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*Occasional Paper #40*



**THE DYNAMICS OF COORDINATION**

MARC SOMMERS

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## CONTENTS

Foreword.....	v
Executive Summary .....	ix
1. The Coordination Challenge .....	1
2. The Conflicts in Sierra Leone and Rwanda.....	7
3. Coordination Among Organizations .....	21
4. Coordination Among Functions .....	51
5. Coordination Within Programs .....	81
6. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	99
Notes.....	113
Appendix I: Acronyms .....	123
Appendix II: Chronology of Major Events .....	125
Appendix III: Agencies Consulted .....	129
Appendix IV: About the Author and the Humanitarianism and War Project .....	131



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## FOREWORD

In the field of humanitarian action, everyone touts the value of coordination. Donors want to ensure the cost-effective use of resources. Political authorities receiving humanitarian assistance expect coherence among the many actors that descend upon them at the drop of an emergency. Aid agencies themselves have an interest in an efficient division of labor and fear media exposure of interagency rivalries. The public has had enough experience with humanitarian circuses to expect the worst.

Beneath the surface, however, the situation is far more complex. Donors complicate the task of coordination by imposing conditions, earmarking resources, and injecting other intrusions into aid work. The host authorities have political agendas that may work against the coordination they profess to want. The agencies themselves have little patience with the costs of coordination, whether in reduced flexibility or in resources diverted from assistance programs. The public is often fickle, insisting that contributions be applied to the direct alleviation of suffering rather than underwriting the coordination machinery to ensure greater cost-effectiveness.

Coordination involves the systematic use of policy instruments to provide effective assistance and protection to vulnerable populations. This definition—quoted in full in Chapter 1 of this study—emerged from the Humanitarianism and War Project’s 1992 review of the crisis in the Persian Gulf. Coordination has been a leitmotiv in subsequent country reviews and thematic studies.

Perhaps our most extensive treatment of the subject was in *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda*, a 1996 review by Antonio Donini. The author, on leave from coordination responsibilities in the UN secretariat, proposed a tripartite typology. Coordination by command, he suggested, involves leadership authority, reinforced by carrots and/or sticks; coordination by consensus uses less authority and requires more persuasion; and coordination by default has even fewer structures for orchestrating concerted action.

Coordination by command, Donini concluded, is not a

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realistic option either for donors or for the United Nations (UN) itself. The most to be hoped for, he said, is coordination by consensus, in which “UN organizations and various NGOs would at least share information and attempt to avoid duplication.” Yet his three-country comparison demonstrated the value—other analysts might say the indispensability—of a command element. Even a modest amount of resources entrusted to the designated coordination agent, Donini found, produced significant paybacks in program effectiveness. In the absence of more assertive authority, he concluded, responses that “rely solely on personalities, goodwill, and intellectual leadership” are likely to disappoint.

Several years and numerous crises later, there is now greater support for the command model. A newly released U.S. State Department study of American humanitarian policy and practice tells a familiar “tale of poor coordination, missions being duplicated or falling through the cracks, and confusion inside the administration and the private humanitarian groups that sometimes cannot be sure with which [government] agency to work.”

At the same time, however, confusion and ambivalence continue to characterize many current discussions of coordination. On one occasion in early 2000 at which donor government officials and international NGOs discussed improving disaster coordination, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed a preference for the phrase “operational cooperation” rather than coordination. A wary donor government official countered by saying that her agency would not fund anything that failed explicitly to embrace the word coordination.

Earlier reviews by the Humanitarianism and War Project provide the context in which the current study of the dynamics of coordination is set. As in previous work, we approach the subject from an operational standpoint. The issue is not what is said about coordination at agency headquarters and around interagency tables in New York and Geneva. It is, rather, what happens on the ground in major humanitarian emergencies. This particular study reviews the international responses to the situation in Sierra Leone during the years 1994 to 1998 and to Rwandan refugees in Ngara, Tanzania between April 1994 and December 1996.

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Each crisis evolved differently in terms of the political-military context on the ground and in terms of the approaches to coordination that were employed. In comparing and contrasting developments in each of the two locations, this study views the coordination issue from three vantage points: organizational (Chapter 3), functional (Chapter 4), and programmatic (Chapter 5). It seeks to answer questions such as the following:

- Is there a correlation between the degree of coordination authority and the effectiveness of humanitarian activities?
- What is the relative importance of institutional structures, on the one hand, and leadership by key humanitarian officials, on the other?
- To what extent does effective coordination require compatible approaches among humanitarian organizations to neutrality and political engagement?

In keeping with the Project's inductive methodology, we believe that there is much to be learned from a close-in review of the dynamics of situations as they evolve on the ground. Those dynamics are, in one sense, unique to each situation. Chapter 2 thus examines the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Rwanda that created the need for humanitarian action. Appendix II provides a chronology of major events in each of the two settings. Maps are also included in the text.

Yet, humanitarian challenges and operational and institutional constraints recur in crisis after crisis. As a result, there are significant lessons with potentially wider implications to be learned from a rigorous comparative analysis of situations such as Sierra Leone and Ngara. Some of these are identified in Chapter 6, which provides a number of concluding reflections.

We are pleased that Marc Sommers has brought to bear on the task at hand his skills as a social scientist (an anthropologist, to be more precise) and as a knowledgeable consultant to humanitarian organizations. (Biographical information on Sommers is provided in Appendix IV.) He conducted the bulk of the more than 100 interviews for this study in 1998 to 1999,

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supplementing field visits to both locations with discussions in Geneva, Brussels, New York, and Washington. The agencies that contributed their viewpoints are identified in Appendix III. We express our thanks to the many officials interviewed, some at great length and on more than a single occasion.

Our colleagues Giles Whitcomb and Thomas G. Weiss were involved several years ago in discussions that helped frame the parameters of this study. We are also indebted to Laura Sadovnikoff, Margareta Levitsky, Ryoko Saito, and Joy Somberg of the Project and Frederick Fullerton of the Watson Institute for assistance in the production process. Special thanks go to the editor of this volume, Mary Lhowe.

The work of the Project is underwritten by financial contributors from practitioner organizations, governments, UN agencies, and foundations identified in Appendix IV. We are grateful for their ongoing support and for the use that they make of our materials. We welcome comments from them and other users.

This Occasional Paper will be among the final publications by the Humanitarianism and War Project at the Watson Institute at Brown University. In its new home at the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University after September 1, 2000, the Project will continue its research and publications. Additional copies of this and earlier monographs may be downloaded directly from our website at [www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W). Our new website at Tufts will be [www.hwproject.tufts.edu](http://www.hwproject.tufts.edu).

Larry Minear, Director  
Humanitarianism and War Project  
Providence, Rhode Island  
July 2000

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study takes a fresh look at coordination dynamics by exploring two situations that were noteworthy both for the difficult challenges humanitarian organizations faced and for their innovative responses. The cases shed light on coordination in general and two contexts in particular: coordination for a country (Sierra Leone in the 1990s) and coordination for refugee camps (Rwandan refugees in Ngara District, Tanzania).

After reviewing the conflicts that precipitated the crisis in each setting, the study analyzes coordination from three perspectives. The first explores the nature of relationships among humanitarian actors in Sierra Leone and in Ngara District. The second highlights three important coordination functions: strategic planning, resource mobilization, and security information management. The third examines two examples of program coordination: the controversial repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania, and education for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees. Throughout this monograph, the Sierra Leone and Ngara cases are used as optics for viewing how six sets of humanitarian actors—UN agencies, international and local NGOs, the Red Cross movement, donor and national governments, military contingents and representatives of recipient populations—respond to dynamic challenges in the field.

The study finds examples of significant, replicable innovation in both field cases, such as the Committee on Food Aid (CFA) for the Sierra Leonean food sector and coordinated donor funding to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ngara. It also finds difficult challenges, such as three competing UN entities in Sierra Leone and UNHCR's evolving relationship with the Tanzanian government.

*The Dynamics of Coordination* concludes that donor governments command more power than any other set of actors to exercise a positive influence on coordination. At the same time, the marginalization of national governments from coordination structures is shortsighted because it limits synergies between relief and longer-term development and risks alien-

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ating national authorities that have been and will be key players. The study also finds that humanitarian officials tend to overstate the role personalities play in bringing about effective coordination and to underemphasize the significance of well-structured institutional relationships and clearly delineated coordination systems.

Final recommendations highlight the importance of incorporating a command element into the practice of humanitarian coordination and establishing a clear role in coordination for the national authorities. It also recommends that UN agencies and key humanitarian donors dramatically improve their relationships; that the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) be expected to exercise coordination for all in-country responses; that UN and NGOs develop a formal coordination arrangement adaptable to specific contexts; that the UN's Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) be reformed; that key roles in humanitarian action for local NGOs be recognized; and that all major humanitarian actors, and international NGOs in particular, work to improve their relations with national government actors. Innovations to be replicated elsewhere, with specified adjustments, include the collaboration between the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and the U.S. government, reductions in the number of NGOs in humanitarian theaters, and structures like the Committee on Food Aid used in Sierra Leone.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE COORDINATION CHALLENGE

Former Médecin sans Frontières (MSF) President Rony Brauman has observed, “Humanitarian action is the principal expression of collective values.”<sup>1</sup> If so, then why has it proven so difficult for humanitarian actors to work well together? In reality, humanitarian action is neither as simple nor as straightforward as suggested by a signboard posted on an American military jeep in Kosovo in 1999—“Savin’ Lives.” Shared values do not necessarily lead towards coordinated responses, much less cooperative relationships.

The challenge of creating and maintaining a coordinated international response to a given complex humanitarian emergency begins with different meanings of the word “coordination.” Antonio Donini’s observation that humanitarian agency officials in Rwanda during the 1994 crisis had “no clear or common understanding of what ‘coordination’ meant” could be applied to any number of humanitarian crises.<sup>2</sup> Even in dictionaries, the word coordination has conflicting meanings. One definition of coordination as a noun posits it as the “act or state of coordinating or being coordinated,” based on the verb “to coordinate,” which it considers “of the same order or degree” and “equal in rank and importance.” A second definition, however, suggests that coordination, in addition to conveying equality among parts, can also confer a “proper order or relationship” among them.<sup>3</sup> In times of humanitarian crisis, should coordination arrangements lean towards horizontal equality, as the first definition suggests, or towards more hierarchical arrangements, as the second implies?

Coordination lies at the heart of the international humanitarian enterprise. When a humanitarian emergency erupts, officials from governments, UN and nongovernmental organizations, along with journalists and other interested parties, descend on the scene, armed with a variety of mission orders, capacities, and institutional agendas. Harnessing their divergent energies to create a cohesive system is hardly easy. It may also be improvisational, leading to an uncertain result. Many

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people assume that the UN should assume the mantle of leadership and set up a harmonious humanitarian response system. But agencies negotiate their relationships afresh at the outset of each new humanitarian emergency and they may or may not place the UN at the center. In the view of one humanitarian coordination expert interviewed for this study, “There is no coordination system for the United Nations. Full Stop. None.”

### **Examining Coordination Through Two Case Studies**

This monograph explores the dynamics of coordination by reviewing two major humanitarian emergencies. One arose in Sierra Leone in the wake of civil war. The case study examines field coordination from 1994 through 1998, particularly the latter part of this period. The other involved refugees in Ngara District of western Tanzania who fled genocide and civil war in Rwanda. Study of the Ngara case extends from the Rwandan refugees’ entry into Tanzania in April 1994 until their repatriated return to Rwanda in December 1996.

These two cases represent responses to two different kinds of humanitarian emergencies, each with a different model of coordination. The Ngara case illustrates coordination of refugees in camps, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is typically charged with orchestrating assistance with international and sometimes local NGOs as implementing partners. Host governments usually enter into tripartite arrangements with UNHCR and the government of the refugees’ country of origin.

For a country—as distinct from camps—the model of humanitarian coordination is more complicated. In this approach, illustrated by the Sierra Leone case, a number of UN agencies may compete for a seat at or near the top of the coordination structure. While the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is charged with performing the function specified in its name, the country representative for a second agency, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), is usually expected to become the primary coordinating chief and to receive the title of Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). In some situations, a Special Representative for the Secretary-

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General (SRSG) may also be appointed. The Sierra Leone case contains all three entities and illuminates how working relationships between them must be negotiated in the field.

As these three UN focal points (and perhaps other UN agencies as well) negotiate relations, UN relationships with international NGOs and Red Cross agencies tend to be less structured than in refugee camps. In a country, however, NGOs may have already established a presence as development agencies long before famine or war abruptly shifted their operations into the humanitarian relief sphere. Thus, even while it may appear that the “international community” is operating under the auspices of the UN during a crisis, in practice, NGO and Red Cross officials who are accustomed to working independently of the United Nations in pre-crisis times may not be inclined to fall in step behind UN agencies once emergencies arise. This reality usually makes coordinating humanitarian emergencies inside a country in crisis far more complex than in a refugee camp. It is thus necessary to describe the Sierra Leone case in more detail.

These two case studies should not be seen as evaluations of performance. “Sierra Leone” and “Ngara”—here used as shorthand for the crises they represent—are explorations of two sets of coordination challenges, dynamics and innovations. The frame of reference includes six sets of actors: UN agencies, international (and, where applicable, local) NGOs, the Red Cross movement, donor and national governments, Military contingents, and representatives of recipient populations.

### **Organizing Themes and Subjects**

Two recurrent themes are the impacts of uncertainty and tension on the coordination process. Uncertainties arise from the tenuous nature of humanitarian crises and they affect the context for coordination work. Both Sierra Leone and Ngara provide numerous examples of the impact of unpredictability on humanitarian coordination and on how humanitarians respond to unexpected challenges. Second, a range of internal tensions between humanitarian actors regularly creates testy, adversarial, and sometimes counterproductive relationships

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that challenge the actors' ability to coordinate their actions. The primary questions considered here are:

- What is the appropriate coordination relationship between UN bodies charged with coordination; between UN bodies and NGOs; between donors and NGOs, UN agencies and the local government; between international humanitarian agencies and indigenous actors, including government authorities, NGOs, and recipients; and between military and civilian actors?
- To what extent does successful humanitarian coordination depend on local governments relinquishing some of their sovereignty?
- What is the appropriate balance between meeting humanitarian needs and supporting reconstruction or development initiatives?
- Can humanitarian actors committed to neutrality find ways of working with other humanitarian organizations that have embraced the political objectives of one set of belligerents?
- How should coordination arrangements balance the need for strong leadership against the desirability of firm institutional structure?
- Can coordination innovations from these two settings be replicated elsewhere?

Coordination is a multidimensional activity that takes place among a variety of actors at multiple levels across a range of activities. It is a dynamic process, responding to changing political, military, and humanitarian circumstances on the ground. The conflicts that generated the need for humanitarian action in Sierra Leone and Ngara, are reviewed in Chapter 2. Coordination in its sense of orchestrating relationships among organizations is the focus of Chapter 3. Coordination as the elaboration of a division of labor among functions is reviewed in Chapter 4, with strategic planning, resource issues, and information management singled out for special attention. Coordination of activities at a more programmatic level is highlighted in Chapter 5. The final chapter identifies conclusions and offers several recommendations.

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## Methods and a Definition

At the heart of the research methodology were interviews carried out with approximately 100 officials with first-hand knowledge of humanitarian activities in Sierra Leone and Ngara. The interviews covered many subjects, from the UN's Consolidated Appeals Process and the Committee on Food Aid in Sierra Leone to UNHCR's dominance over the coordination process and involvement in the *refoulement* effort in Ngara. A recurring theme of interviews, however, was that the task of coordination was as personal and idiosyncratic as it was technical and demanding. Indeed, the role of personalities figured prominently. Although the roles that key individuals played will be examined here, attention will also be paid to the interplay between such individuals and coordination structures or systems.

The concept of coordination that will serve as the reference point is as follows:

Coordination is the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include: (1) strategic planning; (2) gathering data and managing information; (3) mobilizing resources and assuring accountability; (4) orchestrating a functional division of labor in the field; (5) negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities; and (6) providing leadership.<sup>4</sup>

This definition informs the structure and analysis of this study, with two caveats. First, while successful humanitarian coordination requires that all involved feel it is necessary, often they do not. In both Sierra Leone and Ngara, some humanitarian actors viewed coordinated action as restrictive and even counter to fundamental humanitarian principles. In their opinion, the most effective humanitarian response may not necessarily have been a coordinated one.

Second, using policy instruments in a systematic fashion in the field may represent a distant goal rather than a present reality. Coordination is a messy, dynamic, and evolving process; the crises that created the humanitarian emergencies in the first place ensure that this will be true. Strategic planning may be directed far more at reacting to changing events than

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developing plans in advance of them. Whether one ultimately faults the individuals or agencies involved or the circumstances, coordination efforts often center on developing immediate, short-term solutions to difficult, perplexing, and rapidly evolving problems.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONFLICTS IN SIERRA LEONE AND RWANDA

An examination of coordination in contexts as different as an entire war-torn country and a single district containing refugee camps might lend the impression of two situations with little in common. But Sierra Leone and Ngara shared many important similarities. In both, the international coordination structures were headed by UN bodies that developed both positive and problematic relationships with international NGOs. Relationships between international agencies and national government bodies also appeared deceptively easy in both cases, but they eventually presented considerable problems for coordinated humanitarian action.

