not to treat this as a theme or at the very least to acknowledge that it is not a theme like other themes. It can be referred to as cross-cutting theme or issue. The precise structural resolution of this problem may be less important than achieving a better understanding of responsibilities. The key danger is, as has actually happened, that responses in these special contexts are passed to the IECT.

Further scope for resolving these problems may lie in the recent proposal from the Chief Executive to align 30% of work in each country to international priorities rather than themes. Disaster response, DRR, protection and conflict sensitivity could all be treated as 'international priorities'. The important point, whatever the method, is to distinguish more sharply between basic responsibilities and optional sectors of work. Activities in relation to emergencies and conflict are basic responsibilities of all staff. DRR and disaster response must be incorporated across all offices and themes. This report suggests that protection and conflict sensitivity should also be treated as core responsibilities.

### **3.6. The Role of the IECT**

The IECT has gained a high reputation both inside and outside AAI. The implication of this Review is that, once responsibilities have been more clearly fixed in the line management structures, the IECT should be in a supporting rather than leading role. The primary objective of the IECT should be to promote and support emergency and conflict response and reduction across the organisation.

International advocacy from London should be tied into this agenda. The IECT should support advocacy at national level and ensure that training and capacity building is available when needed. If the Hyogo Framework is taken as a central focus and spread widely across the organisation, the IECT could help disseminate practices for influencing national governments.

IECT's success in fundraising has to some extent let country offices 'off the hook'. They have come to rely on support from the IECT rather than cultivate relationships with funding sources in their country. If human security is to be taken as an organisational responsibility country directors will need to take the primary responsibility for funding. There will be a need for regular communication between offices of donors in each country and also a strategic approach to developing funding sources at national level

especially from government. There may be cases where such relationships would cause compromise but there may be others where AAI can benefit from working more closely with government, including taking government funds. There may also be possibilities for triangular relationships with governments and donors, especially around issues such as disaster risk reduction.

AAI has gone a long way towards integrating disaster planning into budgets, but there will still be disasters beyond the scale that could be predicted. In these cases AAI will need to search for funding internationally, and this role is likely to fall to the IECT. There is also a question whether AAI should respond to major disasters outside its areas of operation. In principle AAI should avoid this. In most situations there is a rush of humanitarian agencies focused on emergency response and the quality of the response is related to the level of experience in country. It is very hard to launch a high quality response 'out of area'. But there may just be a few cases where AAI can play a useful and distinctive role –for example in reaching extremely poor groups or in taking a strong rights-based approach when other agencies are embroiled in the practicalities of service delivery. A factor in reaching balanced decisions in such cases is that AAI's membership of the DEC creates a pressure to retain global reach.

The IECT should seek to develop ways of monitoring what is happening across all AAI programmes in relation to emergencies and conflict. As noted in Section 3.5. above, this is difficult because the distinction between DRR and other activity, and between conflict and non-conflict, is never precise. The more that responsibilities are integrated into other themes, as proposed in this report, the more difficult this may become. The best way forward may be for AAI to rely on qualitative assessments rather than quantitative ones, but perhaps develop ways of presenting qualitative assessments in a systematic way. Despite the difficulties it is surely important that the organisation can monitor the trends. The IECT should seek to develop management information systems that reflect the underlying problems but still provide senior managers with a basic monitoring tool.

In conclusion, this report suggests that AAI should make a virtue of its decentralised structure and build relations and organisational focus at national rather than international level. This shift should never be complete because the West is indeed part of the problem, and it may have to take place slowly and over a long period. Issues such as response to disasters 'out of area' will need to be considered on an ad hoc basis for some time to come the IECT will need to retain flexible capacity. The shift proposed in this report is primarily in terms of increased management responsibility but the size and staffing of the IECT should not be reduced, at least until these responsibilities are firmly established.



## Section Four: Moving Forward

### 4.1. AAI's distinctiveness

AAI is distinctive in being a 'Southern' INGO with a focus on risk reduction that derives from the perceptions of poor people. Western humanitarian aid has focused almost entirely on response and as disasters occur more frequently the limitations of this approach become more apparent. Western humanitarian aid has also tended to focus on international institutions when national governments are really more important.

