

Discussion paper

D6 – Emergency Relief

“terre des hommes is to be enabled to provide development-related emergency and disaster relief in the project regions in co-operation with its project partners. Such support can also be given by collaborating with the International Federation terre des hommes.”
(Resolution of the 2003 Delegates Conference)

(1) Work in the field of emergency relief is being carried out on the basis of tdh’s statutes and its positions concerning development policy. tdh supports viable and fair development. This term refers to self-determined development of the individual. Political participation as well as fair distribution and access to resources are necessary basic conditions. The political and cultural background of all those concerned and their right to self-determination must be respected. Making the target groups a part of the process is a major goal. Ideally, members of the target groups should receive training and take responsibility for planning, organising and implementing measures.

(2) Emergency relief is co-ordinated by the programmes department. It complements tdh’s development policy-related co-operation with its partners whenever disasters or crises require fast responses or interventions. This means that emergency relief is another important element of tdh’s overall development-related strategy.

(3) Being affected by natural disasters on a regular basis, the Indian subcontinent was the regional focus of tdh’s activities in this area. This primarily refers to disaster relief; tdh was active in five conflict situations. The most important project themes revolved around initial emergency relief, help for refugees, the construction of houses and schools, providing seed, reforestation and income-generating activities. Projects on disaster prevention were also carried out. A lack of expertise concerning specific technical questions was able to be compensated for by working with partners and the respective co-ordination offices.

(4) New co-operative projects were launched with various partners in Germany (Together for People in Need – Development Works!, Association of German development non-governmental organisations – VENRO, Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee of Germany’s Foreign Office) and also within the tdh federation.

Working principles

(5) There are a range of norms and humanitarian principles world-wide governing work related to emergency and disaster relief or humanitarian aid (the humanitarian imperative, impartiality, independence, competence, co-ordination, participation). Another oft-quoted principle, *neutrality*, is controversial among aid organisations. At the same time, *sustainability* and *development-oriented emergency relief* are becoming more important. This can be seen, for example, in a general focus on development, the promotion and preservation of self-organisation by those affected, the stabilisation of local economies

and structures, the promotion of participation by the population and long-term preventive measures for reducing the vulnerability of populations at risk.

(6) Guiding principles for tdh's work:

- The right to help of those affected in emergency situations has to be achieved by lobbying and advocacy and underpinned by tangible assistance.
- The political, social and cultural context of crises has to be taken into account.
- Strengthening the resilience of those affected (not victims, but survivors) has to be the focus of work.
- The vulnerability of populations at risk must be reduced.
- The local civil society, its networks and local economies have to be part of the process and must be strengthened.
- The existing capability to deal with crises and disasters must be strengthened (it is generally underestimated).
- The right to self-determination of those affected has to be guaranteed.
- Reducing their role to being mere recipients of aid and thus creating paralysis and dependence must be avoided.
- The appropriateness and quality of humanitarian aid must be ensured by the participation of those affected.
- The necessary combination of disaster prevention, emergency relief and development has to pursue long-term development goals (sustainability).
- Emergency relief and reconstruction efforts are not only aimed at reproducing the initial situation, but at dealing with existing inequalities and at finding solutions.

(7) By developing clear indicators, these principles have to be made more operational and assessment criteria must be developed. This means that the results of tdh's work have to be recorded more systematically.

(8) Based on these principles, tdh distinguishes itself from other emergency relief organisations by its direct contact with local partners, long-term presence in the region, the resulting knowledge about social, cultural and economic conditions and access to civil society. tdh pursues an integrated approach to development-oriented co-operation and also has strong process-related expertise. The risk of helping too slowly is offset by the high probability that sustainable help will be offered.

New circumstances and expected developments

(9) Natural disasters have increasingly severe consequences. Millions of people are experiencing long periods of drought including starvation, ever stronger storms and regular floods as a part of their "everyday life". Those who are poor suffer the most. **The fight against poverty** is therefore directly connected to the envisaged reduction of the population's *vulnerability* to natural disasters. Together with political, social and economic problems, these disasters often develop into **complex crises**. Combating poverty, responding to crises, the promotion of participatory processes and prevention are all necessary parts of a comprehensive approach. To be successful, action in different conflict scenarios presupposes a clear analysis of the underlying causes and a sound knowledge of the local circumstances. There is an increasing danger that humanitarian aid and military "humanitarian" interventions will mingle or overlap. This raises questions about the independence of aid organisations.

(10) Emergency and disaster relief have been pushed to the fore in recent years by both the media and politics. The media make use of and appeal to the extraordinary willingness of the population to offer a helping hand. Politicians, on the other hand, use humanitarian aid as a substitute for political and diplomatic initiatives which do not seem to be politically enforceable before the disaster actually occurs. At the same time, this leads to extremely high expectations as to the ability of humanitarian organisations to find speedy solutions for the various crisis scenarios. This development holds great risks. First of all, it threatens to over-task aid organisations and to produce the opposite effect (frustration of donors, loss of trust, etc.). Second, this media overkill could also have a negative effect on public attention for what we call “forgotten disasters” or mid-range disasters.