Moreover, in both cases national and international actors alike had difficulty in dealing with nongovernmental authorities, namely the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and the Rwandan refugee leaders in Ngara. In Sierra Leone, inability to relate to the RUF with any regularity except for one brief period during the war made humanitarian work in areas the RUF controlled virtually impossible and the threat of RUF attacks on aid convoys an everyday possibility. Rwandan refugee leaders in Ngara were readily accessible and frequently helpful to humanitarian agencies. But on certain issues, particularly relating to repatriation, they blocked progress and eventually foreshortened the Rwandans' stay in Ngara.

Another important similarity between the Sierra Leone and Ngara cases was the regional impact of nearby wars. Civil wars in Liberia and Burundi directly influenced the coordination challenges in Sierra Leone and in Rwandan refugee camps in Ngara, respectively. Contingency planning and strategic analyses had to incorporate the impact of instability and negative influences from troubles just over several borders, heightening the difficulties of coordination.

In many other ways, the two conflicts described here were as different as the coordinated responses that aid agencies engineered for them. Sierra Leoneans suffered from nearly a decade of killing, amputations, displacement, and child ex-

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ploitation. The war began years before aid agencies declared a humanitarian emergency in the country. The Rwandan experience of conflict centered on a sudden genocide of extraordinary proportions, which dramatically increased the need for humanitarian aid. This dissimilarity between the conflicts was reflected in the international response each received. For much of the 1990s Sierra Leone was probably Africa's most overlooked war, while Rwanda's 1994 genocide immediately attracted widespread attention.

There were other differences, too. RUF banditry and sadism usually made it easy for Sierra Leoneans to disassociate themselves from the war's combatants. But the refugee camps for Rwandans in Ngara contained fugitives from justice—the organizers and perpetrators of genocidal acts. Sierra Leone's war was not ethnically based, while Rwanda's conflict was. Neither side in Sierra Leone's conflict employed many land mines, which were used regularly in Rwanda. Finally, some of the fiercest fighting in Sierra Leone's war has taken place in the vicinity of its many diamond mines, but Rwanda's war did not feature vying for control of natural resources (the country lacks resources).

What follows is a brief description of the two conflicts, with particular attention to aspects that influenced coordination efforts. While the Sierra Leonean conflict is reviewed from its beginning in 1991 to the present, the horizons of the Rwandan conflict are set more narrowly, ranging from the outset of genocide in April 1994 until the December 1996, when nearly all Rwandan refugees in Ngara were forcibly repatriated. The account presented here does not include events in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo that happened after the Rwandans had returned from Tanzania.

### **Sierra Leone: A Creeping Catastrophe**

Sierra Leone's tragic strife contains all the elements of a riveting war novel. Since its beginning in 1991, the coups, corruption, and terror have involved mercenaries from South Africa and Ukraine, Gurkhas from Nepal, diamond smugglers, militias with magical charms and a reputation for cannibalism, a regional fighting force, secret societies, and thousands of child soldiers and captives.



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Novelesque elements notwithstanding, war in Sierra Leone has been as real as it has been devastating. Eight years of civil war triggered a sequence of political upheavals, including two military coups; the euphoria of democracy's return in 1996 with the election of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah as president; widely hailed peace accords; a third military coup in 1997 carried out by dissident military soldiers called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which was joined by the RUF; a second failed peace accord in 1997; Nigeria's rout of the RUF-AFRC junta in Freetown in early 1998; Kabbah's return to the presidency; a second attack on Freetown in January, 1999; and a third peace treaty in June 1999 and its unraveling early in 2000. Long years of uncertainty mixed with spasms of sudden violence greatly hampered the international community's ability to coordinate humanitarian relief. The conflict left more than 50,000 Sierra Leoneans dead and at least one million displaced. The number of refugees in surrounding countries (but mostly in Guinea) has risen to 500,000.<sup>1</sup>

Counter to perceptions of the RUF as sadistic hooligans,<sup>2</sup> over the course of the war the Revolutionary United Front became, quite simply, one of the best guerrilla outfits in the world. Consistently underestimated, the RUF's brilliant and diabolical leader, Foday Sankoh, together with commanders such as Sam "Mosquito" Bokarie, developed an astonishingly successful military strategy. It featured children between the ages of 7 and 14,<sup>3</sup> whom they captured and then used as fighters, forced laborers, and concubines. Its well-deserved reputation for amputating limbs was not a sign of madness but rather part of a calculated strategy to depopulate vast areas of inland Sierra Leone.<sup>4</sup> This obviously prevented the RUF from building a popular base—a central criticism of the RUF—but the secretive group lacked a well-known political platform in the first place. Its effectiveness rested on its ability to command political power by wreaking havoc on civilians virtually at will, to cultivate a youth-oriented ideology within its ranks, and to control some of the world's richest diamond mines. The RUF accomplished this with a fighting force of perhaps 5,000 combatants for much of the war, most of whom were young and profoundly traumatized children.<sup>5</sup>

The implications of RUF tactics for humanitarian work

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have been considerable. For much of the war, security remained a major concern for civilians and aid personnel alike. No agency was able to negotiate with the RUF to gain ongoing access to displaced populations behind RUF lines. RUF attacks created huge displaced populations in cities and in refugee camps in Guinea, with RUF infiltrators in their midst.

If international actors in Sierra Leone were largely unable to negotiate humanitarian space with the RUF, the distance many maintained with government officials was a matter of choice. Aid agencies frequently created coordination arrangements that kept national government actors on the periphery. While some officials were concerned about aligning themselves too closely with one side in the civil war, an overriding concern for many was more pragmatic. With few exceptions, they considered Sierra Leonean government officials corrupt and lacking the requisite training and skills. Granting them too much control over coordination mechanisms would thus slow the delivery of emergency services. Cooperation with government counterparts might pay dividends, but active collaboration with the authorities, many agencies and donors believed, had to be minimized.

The corruption of governance in Sierra Leone has deep roots. Since the country gained independence in 1961, its excellent and abundant diamonds have bankrolled a wealthy and nepotistic political elite and separated it from one of the world's poorest populations. A quarter century of political dominance and economic mismanagement by President Siaka Stevens laid the groundwork for a declining economy. The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate fell an average of 3.7 percent between 1965 and 1973, to an average of 1.8 percent between 1974 and 1984, to -3.6 percent in 1995.<sup>6</sup> In 1996 the UNDP Human Development Report ranked Sierra Leone last among 174 countries in per capita gross national product (GNP), life expectancy at birth, and adult literacy in 174 countries. Even before the economy's collapse following the May 1997 coup, the Economist Intelligence Unit predicted that "the [Sierra Leonean] economy's overwhelming reliance on donor aid was set to continue well into the 21st century."<sup>7</sup>

Sierra Leone's long-running war can be traced back not only to the government's legacy of corruption amidst extreme

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poverty—a gap that the RUF has tried to exploit among poor Sierra Leoneans—but also to a desire for revenge by Liberia’s most famous militia leader and current president, Charles Taylor. The war began in Sierra Leone during the term of Stevens’s handpicked successor, Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh. A handful of Sierra Leonean political exiles and economic refugees who had settled in Liberia began to receive direct support from Charles Taylor, then the political leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which had invaded Liberia from Cote d’Ivoire in late 1989. By the middle of 1990, Liberia had become a humanitarian catastrophe, with much of the population displaced, nearly 400,000 of whom lived in refugee camps in surrounding countries. That same year, Sierra Leone President Momoh decided to allow the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces, the West African multilateral force, to use Sierra Leone as a staging post.

While Momoh evidently sought to play the role of peace-maker in Liberia’s conflict, Sierra Leone’s involvement in Liberia’s war turned out to be Momoh’s undoing.<sup>8</sup> ECOMOG troops stopped Taylor’s NPFL fighters from overtaking Monrovia in 1990. Part of Taylor’s response was to encourage and supply the RUF’s entrance into Sierra Leone in 1991.<sup>9</sup> In April 1992, Momoh was overthrown in a military coup, fled to Guinea, and was replaced by Captain Valentine Strasser, who at age 26 became the world’s youngest head of state.

Although Sierra Leone’s civil war did not shift from a political rebellion to a resource war until 1993, interviews with Sierra Leonean refugees from the RUF’s initial entry point in the country—the peninsula-shaped district of Kailahun—suggest that the political component of the RUF’s fight did not last even that long. Disgusted by the pervasive poverty and corruption in the country, many refugee parents reported how they had allowed their eldest sons to remain behind in Kailahun District while they fled the fighting. The boys were instructed to listen to the RUF’s village presentations and report back to their parents. But refugees’ descriptions of what took place match the reports of RUF tactics by Paul Richards.<sup>10</sup> Instead of leading a “people’s movement for national recovery,” the RUF captured youths and forcibly conscripted them into their

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fighting force.<sup>11</sup> This early experience with the RUF marked the beginning of a war that many Sierra Leoneans eventually viewed as pointless and bewildering.<sup>12</sup>

The war was also difficult to understand for the international community. Were RUF fighters mere bandits or a true opposition force? If bandits, would aid agencies be relieved of the need to avoid choosing sides between the RUF and an elected government? But if the RUF were an opposition force, it was a difficult one to decipher. Its leaders were reclusive, the organization decentralized. Direct connections between “Mosquito’s” troops in Kailahun; bush camps allegedly headed by Liberians; and Foday Sankoh, who spent much of the war in forced exile, were hard to make out.

The uncertainty and danger that would plague humanitarian action in Sierra Leone throughout the war was further complicated by the advent of a new kind of actor: the *sobel*. Sierra Leoneans coined this word to describe national army soldiers who impersonated rebels. As soldiers, they protected civilians, but at night they looted them, and then, perhaps, amputated a civilian’s arm to make it seem that the RUF had carried out the atrocity. It was thus never clear just who had carried out a particular village raid. Were they actual RUF rebels or *sobel* impersonators? “Who are the RUF anyway?” said a senior UN humanitarian official charged with coordination tasks. “Can you trust them when they make promises?”

There was still another troubling aspect of the conflict. “Why has there not been a concerted battle since nearly the outset of the war, just small skirmishes?” a veteran aid official asked in 1998. Whispers of collusion between government and RUF troops that had begun to circulate in the mid-1990s were confirmed by the May 1997 coup staged by mutinous national army soldiers calling themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The AFRC had received support from the RUF, which, for the first time, left the forests and entered Freetown. Even after the two groups were chased back into the forests by the Nigerian-led ECOMOG force in January and February 1998, talk of collusion persisted. Some observers in the aid community found it difficult to believe that the RUF and AFRC could have survived the ECOMOG attack. One concluded that “ECOMOG [had] allowed the AFRC/RUF

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convoy to escape into the forest” during their retreat from Freetown.

The central thread tying possibly colluding national army and ECOMOG troops, mercenaries, civil defense units, multinational companies, and regional leaders such as Liberia’s Taylor and Burkina Faso’s Compaore to the RUF was the insurgents’ control over diamond mines.<sup>13</sup> Together with the brutality, the lure of diamonds and the enormous wealth and power they represented helped make the violence seem, as one Sierra Leonean author put it, more like “civil chaos” than outright war.<sup>14</sup> However repugnant, the RUF strategy of extreme child exploitation, terror, brutality, depopulation, collusion, and diamonds has proved extraordinarily successful.

In the view of one observer, the terms of the third peace treaty that Foday Sankoh’s RUF signed with President Kabbah’s Sierra Leonean government “amounted to a victory for Mr. Sankoh.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to receiving amnesty for RUF and AFRC leaders against prosecution for crimes against humanity—a provision denounced by international human rights groups—Sankoh received a government position equivalent to vice president and also became the head of a new commission on mineral resources and national reconstruction. Even in the tenuous post-war period, the RUF’s connections to the diamond trade appears to have been preserved, the government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah remains weak, there is no viable national army and instability and violence continue to regularly hamper aid operations. Despite local and international condemnation of their tactics and a concerted military response to their aggression, the RUF continues to dominate the Sierra Leonean landscape.

### **Rwanda: Refugees and Killers in Camps**

The ferocity and staggering efficiency of the Rwandan genocide has spawned a cottage industry of publications on the darkest chapter of central African violence.<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, the horror of the human slaughter overshadowed the international community’s numbed response to the 100-day genocide. Unlike the videotape of the fallen American soldier



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dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, which was broadcast endlessly on news shows across the globe, Rwanda's tragedy could not be captured by a single dreadful image. On April 6, 1994, when the violence began, only two international journalists were present in Rwanda. In newspapers and on television, evidence of extraordinary atrocities and massive brutality in Rwanda mixed with widespread indifference in the UN and many governments. Murders and dismemberment took place in full view of UN contingents and media cameras. Corpses were piled high in churches or dumped into rivers. As the days and weeks passed, the spectacle of horror seemed only to get worse.

On April 28, three weeks into the genocide, an uncomprehending world watched nearly 250,000 Rwandans cross the Rusumo Bridge and enter Tanzania. The size of the movement on a single day was unprecedented. The media attention paid to this stunning scene was the first of what a UNHCR official later called "a set of unusual circumstances" that soon benefited the humanitarian coordination effort. The press was in Ngara en route from covering elections in South Africa, the official continued. "So when they heard of a quarter million people crossing in a day, they came." In their wake were planeloads of donor government officials, eager to support the humanitarian response in an unusually coordinated fashion.

The Rwandan refugees who arrived in Tanzania during the initial influx were put on a hill near the border called Benaco, a site that UNHCR had previously identified for about 60,000 Burundian refugees. The sheer size of the population presented problems of unprecedented magnitude. Routine tasks such as digging latrines, providing potable water, and supervising firewood collection became major operations. The logistics required to deliver large quantities of food and supplies to Ngara District, a particularly remote section of East Africa, were complicated and difficult.

The attention paid to Rwandan refugees in Tanzania turned out to be short-lived. In July, 850,000 Rwandans entered Goma, Zaire, in what has been called "the largest and most sudden population movement in modern history."<sup>17</sup> This second Rwandan refugee influx radically changed how Ngara was viewed. From mid-1994 until late 1996, the more

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than half million Rwandan refugees in Tanzania were overshadowed by the presence of a million-plus Rwandan refugees in Zaire. The refugees in Tanzania eventually became a kind of enormous backwater. While Goma attracted ongoing international attention, Ngara's refugee camps, well-coordinated and orderly by comparison, did not.

Tracing the origins and experiences of the Rwandans who later occupied the refugee camps near Ngara helps shed light on the perplexing challenges they presented. Most came from Byumba Prefecture in Rwanda's northeast and Kibungo Prefecture in the southeast. The refugees from Byumba were among the first Rwandans internally displaced by the civil war that began in their prefecture in October 1990, three and a half years prior to the genocide. By early 1992, more than 300,000 Rwandans, most of them from Byumba, were in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>18</sup> The civil war period leading up to the 1994 genocide continually drove the IDPs southwards. Some later reported to have lived in as many as eight IDP camps before becoming refugees.<sup>19</sup>

By the time the genocide began, many of the IDPs from Byumba were residing in Kibungo Prefecture, a major site for killings during the genocide's early stages: "The vast majority who had fled to Tanzania from Kibungo *préfecture* (300,000) were Hutu, and they were not fleeing massacres, as their leaders tried to pretend, but on the contrary they were the people who had just killed between 25,000 and 50,000 Tutsi in eastern Rwanda and were fleeing to escape what they felt would be the vengeance of the advancing RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front] forces."<sup>20</sup>

The population that crossed into Ngara District was thus quite unlike refugees that aid and Tanzanian government officials were accustomed to working with. They were plagued by extreme fear and trauma. They were violent. At night, murder, gang warfare and occasionally even militia training took place while girls and women avoided going to latrines for fear of being raped. The population contained *genocidaires*, Rwandans who had orchestrated or carried out the killings, including members of the notorious *Interahamwe* militia. While officials debated the likely percentages of guilty killers and innocent refugees, the exact ratio remained unknown. Some

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Rwandans, swept up in the tumult and terror of genocide and flight, were faced with “incredibly complex moral and social situations”<sup>21</sup> that led one observer to label them “innocent murderers.”<sup>22</sup> Still, Prunier argued that “the main agents of the genocide were ordinary peasants,”<sup>23</sup> though it should also be remembered that much of the Rwandan refugee population was comprised of children who had witnessed killings but did not commit them.

Refugees were also, on the whole, deeply suspicious of foreigners. They viewed Tanzanian authorities as allies of the RPF leaders who had assumed power in Rwanda following the genocide. Refugees, and those from Byumba in particular, also believed that the international emphasis on the genocide overlooked the tragedies that had befallen them in the civil war period. During interviews in 1996, Rwandan refugees expressed their conviction that UNHCR and other foreign officials viewed them as guilty of genocide rather than victims of war.<sup>24</sup>

The refugees' feelings of vulnerability, fear, and isolation proved unshakable. UNHCR's attempts at voluntary repatriation, a campaign that began soon after the refugees arrived in Tanzania and extended until just before their return late in 1996, met with scant success while the agency's credibility among refugees steadily declined. Indeed, relations between aid agency officials and refugees often seemed adversarial. In the eyes of Tanzanian authorities, the refugees gradually became unwelcome guests. They had entered a forested area in 1994 and within a matter of months left it nearly bereft of trees. The Tanzanians increasingly viewed the refugees as a severe security risk as well. Over time, they began to assert control by limiting refugee movements, patrolling the camps and the surrounding areas, and, by the end of 1996, driving the refugees back into Rwanda.