At a time when the Global War on Terror creates a suspicion about Western humanitarian aid, this opens the way for AAI to develop a special relationship with national governments. But AAI remains dependent on Western funding, especially from DFID and ECHO, as well as public appeals in the UK managed by the DEC. In the long run, AAI should seek to reduce this dependency or convert it into triangular relationships that are locally based and include national governments. AAI may be able to develop collaborative relationships with national governments, sharing with them the funding that comes from international sources. AAI is already using money from Western donors to work with governments around the Hyogo Framework. . In taking this direction it is helpful that AAI has already followed an informal policy of not accepting funds from USAID.

Conceivably, AAI might draw funds from governments that have received donor funding, helping them to roll out issues such as DRR and conflict prevention. Although AAI should never lose its critical edge in relation to governments the way is open for closer, more constructive relationships within which AAI may be able to tackle deeper issues such as political patronage, seeking out realistic alternatives and developing policies with governments that are value-based as well as practical

AAI should develop forms of advocacy that are likely to influence national governments –and these methods may be different from those used in the West. AAI should also consider the possibility of influencing regional superpowers. This is a neglected area for which AAI may be particularly well suited.

These Opportunities and corresponding Threats are summarized in the following paragraphs before leading into proposals for modifying AAI's Human Security objectives.

### 4.2. Opportunities

- AAI can develop its rights-based **focus on national governments**;
- AAI can work with governments to promote a preventive approach and focus on **risk**;
- There is an opportunity to develop advocacy at national level, based on the **perceptions of poor people**.

## AAI Review of Human Security

- AAI can strengthen its **relationship with partners and local communities** by being consistent in disaster response;
- AAI can develop its role in disaster response focused on the **very poorest groups** and the rights-based approach;
- AAI can build disaster response capacity in each country by extending this **responsibility** to all staff and themes;
- There is an opening to promote **conflict sensitivity** in national development and international aid;
- AAI can help to fill the gap in relation to **protection**, especially relating to women;
- AAI can use notions of risk and **Human Security** to challenge the Western 'Global Security' agenda;
- AAI can offer wide experience of downward accountability, especially in the form of **public audit**;
- AAI can develop **local funding links** with donors and national governments.
- AAI should consider how to extend its influence in relation to **regional superpowers**.

### 4.3. Threats

- As AAI aligns itself more closely to national governments it may weaken its links **with Western donors**, both public and private;
- AAI may be drawn into **compromise** in its relationships with national governments;
- It may be difficult to **hold the organisation together** as national offices become more deeply embedded in national issues;
- A focus on risk and prevention may not achieve adequate **profile** for AAI and it may be difficult to demonstrate impact;
- Country Directors and **staff** in other themes may be reluctant to accept greater responsibility for disasters;
- **Partners** may not want an increased focus on national governments and may prefer work at community level;
- A challenge to the 'Global Security' agenda may **threaten funding sources**;
- Work on **conflict sensitivity** will draw AAI into dangerously political involvements;
- Work on **protection** could jeopardize AAI's disaster responses and other programme work;
- AAI will miss out on opportunities for **international advocacy** if it is too much focus at national level;
- Attempts to influence regional superpowers may have little impact.

#### 4.4. Other Strategic Options

The course of action indicated in this Review is to build on the opportunities outlined above. None of the threats is considered overwhelming. There are, of course, many other strategic options. Some of these are set out below with the reasons why they are not recommended-

Option	Reason against
Build up international emergency response capacity in a particular sector;	The humanitarian sector is crowded; AAI's decentralised structure and themes make it difficult to create a single focus for disaster response;
Focus at community level;	Lack of significant and sustained impact;
Increase international advocacy work;	AAI would have to invest hugely to make a difference; Better to focus at national level;
Status quo	AAI has potential for greater impact by focus at national level and by developing a Southern voice;

#### 4.5. Reframing the Human Security objectives

This report proposes that Human Security is accepted as an organisational goal rather than a theme. The current goal of 'poverty eradication' implies that the problem lies in being poor rather than in the risks and vulnerabilities that arise from being poor. Human Security (Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear) is a better articulation of concern.

Responsibility for responses to emergencies and conflict, together with disaster risk reduction, should be the responsibility of all staff across the organisation. They should not really be treated as a theme. Instead there should be objectives for the IECT in supporting those responsibilities.