(11) Given this situation, competition between the different aid agencies for donations is increasing, which means that these organisations have to develop communication strategies. Together with the aid organisations medico international, Misereor, Brot für die Welt and Welthungerhilfe, tdh founded the alliance “Together for People in Need – Development Helps!” in 2005. The special feature of this alliance is that it stresses the interdependence of emergency relief and development policy, as well as the rich experience of these agencies in both areas.

(12) Due to the increasingly complex situations in which emergency and disaster relief is offered and the resulting challenges to aid organisations, the issue of quality management has been raised more often recently. It can already be predicted that in the future, donors will take a much closer look at quality management when taking their funding decisions.

(13) Simultaneously, at the international level, UN-OCHA has grown in importance as a humanitarian aid organisation. It has large sums of money available and has acquired a strong position in coordinating relief activities. International organisations have been calling upon the individual national states to make higher financial contributions to international funds and to reduce bilateral humanitarian aid.

Challenges and opportunities for action for tdh

•(14) Up to now, tdh has mainly been undertaking relief activities in the context of natural disasters. Armed conflict and complex crises were only of secondary importance. Countries struck by these kinds of crises are not very strongly represented within tdh. But the global reality looks different. More and more countries are being hit by long-running crises and civil wars which are often accompanied by an extensive dissolution of government structures (failed states). And these are exactly the countries which need long-term humanitarian aid, reconstruction and development-oriented policies at the same time. Here tdh will have to find a strategy for dealing with such situations.

•(15) Given the medium size of tdh and the resulting necessity to limit the scope of its work, it makes sense to consider focusing on certain thematic fields of emergency and disaster relief and on involving the core strengths of the organisation and its partners. In recent years and even more after the tsunami, psychological and social assistance or educational activities for children and young people in disaster and crisis situations have evolved as a potential focus. However, with a view to the local circumstances and the funding options, other topics related to emergency and disaster relief should not be

neglected (temporary supplementary food aid, medical care, emergency accommodations, etc.). Full-scale general food aid is not seen to be within tdh's remit.

•(16) Given the medium size of tdh, it is obvious that the organisation cannot intervene in all conflicts and crises or natural disasters all over the world. Alliances and co-operation can be helpful if tdh wants to be recognised as a permanent stakeholder in the field of humanitarian aid and to exert influence on debates and developments. tdh has entered into this process in recent years both by working with partners within the international federation and by co-operating with some German organisations. Learning from each other and exchanging experience is to be given high priority in the co-operation with others.

When co-operating with partners and working in alliances, tdh shall:

- limit its work to those regions/countries with which the organisations have sufficient experience
- work with local partners
- by doing so, benefit from existing knowledge about the political, social and economic context.

If these criteria are not fulfilled, the partners will have to explain in a convincing way how they intend to ensure sufficient consideration of the overall context without having a solid presence in the affected countries or regions and without having access to local partners.

•(17) If tdh wants to ensure the necessary quality of its work, responsibilities, knowledge and specific skills will have to be developed further at the head office in Osnabrück and at the regional offices. This would also help to make sure that the partners in the region are given the advice they need, especially if they are not able to continuously acquire hands-on experience in the field. Quality needs to be ensured on different levels:

- method-related quality (methods for planning, monitoring and assessment)
- process-related quality (participation, gender mainstreaming, sustainability)
- substantive-technical quality (technical standards).

In certain situations, it can be necessary to send external experts to the affected region to help the local staff. This will usually apply if a disaster occurs in a society which, due to the widely varying developments, was not able to set up a sufficiently strong basis for the professional implementation of humanitarian aid. Here again, co-operation with local partners has a high priority. External experts should only support the process and help develop local skills in dealing with crises and disasters. They should preferably come from the project regions.

•(18) Additional financial resources can come from increased funds from existing donors or from access to new donors. Germany's Foreign Office is currently the most important and regular institutional donor. The Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) has also allocated funds from the emergency relief budget to tdh. The funds have in the past been sufficient for responding to the requests from the partner regions. Money has been short, though, when it came to the stage of continued financing after initial emergency relief and the combination of emergency relief and long-term development-oriented co-operation. Through the alliance "Development Helps!", tdh can participate in campaigns for donations for countries or projects in which tdh is not directly involved. This might possibly affect tdh's emergency relief work without creating the necessity for tdh to develop its own campaigns in the affected countries.

Recommendations

- (19) terre des hommes should respond to the increasing complexity of crises and develop integrated programmes for the future which bring together long-term development policies, crisis prevention and emergency relief. This strategy is to be drafted in co-operation with the regional offices.
- (20) terre des hommes should, as far as it is possible in the context of emergency relief/reconstruction/rehabilitation, focus on the situation of children and young people affected by disasters and crises. To this aim, tdh must continue to assess its experience and work on basic strategies.
- (21) terre des hommes should tap the BMZ's emergency relief budget, both bilaterally and in co-operation with others.
- (22) terre des hommes, in co-operation with partners and based on a clear profile of its own work in the field of emergency relief/reconstruction/rehabilitation, should extend its influence and its thrust in this area. This also refers to necessary political intervention on the international level in complex crises.
- (23) terre des hommes shall improve its quality management in the field of emergency relief/reconstruction/rehabilitation, in particular by supporting the regional officers and the partners. It shall analyse its experience more systematically, build up a functioning monitoring system, as well as define goals and principles. Concerning existing and planned collaborations, a shared set of principles has to be worked out and made operational by defining clear indicators.

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