The emerging distance between most refugees and both the Tanzanian authorities and the international humanitarian community created a vacuum that Rwandan refugee leaders eagerly filled. Veteran politicians who arrived in Tanzania with significant proportions of their constituencies, the refugee leaders directly supported coordination systems that UNHCR and its NGO partners devised. Working with these

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leaders, however, proved to be a double-edged sword. Their ability to organize the refugee majority greatly facilitated large-scale humanitarian activities such as food distributions. But there was a reason for the remarkable refugee obedience to their leaders' wishes. Many if not all of the major refugee leaders were suspected mass murderers during the genocide. Unlike many of the refugee leaders in Zaire, who arrived in military uniform with arms and thousands of identifiable henchmen, fugitives from justice in the Tanzanian camps threatened bona fide Rwandan refugees in a more clandestine fashion. Threats of retribution against any who may have wished to identify the killers in their midst were less direct and less public, and the perpetrators of violence were more difficult to trace. Still, in Tanzania as well as Zaire the refugee leaders were fearsome; the leaders that aid agencies eventually worked with in both countries did not represent refugee communities as much as rule over them. Thus did "the imperative of feeding Rwandan refugees [conflict] with the necessity of bringing to justice those among them who had been the architects and perpetrators of genocide."<sup>25</sup>

The perplexing moral and logistical challenges that Rwandan refugee leaders presented to the humanitarian community dramatized the coordination challenges faced in Sierra Leone and Ngara. In both cases, aid agencies, with the UN at the forefront, were supposed to mount and coordinate major activities. Their expertise in specific tasks and their ability to attract funds from donor governments allowed them to maintain their roles. Their commanding presence also limited the contributions of national governments and marginalized input from local NGOs. But the rules of the humanitarian game could change at any time. Entities such as the Rwandan refugee leaders, the Tanzanian authorities, or, in Sierra Leone, the RUF held the power to alter the dynamics of humanitarian activities. At various times they all invoked that power. While in charge of coordinating humanitarian activities, the roles of the internationals were largely reactive to events carried out by others.



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## CHAPTER 3

### COORDINATION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS

The starting point for discussing the dynamics of coordination in Sierra Leone and Ngara involves relations among humanitarian agencies. Particularly during emergencies, aid officials tend to equate coordination with productive interpersonal relationships: that is, whether or not agency officials get along. If they do, the thinking goes, coordination flourishes; if they do not, it flounders.

Relationships between agency officials, however, are only one element in coordination, although an important one. Conflicting organizational mandates and varying readings of political context are other factors that influence institutional relations. A review of the nature and evolution of institutional relationships over time in this chapter sets the stage for analysis of the functional and programmatic dimensions of coordination in the following two chapters.

#### **Sierra Leone: Coordination for a Country**

This section examines the structuring of relationships among three UN entities charged with coordinating the international humanitarian response in Sierra Leone, as well as their relations with international NGOs and national government bodies. It then reviews a particularly illuminating event that exposed and personalized sharp philosophical differences among UN and NGO agencies. It closes with a look at how donors managed to maintain good relations among themselves and coordinate assistance across a divided community of humanitarian agencies.

#### *Three Structural Problems*

Humanitarian coordination in Sierra Leone illuminates how personality clashes among key actors can obscure underlying structural difficulties and discourage creativity and innovation. By late 1998, when field research was carried out in Sierra Leone for this study, the head of UNDP in that

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country, Elizabeth Lwanga, had become a focal point for what was good or bad about humanitarian coordination there, depending on viewpoint. The controversy that surrounded her pointed to a weakness in the overall coordination scheme in general and three structural problems in particular. These were: UNDP's inherently problematic position as humanitarian coordinator, a logjam at the top of the UN's coordination structure, and contradictory approaches regarding how international and national actors should work together.

*UNDP's Mandate.* Though the government's role as the titular head of coordination was not insignificant, the power and ability to orchestrate international humanitarian coordination lay with the United Nations. UN agencies had the necessary resources, international recognition and experience. Many international participants also believed that it would have been inappropriate for the national government to coordinate humanitarian action because it was a partisan player in the civil war that had caused the emergency. But beyond this debate over principles lay other problems for the Sierra Leonean government. War threatened its sovereignty, undermined its domestic economic and political resource base, and kept relationships with donor governments subject to negotiation. The authorities had little alternative but to accept the operational UN hegemony. Indeed, when the RUF and AFRC twice invaded Freetown, the authorities in Freetown were understandably more concerned with their own survival than with coordinating relief.

As the RUF slowly infiltrated forests in portions of eastern and northern Sierra Leone during the early stages of the war, international responses to changes in the countryside varied. A split arose in 1993 when many non-UN agencies with long-standing presence in the country such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) began to shift from development to emergency work. At the same time, the UNDP resident representative (ResRep), who served as the resident coordinator (RC) of all UN activities there, was reluctant to label the situation a humanitarian emergency. Speaking in 1998, a UNDP official conceded that "the emergency started before it was called an emergency" but cited rebel attacks on Kabala in

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November 1994 as “the signal for the [UN’s] emergency response.” The UN awarded the UNDP ResRep a second title: humanitarian coordinator.<sup>1</sup> This decision sowed the seeds of division and conflict.

UNDP is a development agency with an Emergency Response Division (ERD). Unlike most aid agencies, it assumes a development-oriented approach even during conflicts and in war zones. “All our coordination has been around strengthening the government” of Sierra Leone, Ms. Lwanga explained in October 1998. War did not disrupt UNDP policies that had been developed during peacetime. “The only way to deal with [the government] is to work with them,” she continued, adding that as ResRep, her role “is to harmonize what all UN agencies do operationally” and to facilitate their cooperation with the host political authorities. For UNDP to assume the HC role was appropriate, she concluded, simply because, as the ranking UN aid official on the ground, “the resident coordinator should be the humanitarian coordinator.”

Although such declarations attracted criticism from other aid actors, Ms. Lwanga’s position was entirely consistent with her agency’s mission and goals. A senior ERD official in UNDP’s New York headquarters explained the logic of having UNDP’s ResRep in a country at war serve as both the RC and the HC. “The two [titles] are linked up in one person to build a bridge between humanitarian and development work,” he explained. Wearing both hats is important because “humanitarian agencies are not committed to linking with the development-oriented” agencies. The official saw no structural contradiction; he believed the two positions were complementary.<sup>2</sup>

In UNDP’s view, war and humanitarian emergencies do not destroy development activities: they only upstage them. If development processes are endangered during emergencies, then UNDP should support development initiatives that are “curative.” “Being mandated to deal with the entire development process,” explains one UNDP document, “UNDP’s primary concern has been to ensure, as the conflict unfolds, that bridges are built between the humanitarian operations and future sustainable human development assistance.”<sup>3</sup>

While UNDP views itself as an advocate for development

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and a supporter and enabler of government institutions, its mission statement also explains that the agency is “politically neutral” and “impartial.” Given that Sierra Leone’s government was directly involved in the civil war, the two roles—government supporter and neutral development agent—seem contradictory, if not schizophrenic. But UNDP officials considered their approach during periods of war and peace in Sierra Leone as both consistent and appropriate. During civil strife as in peacetime, one UNDP official in Sierra Leone noted, “humanitarian workers have to deal with the local [government] authority in order to serve the people.” Delivering humanitarian relief requires close relations with the government and careful distance from opposition groups, the official continued, because “you can’t negotiate with [the RUF rebels] and so alienate the government.”

Few if any other international agencies in Sierra Leone agreed with UNDP’s approach. A high-level official of another UN agency in Freetown offered a common critique. “UNDP is mandated to help the government with its developmental objectives,” he explained, “so it’s incumbent upon UNDP to side with the government.” Although UN agencies such as “the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) know how to provide humanitarian assistance without taking sides” in civil conflicts, “UNDP’s mandate precludes it.” While the neutrality of UNICEF, WFP, and other UN organizations at the level of aid operations is surely debatable, the official argued that, unlike a number of UN agencies with considerable experience in humanitarian emergencies, UNDP “is a complete novice.” As a result, UNDP’s role as humanitarian coordinator was “the biggest obstacle in the UN to addressing crises” effectively as a system.<sup>4</sup>

UNDP did not take such criticism sitting down. “Some [international] agencies don’t give a damn about Sierra Leone,” a senior UNDP official in Sierra Leone charged, because “they just distribute food without caring about the political aspect of the crisis.” In many respects, the humanitarian effort for Sierra Leone was severely weakened because key coordination figures had daggers drawn against each other. A controversial episode in nearby Guinea that illuminated the seriousness of this divide will be described shortly.

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*The UN Logjam.* UN coordination responsibilities in Sierra Leone gradually spread across three separate bodies. At the outset of the emergency, UNDP led the coordination effort. In 1996, a second agency arrived, the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit, or HACU, the local office of the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (or OCHA, known before January 1998 as DHA, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs). HACU's entrance divided UN coordination into two levels. While Ms. Lwanga remained UN humanitarian coordinator, HACU became informal facilitator of a coordinated humanitarian response that extended well beyond the UN family of agencies.

Though it was generally accepted that HACU would coordinate activities under UNDP's guidance, perceptions of the relationship between these two agencies differed. UNDP officials saw their relationship with other humanitarian agencies in hierarchical terms. Reflecting her view of UNDP as the international agency in charge of humanitarian coordination, Ms. Lwanga explained that "HACU is the executing body for carrying out coordination" that UNDP, as humanitarian coordinator, supervises. But a HACU official described his agency's role in horizontal terms, as a "balance between the UN agencies and the others." Compared to UNDP's primary focus on coordination between the host government and UN agencies, he saw HACU's mission as much broader and more inclusive. For HACU, the "coordination players" included not just UN and host government agencies but "other parties to the conflict: local and international NGOs, community-based organizations such as farmers' and women's groups, tribal and other traditional leaders, and religious leaders."

Emblematic of conflicting conceptions of coordination was the fact that UNDP, while delegating coordination for humanitarian activities to HACU, also carried out its own development activities. Asked to explain why UNDP's development work was not coordinated with humanitarian activities, a HACU official responded, with considerable frustration, "because UNDP does development" and HACU does not. The implication was that UNDP viewed its dual roles in development and humanitarian work as not in conflict with each other. UNDP development activities, however, under-

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mined its credibility as humanitarian coordinator. Though its development and humanitarian work may have seemed an appropriate mix of “curative development” and humanitarian action to UNDP, the approach seemed intentionally divisive to many other international actors. In their eyes, government-oriented UNDP development work was directly at odds with its humanitarian coordination responsibilities, which should have emanated from the principle of impartiality. Ms. Lwanga’s leadership style as HC, together with UNDP’s distinct approach to humanitarian response, combined to isolate her and her agency from many if not most other international officials, NGOs in particular, while allowing her to maintain close relations with Sierra Leonean authorities.

The emergence of a third UN entry atop the coordination structure, the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), complicated coordination further still. Established by the UN Security Council on July 13, 1998, UNOMSIL’s office was located not with UNDP and HACU in UN House in Freetown’s city center, but instead on a hillside overlooking the town. To many internationals, this symbolized the separate position that this new UN body assumed in the coordination structure.

UNOMSIL was originally headed by Francis Okello, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone. Its staff had a large military component but also included human rights monitors from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. While UNOMSIL was charged with monitoring the military and security situation and reporting on human rights violations, its coordination role was less clear. A senior UNOMSIL officer explained that the entrance of UNOMSIL into Sierra Leone did not upset the existing coordination structure: it simply assumed the position at the top of it. “Once a UN SRSG arrives,” the officer explained, “he automatically becomes the UN family head. He coordinates their activities without violating the mandate of other UN agencies.” The SRSG’s family head role was seen to complement and not interfere with existing UN activities because “the SRSG doesn’t get involved with local issues.”

By the fall of 1998, however, relations between UNDP and UNOMSIL had grown difficult. Lines of authority were not

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clear. A UN official in Sierra Leone explained that this was to be expected, since the two groups derived their authority from different UN bodies. "The SRSG is endorsed by the UN Security Council," the official explained, "while the UNDP's resident representative is endorsed by the UN General Assembly." UN policy, the official continued, positions the SRSG as the highest authority, while the ResRep/HC is charged with carrying out specific coordination tasks in consultation with the SRSG.

In the view of many NGOs, the UNDP/UNOMSIL clash seemed increasingly irrelevant. As one veteran NGO official said, "The coordination structures have developed in spite of the Resident Representative/Humanitarian Coordinator, and when UNOMSIL came along, the coordination structure was already in place." UNDP's HC, the official continued, "had tried to prevent the NGOs' participation in coordination" planning and had lost. Indeed, several NGOs noted that they eventually ignored UNDP and worked with HACU to develop a more inclusive coordination strategy even as UNDP and UNOMSIL, whom they perceived as pro-government and detached from the larger humanitarian arena, followed a separate course.

In sum, three institutional UN players, all of them viewing themselves as coordination leaders but perceived differently by other humanitarian actors, complicated but did not entirely undercut the exercise of coordination on the ground. By 1998, most international NGOs and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officials seemed to view UNDP, UNOMSIL, and the Sierra Leonean government essentially as a single unit. Such an alliance, whether real or perceived, clearly undermined the credibility of UNOMSIL and UNDP as coordination agents. Opinions regarding HACU were more divided, but even those suspicious of its coordination role found its officials accessible. HACU may never have been the UN's anointed coordination leader, but its officials were the most effective coordinators. While holding the UN's lowest coordination rung, HACU worked with a diverse range of humanitarian actors and, in the eyes of most observers, usually succeeded.

*The National Government's Role.* In Sierra Leone, coordina-

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tion structures often incorporated the official whom international agency officials preferred to deal with rather than the ranking official from the appropriate government ministry. Officials defended this approach by arguing that government counterparts were frequently inept or corrupt, or both. But ignoring formal government coordination relationships in pursuit of solutions to immediate crises may have created new and lasting problems.

“The ‘good’ people [in the government] are earmarked as points of entry,” said one NGO official. “Then everybody goes to [them] with everything, and soon they can’t do anything properly. It’s a potential vicious cycle, and [soon] their [government] peers will call them a ‘donor baby’— beholden to foreign interests [and] not a true patriot.” By selecting which government officials to work with, international agencies sent a message to the Freetown authorities about power relations. They defended this in the name of expediency—they were trying to get things done fast to save lives. From the government’s perspective, however, the message was different: international agencies, not the government, were calling the shots in their country.

What role in coordination should the government play in a country that is at war and wracked by a humanitarian emergency? In Sierra Leone, the question was never resolved. Unlike failed states such as Somalia in the early 1990s, the civil conflict in Sierra Leone weakened but never destroyed the state. Even when the AFRC and RUF overwhelmed Freetown and sent President Kabbah into exile, his government retained international recognition and remained a player in domestic politics. For many international NGOs and donors in Sierra Leone, the tension between preserving the mantle of neutrality to facilitate access to all victims of conflict and establishing some sort of working relationship with the government proved difficult to resolve. This tension became a persistent theme in coordination politics there. It frustrated efforts to find common ways of proceeding and underscored the need to acting in concerted fashion.

International agencies with a greater attachment to the principles of neutrality and impartiality perceived UNDP’s primary strength throughout the crisis years—its mainte-

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nance of good relations with the Sierra Leonean government—as a weakness. This perception was particularly strong on the part of NGOs, many of whom antagonized the government’s central body for humanitarian coordination, the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR). Specially created and charged with coordinating assistance to the line ministries (e.g., health, education), the NCRRR sought to increase control over the international coordination structure by establishing itself as HACU’s counterpart.

NCRRR was supposed to receive findings from all coordination groups and advise the government’s Inter Ministerial Committee on humanitarian policy.<sup>5</sup> In reality, however, its coordination role was less clear and its relations with other government actors frequently strained. A UN official noted that even though the NCRRR may have had its own budget to dispense to line ministries, these ministries opposed its role as chief coordinator of the government’s humanitarian work. As a result, the Inter Ministerial Committee, which the NCRRR chaired, rarely met. The official explained that “the NCRRR needs support to get the Inter Ministerial Committee going,” and added that UNDP was among the barriers, for it “focuses on the [line ministries] to support them against the NCRRR.”

This last comment illuminated both the complexity of the government’s involvement and its largely reactive role. UNDP’s apparent alignment with the line ministries contrasted with HACU’s relationship with the NCRRR. At the same time, many international NGOs and donors kept their distance from all but a few government figures. And while HACU seemed able to maintain relations with more humanitarian actors than any other agency—a notable and important strength—a Sierra Leonean with experience working for both the UN and the government offered a persuasive explanation for its edge over the NCRRR. HACU, he said, took the lead in coordination and NCRRR did not because HACU had “more clout” and far better relations with the powerful, well-organized, and well-funded NGOs.

NCRRR officials reserved a great deal of criticism for NGOs. In their view, NGOs trampled on their authority and government sovereignty. As one official commented, “The

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international NGOs go wherever they want [and] we can't coordinate them. This is a burning issue with us. Sometimes I find NGOs just putting up health centers or digging a well and that is it. Some NGOs send us monthly reports but don't say what money they have left. We don't know their future plans. But the problem of everything is that NGOs go to the people they choose in the government. The NGOs do what they want."

Other government officials also viewed NGOs as threats to their sovereignty. They were contemptuous of them for working outside of the government and focusing on humanitarian activities instead of tackling, as one NCRRR official said in late 1998, "what's needed now—development work." One interview with an official concluded with his assessment that "maybe we have to do like the Rwandans and Ethiopians" and expel some NGOs from the country. Significantly, even though donor agencies such as the European Community Humanitarian Office and USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) maintained their distance from government officials, they were spared the criticism directed at NGOs, perhaps because the government continued to seek access to their funds.