These objectives may need to be quite topical, meaning that they express what the IECT should focus on at a particular time. Currently the important needs are to clarify responsibilities and to develop an organisational approach towards conflict. This may be presented in the following paradigm-

##### **Organisational Goal: Human Security**

##### **Core responsibilities of all staff:**

- DRR incorporated in all programmes;
- Disaster response according to needs especially where programmes and partners are directly affected;
- Conflict sensitivity in all programmes;
- Human rights protection of all those involved in AAI programmes;
- Proactive assertion of women's rights.

## AAI Review of Human Security

On the above basis the Human Security objectives can then be reframed as follows-

### Proposed revision of Human Security objectives

Current Thematic Objective	Revised IECT Objective
1. To reduce hazards that threaten poor people;	2. To ensure that DRR is integrated into all plans and programmes;
2. To alleviate and address the causes of conflict;	3. To ensure that AAI programmes are conflict sensitive and spread conflict sensitivity to national development programmes and international aid;
3. To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies;	-
4. To generate pressure... to protect people in conflict and emergencies;	4. To ensure that AAI offers human rights protection to associates and develop specific skills in relation to violence against women in emergencies and conflict;
5. To assure....access to basic services during conflict and emergencies;	1. To support national offices in fulfilling their responsibilities for response to emergencies and conflict and monitor organisational performance on this;

## **Section Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Conclusions**

AAI has registered considerable successes in the three years of the Human Security Strategy. It has established itself as a leading force on disaster risk reduction especially at national level. It has developed experience of risk reduction at community level through its PVA tool and work with schools. It has published respected studies on the impact of climate change on poor people and on UN work related to peace-keeping and coordination. Stakeholders refer to AAI with respect.

The humanitarian sector has become increasingly competitive. It is unusual for disasters to be ignored but the focus is often badly skewed by political and cultural factors. AAI's focus on the poorest people is still a valuable element in disaster response. AAI should not seek to compete with other INGOs in the humanitarian sector by developing a 'niche' but instead focus on its preventive approach, building on its identity as a Southern organisation focused on national governments. It should continue to base its work on the perceptions of poor people and especially on their perception about the importance of risk. AAI should therefore continue and develop its current focus on risk reduction and prevention.

Conflict and violence are major risks for poor people that have not been adequately addressed through international aid. AAI should ensure that all its programmes are conflict sensitive and go on to advise national governments and aid organisations on conflict sensitivity. This will entail development of conflict analysis methods and integration of conflict into existing tools for analysing risk.

In terms of organisational structures, Human Security should become the Goal rather than a theme. Disaster response and risk reduction should be regarded as organisation-wide responsibilities. AAI should implement policies for disaster response in a vigorous and consistent way. It will require strong leadership from management to develop an organisational culture properly attuned to these responsibilities.

Challenges will have to be met in relation to funding. For the foreseeable future AAI will need to maintain its London-based IECT, largely for funding reasons, but the role of the IECT should gradually shift towards support to national offices and other themes rather than being a theme manager. In order to determine this future role more clearly AAI will need to make clear decisions about response to emergencies 'out of area' and how to resource such responses.

## 5.2. Recommendations

In relation to Human Security, AAI should-

1. Develop its identity and distinctiveness as a Southern organisation;
2. Make Human Security its overall goal and re-name the theme as 'Emergencies and Conflict';
3. Distinguish more clearly between mandatory basic responsibilities and optional activity as a theme;
4. Take steps to ensure that national programmes take the primary responsibility in relation to emergencies and conflict;
5. Ensure that disaster responses are more consistent;
6. Integrate disaster risk reduction throughout AAI's programmes;
7. Revise current objectives under the Human Security theme to focus attention on conflict;
8. Develop tests for conflict sensitivity and build capacity to advise and influence national governments and aid agencies;
9. Develop a role in relation to protection, especially for women, in unstable situations;
10. Restate the primary role of the IECT around support to country programmes rather than responsibility for disaster response;
11. Reduce direct programme management by the IECT as far as possible and instead develop the capacity to monitor and influence trends across the organisation in relation to emergencies and conflict;
12. Focus international advocacy on national rather than international level, particularly in relation to disaster risk reduction and emerging conflict priorities.

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