Civilian Protection and Humanitarian Advocacy

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London
23 May 2007
Modern Oxfam practice is based on:

- **One** humanitarian approach
- Lessons from experience – good and bad
• **No** magic wand – to answer the dilemmas

• **But** experimenting with new approaches which help us manage them
Space for Humanitarianisms?

- Diversity in humanitarian action, in:
  - Protection
  - Advocacy
  - Dealing with the dilemmas they pose
I was called to an explosion. I saw a 4-year-old boy sitting beside his mother’s body, which had been decapitated by the explosion. He was talking to her, asking her what had happened.

‘Protecting Iraq’s civilian population must be a priority, and the ICRC urgently calls for better respect for international humanitarian law.’

_Civilians with Protection_  
ICRC, 11 April 2007
The biggest problem is the lack of medicine. We have no money to buy it... [Now] I use firewood to cook. It takes three hours to prepare a meal.

‘The international community should resume aid to the Palestinian Authority... for essential services, including health and education.’

*Poverty in Palestine*

Oxfam I, 13 April 2007
For Oxfam

The humanitarian imperative is

- People-centred: what they need – and call for
- Not INGO-centred: what humanitarian agencies do
Helping people reach safety (IHL)

As well as water, food, sanitation etc.

Both of which are as ‘humanitarian’ as the other

And the lack of assistance is no less ‘political’ than the lack of protection
Which means

- Doing **everything** possible, that we are competent to do, to contribute to protection and assistance
- Including pressing governments to respect IHL, and implement the practical policies to do so
- Judging the balance of responses – operational, private lobbying, public campaigning etc – in each crisis
Depending on that balance, in each crisis:

- Doing more or less of each action (though, overall, 50 times as much spent on operational programming than campaigning)

- And more or less directly as Oxfam
The real choice

- Not between staying in and ‘speaking out’

- But more between:
  - Speaking out in the name of an INGO
  - Empowering others to speak out, while vigorously lobbying in private
Lessons – from 10 years of trying

Test the assumptions, of

- Risks to security and programmes
- Impact of ‘speaking out’

To focus more on evidence, 1990s’ net benefit tool replaced in 2006
2006 Guidelines

- Compare likely impact of humanitarian, campaigning and development options

- Assess who else could achieve similar impact if Oxfam did not – in all these ways

- Assess risks to programme, or security of staff and partners
- Identify tensions between the options
- Senior managers judge between them – up to Executive Directors of Oxfam International affiliates deciding basic posture on Darfur
- Monitoring impact, and talking to others on the impact on their access
It is difficult to build up an organisational ethos on managing these dilemmas – because almost all of us are recruited to advise on operational responses or advocacy.
Campaigning: on what?

- Exposing suffering?
- Condemning those responsible?
- Proposing solutions?
Campaigning: how? Speaking out?

Challenge:

- **Western-focused assumption** – that speaking out is vital to change policy in a media-driven democracy

- **INGO-focused assumption** – that, if INGOs don’t speak out, other people’s campaigning will have less impact
Impact-focused alternatives

- Test whether the governments who can choose to protect people are influenced by:
  - Public pressure
  - INGOs
Consider

- Private pressure
- Actively working to increase the space for our public pressure – including by speaking out on other topics
- Non-attributable public pressure
- Empowering others