Relationships between international and national officials illuminated the impact of selectivity on coordination. The NGO emphasis on efficient service delivery enraged many government officials while donors, in turn, funded such groups because of their ability to "get things done." As ECHO and OFDA officials explained, "We [jointly] fund directly to NGOs" because they are "the big guys, the professionals." This attitude among donors may have contributed to government resentment. Meanwhile, the government and local NGOs received comparatively little outside funding during the war years.

The collective message from the international agencies was that they controlled the coordination cards and attached higher priority to addressing human need than to respecting sovereignty. The issue, of course, is built into humanitarian action in settings of civil strife. But the question of whether the agencies would be able to retain their coordination cards would subsequently surface in Ngora. There, too, successful

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humanitarian coordination eventually clashed with aspects of national sovereignty.

### *A Watershed Event*

Politicization often characterizes the application of sanctions and crossborder assistance during civil wars, and Sierra Leone was no exception. After President Kabbah's government fled into exile following the rebel attack on Freetown in May 1997, the humanitarian community split into two groups. All UN agencies and many NGOs set up operational bases in Conakry, Guinea, as did the exiled Kabbah administration. The International Committee of the Red Cross and several European NGOs, by contrast, continued to base their operations inside Sierra Leone. One effort to coordinate activities between the two groups arose following the formation of the Humanitarian Exemptions Committee. The story of this committee's work illuminates the difficulties of maintaining a unified coordination structure when key actors are deeply divided against each other.

The divide within the humanitarian community came to be seen as a dispute between a high-profile group, including HC Lwanga, SRSG Okello, President Kabbah, and Peter Penfold, British High Commissioner for Sierra Leone on one hand, and the ICRC-European NGO group on the other. The operational reality was more complex. A number of American NGOs such as World Vision and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) set up bases in Conakry while continuing to manage operations inside Sierra Leone with local staff, with some of their staff eventually commuting to Freetown from Conakry.

ECHO field officers conducted regular field visits into Sierra Leone while their OFDA counterparts, and all other U.S. government staff, remained in Guinea. Even some UN agencies such as UNICEF managed to maintain a measure of operational activity inside Sierra Leone, even though UN international staff were restricted from entering the country. Members of this intermediate group, which comprised the majority of the international aid community, straddled the growing separation between the two polarized groups.

From the outset, members of the two main groups per-

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ceived in radically different ways the basic issue of danger to humanitarian operations. Members of the ICRC/European NGO contingent based inside Sierra Leone emphasized the high level of safety in rural areas, reporting that their ability to deliver humanitarian assistance to areas outside the capital was better than at any other time since the outset of the emergency in 1993-1994. They claimed that this was due to the shift to the capital of RUF forces, which had previously patrolled inland forests. International staff from NGOs who were based in Conakry but visited Sierra Leone generally supported this view.

Many in Conakry, however, had a different perspective. UN agency officials, some press reports, the ousted Sierra Leonean regime, officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and others maintained that Sierra Leone was far too dangerous for relief operations. They focused their attention not on rural areas but on Freetown, where the junta regime was based. Many also supported the international sanctions against the junta rulers.

Eventually, the ousted president and his supporters became hostile to the European NGOs and the ICRC, which had never left Sierra Leone. In their view, delivery of aid inside the country supported the junta. Yet Kabbah and his supporters did not condemn all agencies delivering aid inside Sierra Leone, singling out only those who retained their country headquarters inside Sierra Leone (ICRC and European NGOs) as "Junta NGOs." NGOs such as CRS, World Vision, and CARE were spared such criticism.

Politics overwhelmed humanitarianism in Conakry. After the AFRC-RUF rulers and the Kabbah government signed the Conakry Accords in the fall of 1997, ECOWAS was to supervise a staged, six-month peace plan. Although ECOWAS had invoked sanctions against the junta during this period (with UN support), the peace plan also called for "a mechanism... to facilitate the flows of humanitarian assistance" into Sierra Leone.<sup>6</sup> The Humanitarian Exemptions Committee became this mechanism.

The committee consisted of representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs, along with observers from

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ECOWAS and the governments of Guinea and Sierra Leone. Its task was to review requests that certain humanitarian items be exempted from the sanctions levied by ECOWAS and to facilitate their distribution within Sierra Leone. ECOWAS, HACU, and the SRSG were considered the major players on the committee, along with Ms. Lwanga, the UNDP ResRep and HC, who served as committee chair. Ms. Lwanga later reported that the committee approved all four exemption requests that it received, a widely accepted fact. The dispute that emerged focused on those who prevented humanitarian relief from crossing into Sierra Leone.

Some UN officials blamed ECOMOG. It had impeded deliveries, one stated. "ECOMOG placed monitors at the border to clear the goods, but they had few people to get it done." HACU's effort to expedite border clearance by paying the monitors' salaries had no effect. Truck convoys loaded with food at the border never crossed into Sierra Leone. To its many detractors, the committee's failure to coordinate relief was intentional and politically motivated. In their view, blocking aid to the country, then under AFRC-RUF domination, supported President Kabbah's belief that "rice was being used in Sierra Leone as a 'weapon of war.'" Food delivery was supposed to wait until Kabbah returned, even if it meant that civilians would starve to death in the meantime, as untold thousands of Sierra Leoneans apparently did.

The committee's failure had a lasting impact on coordination efforts. Late in 1998 in Freetown, a year after it had been formed, the Humanitarian Exemptions Committee continued to arouse passionate arguments over what had happened and who was behind it. One of many aid officials highly critical of the collective stance of the SRSG, President Kabbah, and Ms. Lwanga on this issue argued that "their strategy worked: holding back humanitarian aid helped Kabbah get back into Sierra Leone." But in the process, the UN's lead role on the exemptions committee had seriously damaged its credibility by positioning the world body as "blocking its own [humanitarian] operations [and] preventing humanitarian assistance from crossing the border." Although Ms. Lwanga and others disputed this version of events, UNDP's and the SRSG's support of the Kabbah regime, both in Conakry and following

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Kabbah's return to Freetown in early 1998, confirmed suspicions that political objectives outweighed humanitarian goals.

On the opposing side were the ICRC and many NGOs who considered the delivery of humanitarian aid to all civilians affected by the war their overriding goal. "We try not so much to be neutral," an NGO official explained, "but to be impartial. How can you reach the people on the other side? By being as impartial as possible." An ICRC official stated that his organization sought neutrality, which he defined as "a position to be in support of the suffering." Although supporting the suffering behind RUF lines became virtually impossible once war was started again in 1998, the ICRC official maintained, together with officials from European NGOs, that "if one [humanitarian] group is seen as taking sides with the government, then you don't have a chance of getting to the suffering in rebel-held territories." This perspective interpreted the government-friendly policies of UNDP and other like-minded agencies as creating the impression that all humanitarian aid was partisan and anti-RUF, thus blocking efforts to aid civilians behind RUF lines.

While the ICRC and some NGOs strained to be seen as neutral and/or impartial, other humanitarian agencies did not. This second group's main objective was supporting a democratically elected government against the RUF, which committed human rights atrocities. As one NGO official observed, the issue is "black and white. Some [RUF soldiers] are committing human rights abuses and some [ECOMOG and government soldiers] aren't. It's a democratically elected government vs. human rights abusers." A UN official went further still, expressing the view that "the refusal [of other humanitarian actors] to take sides, to acknowledge who's right and who's wrong, will perpetuate the crisis." ICRC and European NGO officials responded by arguing that soldiers on the government side had also committed atrocities, albeit at a far lower rate than the RUF. In their view, their allegiance to a basic humanitarian principle—neutrality—was being misunderstood as sympathy for the RUF cause because the delivery of humanitarian assistance had become so politicized.

Although politicization often characterizes the application of sanctions and crossborder assistance during civil wars,

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proponents on both sides of this chasm shared one common belief: that the other side was making their work much more difficult. The Humanitarian Exemptions Committee imbroglio had brought the debate about democracy vs. impartiality/neutrality into the open and damaged interagency relationships irreparably. Despite this, however, coordination at the sector level proceeded. The reasons for this seemed clear: the most politicized humanitarian agencies—UNDP and UNOMSIL—were generally not directly involved in sector-level activities, and aiding civilians behind RUF lines remained more of a goal than a reality. As a result, even though sharp philosophical differences remained within the humanitarian community, aid to civilians still continued.

### *Donor Perspectives*

In the midst of corrosive disagreements involving virtually the entire international humanitarian community in Sierra Leone, the two largest donors—OFDA and ECHO—managed to continue coordinating most of their work with each other. A number of important elements contributed to their success in doing so.<sup>8</sup> First, both agencies shared the view that “both sides will get better results if we coordinate well.” ECHO-OFDA coordination succeeded, they believed, “because we make it work.” Second, their preference for keeping OFDA and ECHO coordination links informal was helpful. “Coordination works,” in Sierra Leone, an OFDA official observed, because “nobody makes a big deal about it.”

A third factor was field experience. Field representatives from OFDA and ECHO came to their posts with professional experience in the region and enjoyed good relations with supervisors in their respective agencies. Fourth, with colleagues in the resident European Union and U.S. government delegations in West Africa, they carried out collaborative field assessments which often resulted in joint funding for a given NGO. Fifth, ECHO and OFDA representatives regularly shared information on NGOs and the general situation in Sierra Leone to prevent duplication and to enhance their knowledge about NGO operations and program effectiveness. Successful collaboration between OFDA and ECHO

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also benefited from the fact that their respective donor governments had generally compatible political policies towards Sierra Leone, which was, in the words of an ECHO official, “a forgotten little place” where OFDA and ECHO representatives could “do what we like” without much headquarters interference.

That the two largest humanitarian donors could work together in a cohesive fashion amid such discord was remarkable. OFDA and ECHO officials were generally sympathetic to both the human rights and humanitarian principles that divided the community and managed to maintain relatively good relations with nearly all of the humanitarian actors. At the same time, their assessments of host government management capacities were generally low and their strong support for NGOs exacerbated the NGO conflict with the Sierra Leonean authorities. Both were particularly critical of what they viewed as the UN’s coordination failure, which they blamed on UNOMSIL and UNDP. Yet OCHA and ECHO differed on their support of UN agencies. While ECHO was reluctant to fund them and could be highly critical of their operations, OFDA funded some UN agencies, notably HACU, while avoiding others altogether.

Should Sierra Leone’s civil war have been perceived as an emerging democracy vs. an unpopular opposition guilty of massive human rights abuses? If anything can be learned from the Sierra Leone case, it is that although humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality suffered amid the politicization, humanitarian activities proceeded nonetheless. The urge to provide humanitarian relief regularly upstaged support for democracy. Western humanitarian donor agencies were among those reluctant to involve the government, even a democratically elected one perceived as fighting against ragtag sadists. As one donor official commented, the reason had nothing to do with principles. The central issue was a pragmatic one: timing. “Development is about investing for the future,” the official explained. “Humanitarian aid is about saving lives now.” Thus, the official concluded, “Supporting development for tomorrow doesn’t make sense when people are dying today.”

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## Ngara: Coordination for Refugee Camps

After a quarter million Rwandan refugees entered Ngara District in Tanzania on April 28, 1994, Ngara became an instant media and humanitarian sensation. With the world eyeing the humanitarian response in one of East Africa's remotest regions, the international humanitarian community presumably would have struggled to respond with the alacrity and efficiency the situation required. Also facilitating a prompt response was the fact that the Burundian refugee crisis, which had taken place near Ngara, had only recently subsided. Many aid agencies and supplies were still in the area, and a number of key actors—international donors and NGOs, the Tanzanian authorities, and UNHCR—were familiar with each other and prepared to work out a humanitarian response quickly. The coordination framework that emerged was what Donini described as “coordination by command.” It was characterized by “strong leadership... accompanied by some sort of authority, whether carrot or stick.”<sup>9</sup> UNOMSIL and especially UNDP had attempted this sort of approach in Sierra Leone with, at best, uneven results. But UNHCR's authoritative role in Ngara proved far more successful. An analysis of the dynamics of that role is the subject of this section.

### *The Burundian Precursor*

Humanitarian officials present in Ngara, Tanzania, following the sudden influx of Rwandans into Tanzania had distinct advantages over their counterparts present for the Rwandan influx into Zaire two months later. The Rwandan population in Tanzania was smaller, healthier, and less militarized. Tanzanian troops successfully disarmed many of the Rwandans. Tanzanian officials also developed good relations with aid agency officials, something that could not be said of agency relations with the Zairian government. Even the earth itself was superior: drilling for water or digging latrines was relatively easy in Tanzania, but not in the hard volcanic rock of Goma, Zaire.

An often overlooked advantage, however, was the experience gained from a disastrous response to an emergency that

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had just taken place there. Fleeing their own civil conflict, as many as 500,000 or more Burundians had crossed into Tanzania in 1993 and early 1994 and spontaneously settled in 50 sites along the forested, remote Burundi-Tanzania border.<sup>10</sup> Arriving during the rainy season, the Burundians were almost immediately beset by dysentery, measles, and malaria. Their situation soon grew even worse. Within weeks, “a refugee population, which had arrived in reasonable health, experienced a famine.”<sup>11</sup> Though no accurate figures exist, camp surveys found that the combination of disease and malnutrition had created morbidity rates “40 times higher than expected.”<sup>12</sup> Thousands perished in the forests. One UNHCR official lamented that “We lost about 50,000 Burundian children. This is a shame.”

The humanitarian community’s response was also unfortunate. Although the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR), a comprehensive study, identified the tendency “for staff of one agency to attribute blame for a problem to the other agency”<sup>13</sup> in the Central Africa region generally, it reported that “the worst example encountered of such blaming-the-other concerned the very high rates of mortality experienced by Burundian refugees in Tanzania in late 1993.” In this case, “whilst WFP personnel saw the principal cause of mortality being dysentery resulting from UNHCR’s tardiness in the provision of adequate water and sanitation, UNHCR personnel saw inadequate supplies of food by WFP as the principal cause.”<sup>14</sup>

The JEEAR report also noted that “the relative significance of the logistical difficulties, inadequate resources and management factors in contributing to the increased mortality [of the Burundian refugees] were difficult to gauge.”<sup>15</sup> But every official interviewed about the Burundian refugee crisis admitted that the humanitarian response was, as one NGO official present recalled, “a screw-up.” No agency seemed to have performed particularly well, including UNHCR, which received low marks for the exercise of its coordination role. A UNHCR official admitted that there was not good coordination but added that there was also no press interest and no donor money. All this would change immediately after the Rwandan influx, which the official considered “a CNN emergency.”

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The impact of limited donor funding for the relief effort unexpectedly hastened the end of the Burundian refugee crisis. WFP had initiated a new “Immediate Response Account” to process donations for the Burundians quickly but the donor assistance remained “slow and inadequate.”<sup>16</sup> An NGO official explained that, as a result, “WFP didn’t have money to make local purchases, while any food arriving from the U.S. and Europe would not reach the refugees for weeks or months.” Facing starvation in Tanzania and with the situation in their homeland having improved somewhat, all but 60,000 of the refugees returned to Burundi by early 1994.

During this period, UNHCR dispatched an Emergency Response Team (ERT) to Ngara District, Tanzania. Anticipating a second Burundi refugee influx, its mission was to identify a viable refugee camp site in the area. Eventually it decided on a hill called Benaco. Equipped with an artificial lake, it would be presumably far enough from the Burundian border to stabilize a frightened incoming population. Benaco, as it turned out, would instead host a huge Rwandan refugee population, and its proximity to the Rwandan border would create serious security problems for international and Tanzanian officials there. At the same time, the Burundians’ misfortune in Tanzania provided a boost to the Rwandans. With the humanitarian community already in the area and a refugee camp site established, the foundation for an effective response to the Rwandan emergency was already in place.

### *Coordinating the Arrivals*

The chaos that followed the movement of 10,000 Rwandans into Tanzania every hour for a full day in late April, 1994, created what one NGO official called “a zoo.” But five factors put coordination off to a good start. The first was luck. A UNHCR report later noted that “the response [to the crisis] was accelerated because UNHCR was not only on the ground, but had been present at the border as the influx started.”<sup>17</sup> There were also supplies on hand to distribute. “The stocks ordered for the Burundian [emergency]—food, computers and so on” which did not arrive in time to aid Burundian refugees, a UNHCR official recalled, “were [instead] used for

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Rwandans.” Also, UNHCR’s ERT team immediately began working with seasoned field professionals from donor and NGO agencies, holdovers from the Burundian emergency. This led one UNHCR official to highlight the connection between coordination and competence: “At the end of the day the results are a matter of who is on the ground.”<sup>18</sup>

Good fortune also came in the form of a development project that happened to be in the area when the Rwandans arrived. “The biggest [immediate] problem was sanitation,” said an NGO official afterward. “UNHCR hired Cogifar, an Italian engineering company stationed in the area to build roads, to build a trench around the camp to prevent fecal matter from spreading to the lake. This was credited for preventing a cholera epidemic.”

The second factor was the development of good relations among agency officials present at the time of the Rwandan influx. A UNHCR Mission Report from Ngara, which characterized agency relations generally as “excellent,” attributed much of this to the agencies’ shared desire to shed territorial concerns and work together, saying, “The size of the problem facing everyone on the ground led to an agreement that we would work as a group instead of strictly within agency boundaries to ensure that resources were utilized fully and that coverage in all life saving areas was as great as possible.”<sup>19</sup>

Esprit de corps emerged during these early days. An NGO official later observed that “NGOs were everywhere” and Ngara swarmed with intrusive international reporters. In this situation, UNHCR took charge. Some NGO officials called UNHCR officials in Ngara “authoritarian,” and there was indeed strong individual leadership at UNHCR’s helm during that time. But most NGOs were generally forgiving of any excesses, particularly at the outset.

