

# Civilian Protection and Humanitarian Advocacy

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# Modern Oxfam practise

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