The third factor was donor willingness—first from ECHO and eventually from the U.S. government—to test a new funding mechanism that funneled money through UNHCR. For ECHO, this constituted a new kind of relationship with UNHCR, eliciting high marks from observers and from the JEEAR and World Disasters reports.<sup>20</sup> A related innovation was UNHCR-Ngara’s decision to process NGO grants in the field. This approach was uncommon in refugee situations,

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where donors tended to fund NGO implementing agencies directly, with the processing of grants completed in home offices. These innovations greatly streamlined decision-making procedures, sped up the funding process and enhanced UNHCR's control over field coordination. These two innovations will be explored in the following chapter.

A fourth factor advanced ECHO's relationship with UNHCR even further. ECHO seconded a European Union delegate to UNHCR's staff. Although this unusual situation appeared to work fairly well, it troubled UNHCR. Other aid agencies treated the ECHO official more as a donor than as UNHCR staff, creating a situation that was, in UNHCR's view, "neither clear nor completely comfortable."<sup>21</sup>

The fifth factor was the Tanzanian government's willingness to allow UNHCR to approve each NGO that would work in the camps. In retrospect, this factor may have been most important in creating good coordination and generally satisfactory interagency relationships. It allowed UNHCR to establish, in consultation with accredited NGOs, an orderly, cohesive, and well-coordinated system. UNHCR accepted twelve NGOs as partners in the Ngora camps and rejected 40. This was lauded not only by UNHCR but by NGOs and others as well:

The Great Lakes scramble left some asking whether agencies will ever get their act together. The exception was Tanzania, where teamwork took the place of the agency overlap and competition in Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda. ECHO and USAID put all funding through UNHCR, which also had full authority from the Tanzanian government to approve agencies...successful agencies were unanimous that cooperation had never been better. Coordination triumphed. Donors were delighted.<sup>22</sup>

The authors of the JEEAR report concurred:

The limited number of agencies and personnel involved in the operation engendered an

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unusually collaborative approach between UNHCR and the NGOs and there is almost universal agreement that this was one of the key factors contributing to the highly-effective initial response in Ngara.<sup>23</sup>

However, NGOs that were not allowed to participate in Ngara, not surprisingly, resented UNHCR's directive approach.<sup>24</sup>

The fifth and final factor was generally good working relationships with refugee leaders. This aspect of humanitarian coordination in Ngara would eventually become controversial and a direct constraint on refugee repatriation because some of those involved—exactly how many was never clear—were former leaders of the genocidal operation in Rwanda. As the emergency wore on, this state of affairs would have an enduring impact on the political and security situation in the region.

In the short term, however, the leaders' relationships with aid agency officials yielded results. Their ability to organize refugees according to commune affiliation in Rwanda allowed for the orderly distribution of food and for a particularly successful component of the regional unaccompanied child program spearheaded by the ICRC. In short, regardless of unsavory past activities and recurrent security problems in the camps, the refugee leaders proved to be helpful facilitators of specific humanitarian tasks. They behaved better than their much more aggressive colleagues in Rwandan refugee communities in Zaire, and this enhanced the ways that aid officials viewed them. Indeed, the comparison made the Rwandan refugee leaders in Ngara seem a fairly reasonable and productive group.

### *Establishing Relationships*

UNHCR's assertive approach to coordination appears to have had no precedent. UNHCR decided whether an NGO could work in the refugee camps and became its primary funding source. In a significant innovation, UNHCR also made NGOs solely responsible for different sectors, including

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transportation (the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service, or TCRS) and water (Oxfam UK, later Oxfam Great Britain or Oxfam GB). Unlike in Sierra Leone, where NGO relationships with donors and other agencies working in their sector (such as health or food distribution) were equally if not more important than relationships with the chief coordinating bodies (HACU, UNDP and UNOMSIL), UNHCR mattered most in Ngara. If Sierra Leone's coordination structure was complex and marred by conflicts, Ngara's structure was streamlined and marked by clarity.

It was also authoritarian. NGOs in Sierra Leone could decide whether or not to deal with UNDP, but no such options existed in Ngara. Ultimately, UNHCR, as one NGO official observed, laid down the law that NGOs had to follow. UNHCR admirers in the NGO community considered its approach an enlightened autocracy. "It was the greatest coordination I'd ever seen," one NGO official recalled. "A bit dictatorial, but I think it worked." UNHCR's descriptions of the heady days in Ngara viewed its assumption of coordination responsibilities as successful and transparent. "In general, the atmosphere was one of sharing," said one UNHCR official present at the onset of the emergency. UNHCR believed that "nothing [was] really confidential," which meant that UNHCR's partners in Ngara had "open access to UNHCR's files." A UNHCR colleague in Ngara concurred: "For good coordination, we have to be transparent."

UNHCR's early successes were credited primarily to its sub-office head in Ngara, Maureen Connelly. Praised or criticized, the fingerprints of "Maureen" on humanitarian coordination were everywhere. Decisions that she made in the UNHCR tent at the outset of the crisis, with a handful of UN and NGO officials in attendance, proved lasting. According to those present, she listened and then made decisions. For some, her dominance over coordination (in tandem with the sub-office deputy head, Jacques Franquin) was a weakness as well as a strength. One UN official believed that she and her staff relied too heavily on personal relationships with other agencies. UNHCR's initial coordination arrangements, the official remarked, "didn't leave a structure. Personalities are the grease to the wheels, but without a [coordination] structure, you just

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have grease.” As noted in the following chapter, this comment oversimplified the situation. Connelly and her staff set up a coordination framework that continued after they were replaced. Even so, some officials with other agencies in Ngara felt that successful coordination relied too heavily on getting along with Connelly and her staff. It was not something every UN and NGO official succeeded at.

One of the agencies that found the approach a strain was the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service. A mainstay in refugee operations for three decades in Tanzania, TCRS was by far the most experienced NGO on the scene. But the feud that began during the Burundian emergency in 1993-1994 and persisted across the entire Rwandan refugee period (one TCRS official called relations with UNHCR a “cold war”) centered on UNHCR’s belief that, as one UNHCR official contended, TCRS “doesn’t do emergencies [well]. It does long-term settlement work.” TCRS, of course, strongly disagreed. “If UNHCR branded us as not fit for emergencies and not capable for anything but settlement work,” a TCRS official asked, “then why did they so often depend on us” in Ngara? For TCRS, it was as if UNHCR was setting the agency up to fail by giving it ever-increasing work responsibilities and then taking it to task when shortcomings arose.

Though a number of NGOs felt that UNHCR practiced favoritism with some NGOs while distancing itself from others, TCRS officials felt this most keenly. They believed that “UNHCR did not want to see TCRS anywhere near Ngara” even while UNHCR loaded “more and more responsibilities on TCRS.” A UNHCR official admitted that TCRS didn’t like the operational role it eventually assumed but continued to insist that TCRS’ problems stemmed from its lack of experience in emergencies. It was not, the official insisted, anything personal. In the end, TCRS and UNHCR did not mend their rift until after the Rwandan crisis had passed. Despite conflicts between the two agencies, every TCRS official interviewed for this report credited UNHCR with developing a “model coordination structure” in Ngara.

The charge that UNHCR favored some partners over others was difficult to confirm, and the major implication of this dispute on coordination issues stemmed from TCRS’

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uniqueness. As the Tanzanian office of the Lutheran World Federation, it had an unusually high number of Tanzanian staff, including those in management positions. One expatriate TCRS official explained that “Our one strength is our local staff.” This set it apart from other NGOs, which were staffed largely by expatriates at managerial levels and with more Rwandan refugees than Tanzanian nationals in lower staff positions. Pressure from the Tanzanian government encouraging aid agencies in Ngara to hire more Tanzanians thus did not apply to TCRS. As TCRS tells it, however, UNHCR “tried to get TCRS to hire more expatriates” to replace some of the Tanzanians in high-level positions, offering to increase its budget if they did so. TCRS refused. This allegation was hard to confirm: the disagreement took place after Connelly had left Ngara and the UNHCR officials involved were difficult to identify and track down. However, the presence of a number of senior Tanzanians on one NGO staff and few on others raises the question of whether internationals working in humanitarian agencies simply prefer to deal with other expatriates. A more serious question underlies this and is applicable to the Sierra Leone case as well: to what degree are international actors—NGOs, UN agencies and donors alike—committed to building local capacities and institutions?

### *Post-Crisis Problems*

By 1996, after Connelly, Franquin, and other UNHCR officers had left Ngara and new administrators were in place, the coordination dynamics changed. For officials from the two major funders of the humanitarian response in Ngara—the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) and ECHO—the nature of the change was predictable. They had come to expect a drop-off in the quality of UNHCR personnel between those sent to major crises and those who replaced them after an emergency had been stabilized. An ECHO official, too, believed that UNHCR’s “emergency response team is good, but the post-emergency personnel is not as good.” A U.S. official agreed: “When the [UNHCR] emergency teams leave, the regular UNHCR teams [that replace them] do not have the same quality.” But not all viewed

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the changes in the same light. One NGO official commented that “given a choice, many NGOs preferred the [later UNHCR] period as they felt better recognized.”

Another change in dynamics arose from relationships that UNHCR cultivated in the camps with the Rwandan refugee political leadership, most of them commune leaders. One UNHCR official who regularly met with them in Ngara hailed this connection as “one of [UNHCR’s] successes. We were coordinating well with them.” The general feeling seemed to be that, regardless of the leaders’ contemptible pasts, coordinating services with them yielded results. A UNHCR field officer in Ngara said that the “commune leaders are able to settle problems” and further claimed that having weekly meetings with the leaders “is how we built trust” with refugees. Other agencies also relied on commune leaders to get things done.

This reliance eventually had serious consequences. An ICRC official illuminated how commune leaders could be simultaneously helpful and obstructive. The primary reason ICRC was able to locate unaccompanied children (UAC) in Ngara faster than anywhere else in Central Africa was because the Ngara refugee camps “were better organized. They came as intact communities with the same authorities they had in Rwanda.” Coordinating with the commune leaders in charge of the Rwandan camps helped ICRC and partner NGOs find UAC quickly. But once found, the commune leaders would “pressure the UAC not to go back” to Rwanda to reunite with their parents. ICRC officials assumed that the leaders did this because successful repatriations threatened their influence over refugees. As a result, “80-90 percent of the UAC refused to return” to Rwanda.

If working with commune leaders could be so problematic, were other community leaders, such as church officials, available? UNHCR apparently did not explore the options. Besides, coordinating with the leaders yielded results. Some NGOs criticized UNHCR efforts to build trust with suspected *genocidaires*, leaders who were directly involved in genocidal activities. “UNHCR was mainly talking to commune leaders, many of whom were not clean,” one official explained. “Due to this, it took a long time to separate out the intimidators,

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which could have been possible right from the beginning even on the basis of suspicions and available evidence.”

Whether this sort of conjecture was accurate or not, UNHCR was not alone in this practice. Virtually every aid agency employed some Rwandan refugees without knowing whether they had been involved in the genocide. In response to questions about the past involvement of refugees, aid workers expressed denial or resignation. One NGO official commented, “I don’t want to know who is who among my workers.” Another admitted that a selected cadre of Rwandan refugees, hired as NGO workers, were used to represent the views of all refugees at “all the meetings and workshops.” The official added that this was simply because “they were good workers.” Whether they might have also been *genocidaires* was a question most aid officials avoided.

Reliance on a small cadre of Rwandan refugees for coordinating aid activities with refugee populations while also suspecting that they might be criminals had repercussions on relations between refugees and international officials generally, and on UNHCR in particular. Research in the Rwandan refugee camps in Ngara in 1996 revealed that many refugees believed that UNHCR suspected them of being guilty until they could prove their innocence. Refugees felt trapped and frustrated by this. “UNHCR has never come to talk to us,” a member of a Catholic refugee congregation complained, a view echoed by others. Some also noted that their relationship with UNHCR had changed over time. By 1996, after living for more than two years in refugee camps, one church leader said, “When we arrived in Tanzania, it was possible to tell UNHCR the truth” about which Rwandans were genocidal killers. “But now, if you try..., they will call you a [genocidal killer].”<sup>25</sup> Such feelings over time became major impediments to UNHCR’s repatriation efforts, examined in Chapter 5.

The evolution of relations between the international community and the Tanzanian government was equally problematic. At the outset of the Rwandan emergency, Tanzania was widely praised for its cooperation. But the primary action the government undertook was to step aside and let UNHCR take the lead in working out security arrangements for the refugee camps and accrediting NGOs. Tanzania’s surprising acquies-

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cence inspired one UNHCR official to comment that “in an ideal world, we’d like other governments to do [the same thing].” Over time, however, the authorities became concerned about the Rwandan refugees as a security threat, environmental danger, and drain on resources and came to resent “being ignored by the international community.”<sup>26</sup>

A UNHCR official recalled how agencies in Ngara grew “extremely arrogant” in their interactions with Tanzanian officials. “We weren’t thanking [the Tanzanian government] for all they did: for following our instructions, being open, working with us, responding to our ideas,” the official explained. By late 1996, the government’s relations with the humanitarian community had altogether changed. Previous coordination arrangements were now irrelevant. As another UNHCR official reflected, “the Tanzanians called in their chits, and said ‘we worked with you [before], but now we are in charge.’”

To many practitioners, good coordination is mostly about good people. If people work hard to get along, they will succeed (“coordination works because we make it work”). Strong leaders will create well-coordinated systems through the force of their personalities (“the leader was a bit dictatorial, but it worked”). In both Sierra Leone and Ngara, forceful expatriate women heading UN offices provided the coordinating energy. Regardless of what one thinks of Ms. Lwanga in Sierra Leone and Ms. Connelly in Ngara, they both deserve some credit for the functioning and partly replicable coordination systems that emerged in their respective settings while they were at the helm. And if Ms. Lwanga was more widely criticized than Ms. Connelly, she also faced a more complicated humanitarian situation involving a much larger number of actors.

The emphasis on personality as the key to effective coordination, so often mentioned in interviews, sheds light on the essential insularity of the international humanitarian regime. Coordinators—and most of the other humanitarian officials and organizations they coordinate—are outsiders. Ms. Lwanga became unpopular in part because her desire to engage the local authorities conflicted with the interpretations of humanitarianism and neutrality held by most international agency

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officials. But her policies also took place while other humanitarian actors, directly or indirectly, marginalized national government participation. In Ngara, Ms. Connelly and her staff were hailed as effective coordinators, even by TCRS. Coincidentally or not, however, TCRS, the NGO that had the most troubled relationship with Connelly and UNHCR, was also the international NGO with the largest local staff, particularly at managerial levels. Aid officials also praised the role that Tanzania, as host government, played in the response. Yet its primary contribution during the early stages of the crisis was essentially to get out of the way and let foreign agencies take the lead.

Perhaps humanitarian coordination must be dominated by foreigners. Certainly key elements of the apparatus are international, even though in many emergencies more assistance is provided by local institutions and individuals. Even if the major actors coordinating and to be coordinated are external, however, the challenge of engaging indigenous actors must be addressed. In Sierra Leone and Tanzania alike, the national governments eventually became less than pleased by the behavior of the humanitarians in their midst. Ultimately, it is not just refugees who are guests of the “host” government. International humanitarians are, too. Indeed, the ultimate success of their labors, these two situations suggest, depend more largely than they may realize on collaborative partnerships with national governments.



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## CHAPTER 4

### COORDINATION AMONG FUNCTIONS

This chapter examines selected aspects of three key functions of humanitarian coordination: strategic planning, resource mobilization, and security information management. In each instance, innovations in coordination are highlighted.

In Sierra Leone, the most effective coordination through strategic planning took place at the sector level, where the dynamics of the much-praised Committee on Food Aid are examined. In Ngara, emphasis on assertive coordination concentrated authority in a few hands, with UNHCR selecting a limited number of NGOs as partners.

The discussion of resource mobilization highlights the effects of ECHO's decision to channel funding for NGOs through UNHCR, and the weaknesses of the Consolidated Appeals Process in Sierra Leone.

The discussion of security information management shows that fluctuating security caused the agencies to place a premium on a consolidated response to sudden changes. Security information management in Sierra Leone proved to be divisive, but in Ngara security information management measures strengthened interagency relations.

#### **Strategic Planning**

##### *Sierra Leone*

The Committee on Food Aid stands out as a particularly effective example of sector coordination. Aid officials considered it unusually innovative because it managed to bring all parties involved with food relief into a cohesive structure and maintained a concerted strategy that responded to dynamic changes on the ground.

Interviews with CFA officials suggested that sector coordination took place only because key relief personnel wanted to work together. One commented that "successful coordination depends entirely upon the individuals—usually directors of UN and NGO organizations—charged with such coordina-

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tion.” The personalities of such individuals play a particularly key role in effective field coordination because “few headquarters demand that coordination take place in the field—headquarters are almost exclusively interested in resource acquisition and program growth.” Donors “are only beginning to require evidence of coordination on the ground which, with diminishing donor presence in the field, is easy enough to fake.”

Here again, however, the role of personality in successful coordination is exaggerated. The CFA was a good deal more than congenial people getting along with each other. Individuals were part of a functioning structure reinforced by active donor participation. The shared goals and approach of OFDA and ECHO, two primary CFA donors, became the essential glue. They made CFA participation a prerequisite for receiving support. “Coordination implies consensus on rules and regulations,” an ECHO official explained. ECHO made it “a precondition that the NGOs agree to participate in the coordination mechanism” for their sector. “If an NGO doesn’t coordinate with others, we won’t fund them.”

OFDA imposed the same conditions. Both donors monitored CFA coordination through their own attendance at CFA meetings and by undertaking joint field assessments of food aid operations. Well beyond the dynamics of personalities, CFA coordination succeeded in large part because donors enforced it.

The origins of the CFA are significant because, as a founding NGO official recalled, “it sparked coordination as a model for other sectors.” NGOs created the CFA in 1995 when “We were [all] fed up with people dumping food everywhere. You had massive IDP populations, and something had to be done to coordinate food relief.” NGOs also sought to counter “double-dipping,” that is, the presence of the same individuals on the food distribution lists of several agencies. “The only way to crack [double-dipping] was to unify, coordinate [food distribution] in one system, and get one caseload list.”

An NGO official credited HACU with a key contribution to the CFA’s development. “HACU was brought into coordination in 1996,” the official said, “but found that UN agencies

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didn't want to be coordinated." He said UN agencies resisted because coordination could have revealed their inadequacies. If HACU coordinated UN agency activities, the official cynically asked, "It would show up the fact that [UN agencies] weren't doing much, and how can you coordinate nothing?"

As a result, another added, HACU turned to sector coordination, where HACU helped formalize the previously informal coordination for CFA already put in place by NGOs. "HACU gave us meeting space, a central contact point, a recordkeeping list of who's doing what and where, [and] a published directory of NGOs and UN agencies. HACU also had the resources to photocopy large documents, host conferences, and hire a specialist for developing and maintaining a food registration database." Equally important, the official added, HACU saw its role as "facilitators, unlike the HACU office in Liberia."

What emerged was a three-part committee structure for the food sector, chaired by WFP. At the top was a body also known as the Committee on Food Aid (the CFA was the name for both the overall structure and its main body). Meeting weekly, its members were comprised of donors, host government representatives, and managers of the four food pipelines (three NGOs and the WFP). The CFA was the policymaking body for food aid, determining, in the words of one NGO participant, solutions to "problems that arise or policies that need to be changed."

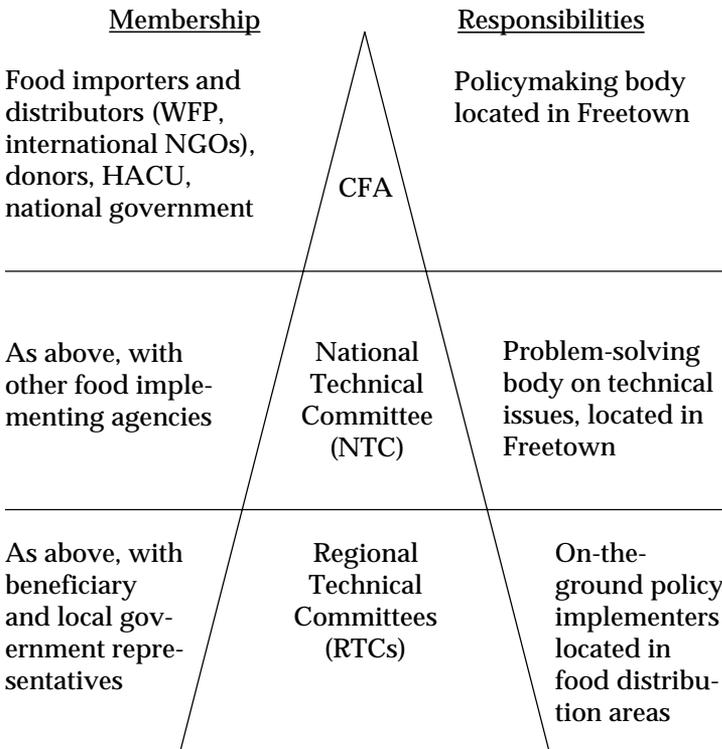
Examples of policy issues that might arise included "general free food distribution; targeted food distribution (such as vulnerable groups, institutional feedings in hospitals and schools for the blind); food for agriculture programs; and food for work programs."

If changes were agreed on, the CFA consulted with the middle committee in the structure, the National Technical Committee (NTC). The NTC linked the central coordinating CFA body with the outlying Regional Technical Committees (RTCs) which implemented policy. The central NTC roles were to supervise the RTCs and solve operational problems such as crowd control during food distributions. The NTC also "passed up issues for the CFA to decide on." NTC membership was mainly comprised of technical representatives from

agencies involved in the CFA—those with relevant expertise for dealing with the difficulties of food programs.

The RTCs constituted the coordination nexus in the regions. Their membership was diverse: officials from local implementing partner offices, local NGOs involved in food relief, local government officials, and beneficiary representatives such as paramount chiefs and leaders of IDP populations. It is at this level, CFA participants reported, that they were able to “build local capacity.” Accordingly, in addition to carrying out food distribution obligations, the CFA also sponsored workshops for RTC members. The following chart, developed by CFA founders, conceived of the structure as a triangle. (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1: The Committee on Food Aid in Sierra Leone**



Adapted from a 1997 CFA memorandum and used with permission

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The changing civil war context increased the significance of the RTC. During the coup period between May 1997 and February 1998 when links between the operations centers in Conakry and Freetown and Sierra Leone's outlying areas were reduced, the intermediate NTC level evaporated, with the CFA's central committee and the RTCs absorbing all their duties. Following the return of the international community to Freetown, CFA members began to insert the NTCs back into the structure.<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1998, the issue had yet to be fully resolved.

Following its entrance into Sierra Leone in 1996, HACU began developing an overarching coordination structure, envisioned as a set of concentric circles. The inner circle was comprised of a body called the Consultative Forum and the Inter Ministerial Committee, described in Chapter 2. This was surrounded by a circle of sector committees, including the CFA, which itself was encircled by regional committees for food (the RTCs), agriculture and others.

Outside of these circles were various members of local government offices (the District Demobilization Committee and district officers) and two sets of civil society members (the Chief's Court Committees and community-based organizations). A simplified version of HACU's National Humanitarian Coordination Structure is pictured in Figure 2 (page 56).

Figure 2 illustrates how sector committees coordinated with local groups. But its depiction of the central circle is less instructive. The Consultative Forum contained international actors interacting with government ministries, but these also acted independently of the overall structure. Donors such as OFDA and ECHO preferred funding international NGOs over the government, much to its dismay. While the Consultative Forum's influence over general humanitarian policy was thus minimized, the actions and policies of international and national actors at the regional sector level were much more integrated.

Though it may appear that local civil society and government representation were marginalized in this elaborate coordination structure (they are positioned outside of the circles), regional sector committees generally had significant local



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representation. While many sector committees were chaired by government officials, WFP's role as CFA chair aroused a measure of criticism.

Aid agency officials who were CFA members explained that food aid arrangements should be considered differently from the health and nutrition committee, for example, which was chaired by Sierra Leone's minister of health. That committee, a donor official noted, "is really run by the government" while the food sector "cannot be in the hands of the government because in the past politicians were handing out food according to political concerns, not needs." Two international CFA members went further. "Sierra Leone is a corrupt country," one said, adding that food is money and power. The other noted that "the primary reason the WFP chairs the CFA is that there are four [international] agencies responsible for food distribution and they won't hand it over to the government. ... The record of misuse or diversion of food in the past is an indictment of the government, and even the government is aware of this."

If food represented power in Sierra Leone, then the aid agencies distributing it became very powerful. This realization was not lost on government officials, some of whom strongly criticized WFP, which itself was defensive on this point. "The government doesn't understand why we are here," one WFP official observed. "It doesn't understand that food isn't free." While explaining that efforts were underway to "develop [government] counterparts for each [CFA] committee level," the official maintained that "we have to remember that the people of Sierra Leone are what we're here for."

This last comment illuminates the CFA's main strength and primary weakness. A decidedly innovative and effective coordination structure, it was designed to address an emphatically humanitarian objective: feeding people. Determined to coordinate food distribution efficiently and comprehensively, remarkably adaptable to dangerous and changing circumstances, the CFA developed an admirable record of humanitarian achievement. Yet it was also built on the assumption that central government involvement would harm food sector coordination. As a result, international actors became accountable for feeding Sierra Leoneans, and, whether they

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sought to or not, significantly enlarged their influence in Sierra Leone. Given the political potency of delivering food to the citizenry, it is not surprising that the government would press for more control over this sector. The CFA thus illustrates how effective humanitarian solutions can weaken links between relief and development. The CFA fed Sierra Leoneans while constraining government participation, thereby limiting the longer term development value of its contribution. Though capacity building was a component of the CFA's work in the regions, it was not a priority at the national government level.

Despite this limitation, many aid officials believed that such a structure was applicable to other humanitarian emergencies. It was replicated, to some extent, in Liberia. An official familiar with CFAs in both countries commented that “the Sierra Leone CFA works better than that in Liberia mainly because the Sierra Leone WFP director—WFP being the largest CFA partner and the CFA chair in both countries—encourages coordination, while the Liberia WFP director does not.” To ensure success, the official believed that “unless a director sees the need for coordination, no one ... will push for it.” A donor official in Sierra Leone agreed that the CFA in Liberia was “not nearly as effective as in Sierra Leone.” As many CFA members commented, sector coordination can only succeed with a collective determination among international actors—but most especially among donors—that it do so.

### *Ngara*

For three decades, Tanzania garnered praise for its treatment of refugees. Its refugee settlements “probably received the most attention and study as possible models for replication [in Africa].”<sup>2</sup> Yet its response to the massive Rwandan influx in 1994 was different. “The Tanzanians had no staff to handle such a large emergency,” said one NGO official who had worked for years with refugees in Tanzania. As a result, the authorities essentially deputized UNHCR to manage the refugee crisis.

To work with refugees in Ngara, an international NGO first had to be recognized as an implementing partner of UNHCR. From the outset, “The Tanzanian government wanted

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everything to go through UNHCR. They made the UNHCR representative in Ngara the single point of entry” for all NGOs, the NGO official said. This was a new policy for the Tanzanian government, which had previously assigned a government commandant to coordinate assistance for refugees in camps or settlements. In Ngara, however, “it became clear that [international agencies] weren’t working with the Tanzanian government. The settlement commandants had no authority over NGO activities” as they had following previous refugee influxes.

The government’s approach to sovereignty thus played an important role in the emergence of an effective coordination scheme in Ngara. Its voluntary relinquishment of control over the selection of agencies that would work with Rwandan refugees inside their country became the catalyst for the development of highly focused strategic planning. During the early stages of the emergency, the head of UNHCR’s Ngara Sub-Office, Maureen Connelly, became gatekeeper for all NGOs that wanted to work in the camps, many of whom were amazed at her ability to pull together a coordination scheme quickly. As one recalled, “She in effect called all the NGO representatives together and assigned sectors to each NGO.”

Much of the strategic planning took place in UNHCR’s tent at night. Every evening, NGO representatives met with UNHCR officials. Amid seeming chaos outside, lasting decisions were made quickly. An NGO recalled how “Maureen would say, ‘You do this, you do that.’ If you wanted a contract, you’d better be at those meetings.” Another pointed out that it took Connelly “one to two weeks to work out [the coordination structure] because it had never been tried before” for a refugee operation on Ngara’s scale. She put a premium on coordination meetings, which she described as “unwelcome with so much operational activity going on but necessary to ensure cooperation and coordination at the management level, as well as within and between sectors.”<sup>3</sup>

UNHCR set out three criteria for implementing partners in Ngara: presence, size, and experience. An NGO official recalled that, “Maureen chose only those NGOs who had the capacity to carry out sector specialties: Oxfam for water, CARE for food, and so on. She was looking for performance, NGOs

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who could get the job done.” Although her tight control over the selection process became controversial, her directive approach was widely recognized as essential to coordinating the Ngara response successfully. An NGO official estimated that 20 or 30 aid agencies in Ngara sought to be involved, out of which UNHCR chose 12 to implement programs for 500,000 refugees.<sup>4</sup> Agencies that arrived with their own funds encountered the “Maureen-bar-the-door” approach. One of Connelly’s early reports to Geneva commented that “Whilst [the] embargo on participation on demand was not welcomed by many agencies it did enable real coordination, with standards being set and maintained.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the approach was not only highly innovative but, particularly in the early emergency phase, successful as well.

A kind of mythology soon took shape. One observer noted that “The leadership and quality of the UNHCR team seemed to be an inspiration to the NGOs.”<sup>6</sup> Another remarked that “The limited number of agencies and personnel involved in the operation engendered an unusually collaborative approach between UNHCR and NGOs.”<sup>7</sup> But some aspects of UNHCR’s vetting process were less successful than others. The emphasis on getting NGOs that were in Ngara and had the necessary institutional capacity and experience to carry out assigned activities did not always work as planned. The NGO chosen to handle community services for Benaco, one of the world’s largest refugee camps, was the Disaster Relief Agency (DRA), whose initial team lacked broad emergency and community service experience. UNHCR also assigned TCRS the task of developing a centralized trucking fleet to accommodate the major transport responsibilities, despite its lack of experience in the sector.

Some NGO officials questioned whether the three selection criteria—presence, size, and experience—were the only factors in UNHCR’s choice of NGO implementing partners. One NGO official said, “UNHCR’s claim that only expert NGOs were engaged is not very correct. Many NGOs were new to the situation, many were handling their assigned task for the first time ever (at least on a very large scale like in Ngara), and a large number of staff engaged by the NGOs were very raw, without any previous [emergency] experience.”

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One of the world's largest and most experienced relief NGOs, World Vision, had arrived in Ngara early on but was not selected as an implementing partner. An NGO official present in Ngara at the time speculated that World Vision was "pushed out" by UNHCR because it had begun to work independently of UNHCR and other NGOs. World Vision staff "were handing out blankets [to incoming refugees] at the border. World Vision had Tanzanian experience, but this [action] was thought to be inappropriate. World Vision didn't get any contracts" with UNHCR in Ngara.<sup>8</sup> A UNHCR official emphasized that "The action taken by World Vision [to withdraw] was in fact the decision of one individual and not by World Vision as a policy—and was never viewed as such."

The rejection of "participation on demand" by NGOs required a resolute personality and Connelly, by all accounts, had one. She was a strong, capable, and effective leader, if occasionally controversial. Her emphasis on simplifying coordination arrangements by limiting the number of participants may have attracted criticism from some NGOs, but that did not seem to affect her policies. Beyond Connelly's forceful personality, the strategic coordination plan that she and her staff (especially Deputy Head Jacques Franquin, who had arrived with her during the Burundian emergency) established lasted long after she left. Important though her contribution was, UNHCR's success ultimately hinged not on personality but on the high degree of authority it exercised, reflecting both an unusual delegation from the Tanzanian government and a high degree of control over the allocation of funds, as will be explored in the next section.

## **Resource Mobilization**

### *Sierra Leone*

One of HACU's primary coordination responsibilities involved managing the Consolidated Appeals Process for UN agencies operating in Sierra Leone. The CAP provides a means for coordinating UN agency activities by bringing each agency's funding request into a single document, the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance. HACU

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officials, who believed that the CAP in Sierra Leone succeeded in its aim because it was developed in collaboration with donors, viewed HACU's credibility as a key factor in its success. "We know the donors, and we work with them," one HACU official explained. Referring to a 1998 consolidated appeal, the official said that "We told [the donors] what we could do [and] we've done it, so that's why we got the money." In consolidated appeals, HACU often received a higher percentage of requested funding from donors than many other UN agencies, sometimes far more. The official further contended that HACU's credibility allowed the CAP to be seen as "a major information base for the donors," who are able to trust HACU because "we do information dissemination and coordination strategy."

While enthusiastic about the CAP process, HACU officials acknowledged the uneven quality of the resulting appeals. "The CAP often describes a plan that can't be implemented and is based on conjecture," one official said. Two separate UN funding appeals for 1998 illuminate this problem. The first was a "flash appeal" for March 1 to May 31, 1998 that immediately followed the UN's return to Sierra Leone in early 1998. The second was a 10-month appeal that included the earlier three months but was extended through December 31, 1998. Assuming a defensive posture, the latter document highlighted how some of the three-month objectives had been achieved even if funds had been difficult to secure. "While the official response to the [Flash] Appeal may seem muted, many more of the objectives set for the initial three-month period have been satisfied than might first be assumed." This occurred in part because much of the donor funding for humanitarian assistance had "been provided outside the framework of the Consolidated Flash Appeal."<sup>9</sup> A number of donor officials had viewed the appeal as unrealistic and lacking credibility. Some chose to simply ignore it entirely and target their funding to specific UN agencies in which they had confidence.

Most UN agencies in Sierra Leone—Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP, World Health Organization (WHO), and OCHA/HACU itself—depend at least partially on the CAP process for funding.

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Initial sections of the two CAP documents examined the scope of humanitarian need and how UN agencies proposed to address the problem. The central sections of each document were the project summaries that each UN agency proposed to undertake. The amount of funding sought was US \$11,225,538 for the initial three months and US \$20,253,640 for the ten-month period.

The most glaring weakness was the impression that funding requests by different UN agencies, though presented in one document, were not well coordinated. In the flash appeal, UNDP gave priority to “national coordination,” arguing that “it is critical that the government is able to establish capacity on the ground.”<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, HACU sought a similar sum to support coordination activities such as information dissemination and the formulation of interagency strategies. Neither project summary indicated how these separate activities were related, which appeared to put the UN’s two primary coordination vehicles in competition with each other. Forced to choose which UN agency should carry out coordination activities, donors chose HACU. The regular appeal document stated that “UN-HACU received 91 percent of funds requested in the Flash Appeal” while “no funds were received by UNDP for National Coordination.”<sup>11</sup> In the end, the CAP had not proposed a method for coordinating two separate UN coordination vehicles but simply highlighted their differences.

The CAP process in Sierra Leone (and, for that matter, elsewhere) has had many detractors. Among the reasons why its credibility is so low, a HACU official admitted, was the flash appeal’s unrealistic projections of what UN agencies could accomplish in three months. NGO and government officials also pointed out that the CAP was not well coordinated with funding requests either from NGOs or from the Sierra Leonean government’s funding requests, even though all of them were tapping into the same donors. As one NGO official explained, the CAP was not truly consolidated because it addressed resource needs only for UN agencies in Sierra Leone, while excluding NGOs. In the eyes of one government official, the CAP heightened competition for donor funding and the existing inequality between UN agencies and the Sierra Leonean government. The UN received more donor

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support than the government because it had “the machinery to do [fundraising] better,” the official added.

Another recurrent criticism reflected the perception that UN agencies emphasized their individual objectives over the actual needs of beneficiaries. According to one donor official, this transformed the CAP into “a bloated laundry list. The UN gives unrealistic proposals to donors, so donors don’t fund them.” Another donor official complained that because “the needs were not presented by sectors but rather by UN agencies CAP documents became “non-operational” and thus “a problem for donors” who were seeking to support specific projects in particular sectors instead of an agency’s general financial needs. Some donor officials grew exasperated with the entire process. One argued that the CAP should be ignored outright because the documents are “basically preposterous. They’re totally ridiculous.”

This negative view was not shared by all donors. UN agencies in Sierra Leone do receive funding through the CAP process. OCHA is also working to reform the CAP, and some donor officials are urging their field representatives to become actively involved in working to improve it. “If we don’t get involved,” one senior donor official asked, “how will it get better?” To this, a field representative responded, “Our headquarters officials want us to support the UN CAPs, but I don’t know why we should. If we go on joint assessments [with UN agencies], it looks like we’re approving the CAP. But I’m not paid to do their work.” Other donor field staff disagreed. “I like it,” one official said, noting that in each CAP document, “all parts of UN needs are in one place.” For this official, CAP documents seemed like restaurant menus, allowing donors the opportunity to select which UN agencies they wanted to support.

But the CAP was not conceived as a menu pitting UN agencies against each other in competition for donor support. Its purpose was in fact the opposite: to present donors with a way to fund the UN in a more strategic and coordinated fashion. In Sierra Leone, HACU had the responsibility of putting the CAP together, but lacked the authority to ensure that individual UN agency funding requests were coordinated with each other and with other humanitarian actors,

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NGOs, and the government. As a result, the main utility of the CAP in Sierra Leone—creating a single document that informed donors of the UN system’s humanitarian objectives—exposed cracks in UN agency coordination. One observer noted that, as a result, the role that OCHA, including its country offices such as HACU, plays in the CAP process ultimately provides “no value added” to the goal of coordinating UN funding requests. “OCHA simply staples together” individual UN agency funding requests and hands out the result as a CAP document, he said.

### *Ngara*

Considering that more than half a million Rwandan refugees in Ngara needed humanitarian assistance, it is somewhat surprising that adequate funds were generally so easy to raise. A UNHCR official commented that from the outset of the emergency in April 1994, “we had plenty of money. It was coming out of our ears, and that solved a lot of problems.” The primary reasons for this, the official related, were the massive size of the emergency and the press attention it received.

As with other elements in Ngara, the Tanzanian government was a key facilitator of financial coordination. At the outset it allowed planes to arrive from the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam. “The Tanzanian Regional Commissioner [for the Kagera region] was terrific” in expanding access to this formerly remote Tanzanian district, said one UNHCR official. The planes were ostensibly for the press, but key officials from the European Union and the United States came, too. The donors came up to Ngara and were very pleased with the extent of the response to the emergency, a UNHCR official recalled. Ready access to key players in the emergency stoked the interest of Western donor governments that were already being pressed to respond to the public outcry.

A new centralized coordination system for funding soon emerged in Ngara, though its origins are somewhat unclear. By one account, UNHCR had been “waiting for a chance to implement a new emergency response system which had been designed following the conclusion of the Gulf War in 1992.”<sup>12</sup> But an ECHO official asserted instead that the new funding

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arrangement was simply an isolated reaction to the Rwandan refugee emergency. "After the massive influx of Rwandan refugees into Tanzania," the official explained, "we decided to put all financial support through UNHCR in support of coordination." Underscoring the exceptional nature of its policy towards UNHCR in Ngara, ECHO decided to support Burundian refugees in Ngara differently. Activities for Burundian refugees in the Lukole camp who had remained in Tanzania well into 1994 were funded more directly to NGOs.

ECHO's decision to fund UNHCR directly was unusual. One official called it "a one-time only situation, specific to the Great Lakes crisis," highlighting a hesitancy among many donors to fund UN agencies directly. Under normal circumstances, the ECHO official continued, "our preference is to fund European NGOs. You don't have to go through the United Nations to support refugees." Besides," he contended, "it's not good for UNHCR to be funded so much by one donor." The special funding arrangement in Ngara reflected the fact that "the coordination by UNHCR was so good." Coordination met ECHO's criteria: the mechanism was efficient, it supported coordination with all the agencies involved, and it allowed ECHO to have a voice on key political or coordination issues in the camps. By contrast, humanitarian operations for Rwandan refugees in Zaire involved competition for funds between NGOs and UNHCR, making it difficult for ECHO and other donors to develop a coordinated strategy.

While directly funding UNHCR-Ngara was unusual for ECHO, it was standard practice for the primary U.S. government donor agency for refugee crises, the State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration. Unlike ECHO, BPRM normally provides direct funding to UNHCR "by and large without earmarks," one BPRM official noted. "We don't fund projects; we fund UNHCR's general program." For BPRM, the Ngara case was notable only for the size of its contribution.

Although the common approach adopted by the two major humanitarian donors had a positive impact on coordination, the ceding of donor funding authority to UNHCR directly affected UNHCR-NGO relations. Whether the effects were positive or negative and whether gains in coordination outweighed other perceived drawbacks depended on several

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factors. Some NGO officials found that, as UNHCR's power expanded, their own leverage with UNHCR decreased. For some, that was fine because, as one explained, "UNHCR set it up so that the NGOs didn't have to make decisions. In return, they got money. So with many NGOs, Maureen [Connelly] and UNHCR were very popular." Many NGO officials described Connelly and her UNHCR colleagues as excellent listeners who responded to their concerns.

An early UNHCR document characterized UNHCR-NGO relations as "excellent" during the early stages of the emergency, an assessment confirmed by NGO participants. Later, however, some NGOs came to believe that UNHCR was favoring certain NGOs over others. This belief was tied to their suspicions of a direct correlation between the percentage of funding that UNHCR gave to an NGO for Ngara operations and that NGO's loyalty to UNHCR. An official from an NGO that received some of its funding from non-UNHCR sources said that his agency "could tell UNHCR 'no', but NGOs [receiving all their funding from UNHCR] couldn't do that, so they were easier [for UNHCR] to control." Another NGO official went further, saying "You can bet your last dollar that those NGOs that were 100 percent funded by UNHCR had to stay in line with Maureen and jumped when they were told to jump."

Perhaps it is not surprising that UNHCR's funding and influence were linked. What is more notable, however, is that a UN agency wielded such authority over humanitarian actors that were not part of the UN family. UNHCR's position undoubtedly helped establish and maintain an effective coordination structure. Yet its control over NGOs may have had a significant cost, contributing to the ineffective response of the wider humanitarian community to the government's *refoulement* of Rwandan refugees in late 1996. A more loosely structured coordination system might have encouraged creative problem-solving and afforded NGO views more weight. At any rate, the authority vested in UNHCR by the national government on the one hand and donors on the other left NGOs with limited leverage. For donors and most NGOs, reduced influence with UNHCR and the government was more than offset by the resources and sector responsibilities they were awarded.

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## Security Information Management

### *Sierra Leone*

The RUF's tactics of roaming the forests and thriving on surprise made it difficult to track and its attacks difficult to predict. The character and tactics of the RUF heightened the need to maintain reliable information on security for all humanitarian actors in Sierra Leone as the basis for common responses. Despite the fundamental need to update and share information continuously on security, however, what developed was not a consolidated approach to security management but rather two parallel information management systems that often presented conflicting evaluations of safety and danger.

The evolution of the two systems took place in two stages. During the junta period (May 1997 to February 1998) when UN agencies, the Sierra Leonean government, members of the international diplomatic community, and some NGOs shifted their base of operations to Conakry, the security information management system that emerged there interpreted the situation in Sierra Leone in ways that clashed with views held by the ICRC and NGOs that retained their central operational bases inside Sierra Leone. The second stage arose in March 1998 immediately after ECOMOG soldiers captured Freetown and drove the RUF and its coup partners back into the inland forests. The separate systems then split more closely along civilian and military lines. During both the junta and post-junta periods, the two groups managed and shared security information separately among their members. The core membership of one group included the SRSG, UNOMSIL, and ECOMOG; the other group was comprised of the ICRC and NGOs that remained inside Sierra Leone during the Junta period.

One NGO director in Freetown traced the origins of separate information management groups to the period before the May 25, 1997 military coup. For coordinating security matters in the field, the *UN Field Security Handbook* directs that "one senior [UN] official to be titled Designated Official... will undertake overall and special responsibility for the security

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and protection of the [UN] organizations' staff members and eligible family members and property. ... At most duty stations, the Designated Official will be the Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative of UNDP."<sup>13</sup> The designated officer usually has a UN security officer on staff, as was the case for Sierra Leone. Although the official is technically responsible only for UN staff, it was also the case that, as one NGO official pointed out, "the model in many emergencies is that the UN provides a security system to collect, synthesize, and redistribute security information" to NGOs as well. In some emergencies, this assistance might include "a shared radio channel [for UN and non-UN humanitarian personnel, as was the case in Ngora] and a coordinated evacuation plan and recommended precautions" for those delivering humanitarian assistance. Yet, he said, "None of this happened in Sierra Leone. We approached the UN security officer about briefing NGOs on security," only to have this blocked by the UNDP humanitarian coordinator/designated official. Thus did the enmity between UNDP and international NGOs extend into the management of security information.

During the junta period, a number of aid officials present in Conakry reported that good security information about Sierra Leone was hard to come by and even more difficult to share. "The problem was that [security briefings] took place in a public forum," one NGO official based in Conakry recalled, "so people didn't say much." A UN official also present in Conakry explained that the UN security officer and others "were briefing people at 7 p.m. every night." But since the meetings were large and may have included reporters or even informers for the junta, "you couldn't pass on [sensitive] information, and sometimes there was nothing to report." Often security briefings were based on nothing more than radio broadcasts. As a result, an NGO official described how his colleagues, together with "UN allies," regularly gathered informally to exchange information considered too sensitive for public meetings. This included security information coming directly from Sierra Leonean staff members still inside Freetown and regional capitals, and from members of regional sector committees, in particular those connected to the CFA, which remained in operation during the junta period and

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relayed security updates by telephone and radio to officials in Conakry.

An important first-hand source of security information was generally dismissed in Conakry: NGOs and the ICRC that continued working inside Sierra Leone during the junta period, security constraints notwithstanding. “We were never as able to move about as freely [in Sierra Leone] as during the coup period,” stated one of those present. Particularly in the early months of the junta period, NGO and ICRC officials would regularly drive from Sierra Leone across the border to Guinea to buy supplies and consult with aid officials based in Conakry. They found that “while we were all saying that the situation [in Sierra Leone] was not as bad as it was perceived in Conakry,” their perspective was not believed by most UN officials, ECOMOG and ECOWAS personnel, and members of the diplomatic community. “Information management in Conakry was terrible,” concluded one aid official who regularly visited the Guinean capital from Sierra Leone. “There were incredible discrepancies. People [based there] bought the information that served their interests.” As a result, the UN resisted assessments by NGO and ICRC staff working in Sierra Leone of the security situation inside Sierra Leone.

While the parallel information systems produced different assessments of risk and resulted in different levels of humanitarian engagement and programming, both systems were, in different contexts, accurate. With the RUF out of the forests and in control of the capital, the threat of attacks on aid providers in rural areas was dramatically reduced. Those areas, ICRC and some NGOs maintained, were reasonably safe. Freetown, however, was entirely different, and ICRC and NGOs based inside Sierra Leone were regularly harassed there. Journalists in Freetown reported how the RUF and the AFRC were committing atrocities there. The media reported the atrocities and the news circulated throughout the aid community in Conakry. Secure rural areas might have been defined and demarcated for aid operations, but this did not occur. “[UN Secretary-General ] Kofi Annan told the UN to isolate the junta,” a UN official who was in Conakry at that time recalled, “and refuse to recognize it. The UN had taken a position of strong support for [ousted President] Kabbah.” As

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a result, each group emphasized the security information that supported its views: Conakry-based agencies focused on dangers in Freetown while Sierra Leone-based agencies emphasized safety and access in the rural areas.

The lack of collaboration on security information continued following the February 1998 return of President Kabbah to Freetown and the RUF to the forests, and in fact worsened over time. But membership in the two security information groups changed slightly. One group was comprised of most international humanitarian actors: NGOs, the ICRC, and all UN agencies except UNOMSIL. It resumed the coordination arrangements for sharing security information that had existed in Freetown prior to the coup. The other group was composed of the primary military and political actors in Freetown: ECOMOG, which had essentially assumed the role of the Kabbah government's defense force, UNOMSIL's military and human rights observers, and the Sierra Leonean government.

In the fall of 1998, the government, UNOMSIL and ECOMOG officials believed that the RUF was no longer attacking but had instead assumed a defensive posture. "I don't think the war is escalating," a high-ranking Sierra Leonean government official said at that time. Others in the humanitarian community questioned this view. "UNOMSIL doesn't want to give out bad news," a donor official in Freetown explained, preferring to paint a rosy picture of the war situation. Another aid official contended that "UNOMSIL [is] behaving like there's an almost complete return to normalcy." A third aid official explained that the official way to get information on the security situation "was to go and ask ECOMOG officers, who say 'the situation is rosy.'" The only reason they would say that, however, was "because security is their responsibility." Subsequent events proved the rosy perspective incorrect. Late in 1998, the RUF was actually gaining strength and would enter Freetown in January 1999. The security concerns voiced by the ICRC/NGO/UN agency group in 1998 had been accurate.

The dramatic difference in security interpretations reflected in part the presence of two security systems existing within the UN structure. One was headed by the UN security

**Figure 3: Parallel Security Systems for Sierra Leone During the Junta Period (May 1997-February 1998)**

	<b>Agencies Based in Conakry, Guinea</b>	<b>Agencies Based inside Sierra Leone</b>
<b>Membership</b>	UN agencies, ECOMOG, ECOWAS, some international NGOs	ICRC, some international NGOs
<b>Security Perspective</b>	Urban focus: emphasized serious dangers in Sierra Leone, particularly in Freetown, where junta leaders resided	Rural focus: assessed country risk as serious, but described access to beneficiaries in rural areas as very good
<b>Mode of Communication</b>	Formal daily briefings, allowing broad access to briefings	Shared information informally among themselves and splinter group members
<b>Other</b>	Splinter group of NGO and UN officials developed discreet meetings to exchange sensitive information	

officer, who reported to the humanitarian coordinator at UNDP; the other was headed by UNOMSIL military observers. In the fall of 1998, the former system appeared to have credibility with a large proportion of the humanitarian community in Freetown. Information was collected from a wide variety of sources, analyzed, and shared not only with UN personnel but with NGOs and the ICRC as well. The UN security officer gave briefings at weekly NGO meetings on security concerns and NGO officials also shared relevant security information from their own observations. The security officer also met weekly with the UN's security management team (SMT) to give a more specialized briefing to UN agency heads. SMT members were then supposed to relay important information to their

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staffs. The UN security network included a team of national and international wardens responsible for passing along security information to UN staff quickly.

Although UNOMSIL was represented at the SMT meetings, a UN official explained that “UNOMSIL has its own information gathering system that is separate” from the UNDP/UN security officer’s system described above. Some UN officials reported that UNOMSIL was not allowed to exchange most of the security information it collected with non-UNOMSIL officials. As a result, there was “no formal system for information management or information sharing” between the two UN security systems. Informal information exchange between UNOMSIL officers and NGO and ICRC officials rarely took place.

A high-level UNOMSIL officer portrayed differences between UNOMSIL and the UN security officer as a function of the ways that military and civilian systems operated. UNOMSIL, the official explained, is a military unit (though it also hosted human rights monitors from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights), and for military units there are three types of security information. The first type, dubbed “absolutely correct,” is information that a UNOMSIL officer can verify first-hand. The second-best type of information is “information received from somebody credible” from the civilian side of a humanitarian operation such as an official from another UN agency or NGO. This kind of “credible source” provides information that “may or may not be true.” The final and least reliable kind of security information is “rumors.”

The UNOMSIL officer’s description effectively downgraded the credibility of the civilian security structure, led by the UN security officer (himself a former soldier) but including every UN agency outside of UNOMSIL, all international NGOs, and the ICRC. Although many of these civilians had a far greater experience in Sierra Leone than their UNOMSIL counterparts, UNOMSIL nonetheless considered their information largely unreliable. UNOMSIL thus positioned itself dubiously as a separate entity with superior information. The separate security coordination arrangements for this second set of parallel systems are described, in simplified form, in Figure 4 (page 75).

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The changing alignments in the two sets of parallel structures produced an ironic shift in how Sierra Leone's security situation was perceived. During the junta period, many UN and other officials in Conakry maintained that Sierra Leone was exceedingly insecure while NGOs and the ICRC active inside Sierra Leone were reporting unprecedented successes in delivering assistance to IDPs. After the entire humanitarian community returned to Freetown, however, perceptions reversed. Officials from UNOMSIL, ECOMOG and the government, among others, described a steadily improving situation while NGOs and ICRC officials noted an increasingly insecure situation across the country.

The UN security officer's situation vis-à-vis the humanitarian community was in many respects similar to HACU's. Based in Conakry during the junta period, his credibility with many NGO and ICRC officials suffered, just as HACU's apparently reluctant membership on the Humanitarian Exemptions Committee in Conakry damaged its reputation among aid agencies outside the UN. But back in Freetown after ECOMOG had chased RUF and AFRC forces away early in 1998, the security officer, Grahame Membry, and HACU officials, led by their chief, Robert Painter, worked hard to repair their damaged relationships with NGOs and the ICRC. Among Membry's tasks was to bridge the traditional separation between UN and NGO agencies on security concerns. A senior UN security official summed up the difference by explaining that the UN "has a structure and discipline" whereas NGOs "don't want to work as one corporate body." Despite this, and due to a collective concern about security issues, UN and non-UN agencies regularly exchanged relevant information.

The exception was UNOMSIL. While the aid community generally shied away from battlefield-oriented activities, UNOMSIL coordinated its military observer work with ECOMOG troops who were battling the RUF on behalf of the Sierra Leonean government. Committed to the government's objectives, UNOMSIL's perspective of the security situation was influenced accordingly. Its mid-1998 entrance in Sierra Leone and its separation from aid organizations exacerbated the existing divide between agencies that strongly supported the government side and others struggling to be seen as impartial.

It was ironic that UNOMSIL, a UN institution created to facilitate the return of peace in Sierra Leone, was viewed as a threat to security by so many humanitarian officials in Freetown. An ICRC official expressed a widely held concern about the “clear discrepancy” between the roles of these dual UN systems. He argued that “UNOMSIL has undermined the UN security officer’s role. The UNOMSIL military observers act as if it’s secure to move around. On the other side, the UN security officer is saying that it’s dangerous to move around.” The ICRC official was also concerned that UNOMSIL’s mobility in conflict zones would eventually jeopardize the movements of all humanitarian agencies.

ICRC and others sharing this view, however, did not offer an alternative that would have enabled UNOMSIL to carry out its important work without ECOMOG’s assistance. That said, the lack of coordination between UNOMSIL and the UN

**Figure 4: Parallel Security Systems in Sierra Leone Following the Junta Period (February 1998-January 1999)**

	<b>"Military" Actors</b>	<b>"Civilian" Actors</b>
<b>Membership</b>	UNOMSIL (military observers and human rights monitors from UNHCHR)	All UN bodies except UNOMSIL, international NGOs, and the ICRC
<b>Security Perspective</b>	Viewed general security situation as improving, even "rosy"	Viewed general security situation as high risk and dangerous
<b>Mode of Communication</b>	Internal security briefings, collaboration with ECOMOG and the Sierra Leone government; limited coordination with other UN bodies, international NGOs and the ICRC; attended UN Security Management Team briefings	Led by UN security officer who regularly briefed UN Security Management Team and exchanged security information with international NGOs at the weekly NGO meetings

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security officer (and, by extension, all other UN agencies) effectively threatened the entire humanitarian operation. UNOMSIL's stance on this issue seemed unnecessary and even reckless, given the potentially dangerous consequences that its work posed for all humanitarian personnel in Sierra Leone. As one UN official warned, "The humanitarian community can't survive here if we don't work well together" on shared security concerns. The connection between coordination and effective security information could not have been more clear.

### *Ngara*

UNHCR and NGO officials present during early days of the emergency in 1994 did not devise a scheme for sharing information on security in Ngara. The camps seemed safe and reasonably secure for aid officials and, to a large extent, for refugees as well. With the humanitarian operation straining to address the needs of hundreds of thousands of people, security was not an overriding priority. Massive logistical problems involved in providing water, food, and shelter to refugees received top billing. However, as one UNHCR official in Ngara recalled, with the wisdom of hindsight, "We were naive."

UNHCR rather than the Tanzanian authorities was responsible for refugee camp security. A UNHCR official recalled how "the Tanzanians realized that they lacked the competence to deal" with security for such an enormous population of refugees and trusted UNHCR staff to handle security concerns. Information-sharing between UNHCR and the government on security issues, however, took place not in Ngara but in Tanzania's distant capital, Dar es Salaam. There, the UNHCR official explained, his colleagues were able to inform the Tanzanian authorities of the situation in the camps "and give them the illusion that they'd participate in the operation."

The fact that UN work in Ngara was "never obstructed by the government was very unusual," a researcher on the Great Lakes emergency observed. But an NGO official in Ngara recalled that the authorities "had no staff to handle the emergency." As a result, "the Tanzanian government said, 'We'll watch the borders, but, UNHCR, you handle the refugees.'"

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Reflecting on the government's decision to relinquish its security role for refugees in its country, the official concluded that "it was almost as if the Tanzanians gave up their sovereignty over that area of Tanzania."<sup>14</sup> Its approach was consistent with the authority it ceded UNHCR over the management of the camps.

Because UNHCR at the time had yet to "realize the negative influence of the refugee leaders," as one UNHCR official recalled, it initially hired Rwandan refugees as camp security guards. (It was reluctant to hire Tanzanian policemen to carry out this assignment for fear that they might abuse their power and assault refugee women.) As it turned out, the guards helped the commune leaders, many of whom were likely to have been involved in the genocide, to assert firm control over the camps. "It took us three months to realize what kind of people we were dealing with," a UNHCR official recalled. "We were so focused on humanitarian concerns that we forgot about the genocide during the first three months. This was a big mistake."

The mistake eventually led to a significant security incident in Benaco camp, which began with the arrest of 14 Rwandan refugees by Tanzanian policemen. They had acted on information from refugees that these 14 had organized genocidal killings in Rwanda. The policemen then asked UNHCR what they should do with the suspects. Although UNHCR officials said that they had decided to relocate the individuals to a refugee settlement in another part of the country, the Tanzanians considered the relocation process too slow. Without notifying UNHCR in advance, they released the suspects from the Ngara jail and allowed them to return to the camps.

Among the group was the notorious Kibungo *Bourgmestre*, Rémy Gatete, who had become "famous for [his] enthusiasm for the killing business" during the genocide<sup>15</sup> and whom UNHCR soon realized was indeed very dangerous. On July 15, 1994, a UNHCR protection officer asked Gatete to report to UNHCR's field tent in Benaco camp. Gatete arrived later that day with 5,000 refugees brandishing sticks and machetes. "Up to this point," a UNHCR officer present that day said, "the relations between the Rwandans and UNHCR were very good, because [the refugees realized that] we were trying to save their lives."

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But Gatete would change this. The confrontation was broadcast over a VHF radio network established the week before, allowing aid workers the opportunity to listen to the deliberations between Gatete and UNHCR officials. In the end, the Tanzanian police dispersed the crowd by firing shots in the air. Ten days later, Tanzanian authorities transported Gatete away from the refugee camps a second time. He did not return. When Gatete arrived in Dar es Salaam, one aid official related that “he was met by the French ambassador, who flew him to France to be with [former Rwandan President] Habyarimana’s wife,” who was also thought to have been involved in genocidal activities. The official also related a rumor that Gatete later left to join Hutu extremists in a Rwandan refugee camp in Congo-Brazzaville.

The Gatete incident transformed the aid community’s perceptions. People in the camps were no longer simply refugees in need of assistance; they were a potentially dangerous population led by criminals capable of extreme violence. This shift was accentuated by Western press coverage of the incident, which contributed to a new emphasis on protecting expatriates from refugees regardless of expense. Donors supported this change and “simply announced that funding for security was no problem.”<sup>16</sup> In a costly move, all NGO operations were shifted away from the camps and resettled on a hill 15 kilometers away. Surrounded by thinly populated hills, the new barricaded home for expatriate staff was called “K-9”.

If the release of the 14 suspected criminals had undermined UNHCR’s credibility with NGOs, its handling of Gatete went a long way to restoring it. Following his removal from the region, UNHCR and NGO officials working in Ngara filed a joint letter with the district commissioner requesting that the Tanzanian authorities provide security in the camps. This eventually led to the appointment of a former Tanzanian police chief as the head of UNHCR’s security office. UNHCR also hired Tanzanian policemen from districts across the country and developed a system in which Tanzanian police became wardens of Rwandan refugee guards. An NGO official commented that since UNHCR “had no enforcement capability of its own” and had offered much higher salaries than the policemen normally received, “they gutted the police staffs in other

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parts of the country.” UNHCR also requested that the Tanzanian army not be allowed inside the refugee camps but instead should patrol surrounding areas, although at times the troops entered the camps.<sup>17</sup>

UNHCR also developed staff security systems for NGOs and formed a security committee for UN and NGO personnel. Its formation was another unusual aspect of the coordination system in Ngara. The committee shared information on security concerns for aid staff members and developed an evacuation plan. UNHCR officials emphasized that “this was a joint agency system” involving UN agencies and NGOs working in a consolidated security information system. Hence the divisiveness on matters of security coverage between UN and other aid personnel that characterized the situation in Sierra Leone and elsewhere did not arise.

Indeed, in accordance with UN regulations the UNDP resident representative in Dar es Salaam had appointed UNHCR as the local security head for Ngara District but cautioned that the UN should provide security, including information and evacuation, only to UN personnel. UNHCR in Ngara rejected this policy. UNHCR officials apparently informed UNDP that they would be sharing all security arrangements with their partner NGOs. Perhaps the most significant indicator of this joint UN-NGO security arrangement was the use of a shared radio frequency for all humanitarian personnel. This was a critically important security measure because it provided all personnel with equal access to information. Security regulations also required all agency staff to carry a battery-charged hand radio with them in the camps.

Other security measures were designed only for expatriates. Out of concern that some of the Rwandan refugee workers were relaying sensitive information to *genocidaires* in the refugee camps, the security committee held weekly meetings that required every UN and NGO agency head to attend. Each agency head then shared security information with their expatriate staff in private conversation. Nothing was to be written down, a precaution invoked to prevent Rwandan personnel from intercepting the information.

Many of the innovations described in this chapter appear to be replicable. Some, such as the CFA, have already been

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adapted to other sectors in Sierra Leone and to the humanitarian food sector in Liberia. For security arrangements, both the Sierra Leone and Ngara cases illuminate how NGOs and UN actors can coordinate on shared security concerns even when UN regulations restrict such interactions.

Other innovations may be somewhat more difficult to replicate, given the particularities of these two settings. In Sierra Leone, the CAP illuminated how a coordination innovation can threaten coordination. The two CAPs considered here lacked cohesion because they neither explained program relationships across UN agencies nor clarified how UN agency funding coordinated with non-UN agencies. In Ngara, UNHCR depended on the support of others to initiate many of its coordination ideas. Whether other host governments will grant UNHCR the power to restrict the number of NGO participants, as the Tanzanian government did, also remains uncertain. Finally, applying the centralized funding mechanism initiated in Ngara to other refugee settings may be constrained by ECHO's stated reluctance to do so.

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## CHAPTER 5

### COORDINATION WITHIN PROGRAMS

This chapter examines two emergency assistance programs: one from Ngara, the other from Sierra Leone. Both programs were developed in direct response to specific challenges and both adjusted coordination arrangements to meet rapidly changing circumstances. The challenges themselves, however, were quite different, as are the lessons that can be drawn from the experiences. The first case involves the repatriation of refugees to Rwanda from Ngara District, Tanzania, in the last weeks of 1996. The second concerns emergency education programs for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea. Since the repatriation effort proved the more complex and controversial, it is accorded more space and described first.

The Ngara and Sierra Leone experiences are joined by an interesting paradox. Repatriation is a central concern in virtually every major refugee emergency. Once it is considered safe to go home, aid agencies and governments assist refugees to return. Yet many agencies hesitate to support educational services during humanitarian emergencies, fearing that setting up schools in refugee or IDP camps will make the camps seem more permanent and eventual repatriation more difficult. The two cases paired here offer the antithesis of standard views: a repatriation program from Tanzania to Rwanda that was unusually controversial and an emergency education program for Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in Guinea that was popular and well supported.

The pairing of these two cases challenges conventional wisdom in yet another way. Although repatriation during emergencies is supposed to be voluntary, the refugees in Ngara were rarely consulted and their leaders eventually sought to block the repatriation effort. Orchestrating the repatriation of Rwandan refugees took place without refugee—or, in the end, UN—input. In contrast, the emergency education program in Guinea arose in response to refugees who had started schools on their own. Together with their Liberian counterparts, Sierra Leonean refugees served as central fig-

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ures in the development of a well-coordinated education program.

## **Coordinating Repatriation: The Ngara Case**

### *Changing Circumstances*

Although humanitarian work these days is rarely easy or predictable, the Rwandan return from Tanzania in December 1996 stands out as one of the most controversial and challenging coordination efforts in decades. Repatriation involved a massive population ostensibly under the control of leaders who did not want to return home. And, because of their participation in war crimes and crimes against humanity, they may not have even qualified as refugees.<sup>1</sup> In addition, three factors preceding the Rwandan emergency's sudden dénouement in Tanzania made this coordination challenge particularly difficult.

First, ever since the Rwandan refugees entered Tanzania in April 1994, UNHCR-promoted repatriation strategies failed to spur significant movement. One initiative involved sponsored visits by refugee delegations to Rwanda in the vain hope that these delegations would persuade large numbers of Rwandan refugees to return home. A second initiative featured visits to the camps by high-level Rwandan and Tanzanian authorities, which also yielded disappointing results. A third used videos with statements by various leaders encouraging refugees to return and depictions of peaceful conditions inside Rwanda. Even a cameo appearance by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's in a video failed.<sup>2</sup>

Refugees responded to such initiatives by questioning their credibility, particularly in view of the tens of thousands of Rwandans who had been imprisoned without charges or trials for suspected participation in the 1994 genocide.<sup>3</sup> They were also under pressure from their leaders not to repatriate. In the end, the UNHCR-led repatriation campaign never gathered steam. During the first 11 months of 1996, only 4,200 of the estimated 534,000 Rwandan refugees in Ngara District—less than 1 percent—returned to Rwanda.<sup>4</sup> An NGO official commented that the repatriation could not even keep up with the population growth rates in the camps.

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Second, public announcements by European Union, United States, and Tanzanian officials during 1996 eroded UNHCR's command over the camps and made a final, aggressive repatriation effort seem almost inevitable. In January, Tanzanian Defense Minister Edgar Majogo announced that the refugee presence in Tanzania "must be temporary [and] cannot be a continued stay."<sup>5</sup> In April, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood and European Union (EU) Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Emma Bonino publicly suggested in Ngara that the UN Security Council consider setting "a date for closing the camps." Over time, the two donors had grown concerned over UNHCR camp management. An ECHO official feared that "we were sedentarizing the refugees into Tanzania," making them more difficult to repatriate. ECHO's chief, Emma Bonino, suggested that "Keeping the current level of humanitarian aid is unsustainable in the absence of concrete prospects for a solution to the refugee crisis."<sup>6</sup> U.S. officials were equally agitated, claiming, said a UNHCR official, that "UNHCR didn't want the refugees to go home because they'd lose their jobs." As a result, "Congress said, 'we're not going to fund this any longer.'" All signs suggested that the refugees would head home soon. The only remaining questions, it seemed, were how and when.<sup>7</sup>

Third, the startling voluntary return of 600,000 Rwandan refugees from Zaire in November 1996 immediately reverberated across Ngara. In the wake of civil war between Zairian insurgents (led by Laurent Kabila and supported by the Rwandan army) and Zaire's national army (supported by former Rwandan government soldiers and *Interahamwe* militiamen), many Rwandan refugees there returned home. This undermined somewhat the widely held assumption that Rwandan refugees comprised a "willing and loyal community" that chose to support their camp leaders. It also provided the Tanzanian and Rwandan authorities with the precedent they sought.<sup>8</sup>

The two governments reacted swiftly. Days after Rwandan refugees began to repatriate from Zaire, Tanzania's President Benjamin Mkapa met with Patrick Mazimhaka, Rwanda's Rehabilitation Minister, in Dar es Salaam. President Mkapa pledged to "facilitate the voluntary repatriation of all Rwandan

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refugees camped in Tanzania” and asked for international help in the effort.<sup>9</sup> Minister Mazimhaka declared that Rwanda “was ready to receive all refugees from Tanzania.”<sup>10</sup> UNHCR then dispatched a special envoy to Tanzania, Sergio Vieira de Mello, to help coordinate a new repatriation initiative. On December 5 the Tanzanian government and UNHCR announced a plan. “We are putting out the message that it is time to go back” by the end of the month, UNHCR’s deputy director for Tanzania, Lennart Kotsalainen, said following the Dar es Salaam consultations. “Hopefully by the end of this evening they will get the message.” Kotsalainen outlined the plan of action: “The police would protect the refugees, supported by Tanzanian troops if necessary... [while] the United Nations would provide transport across the border.” The transfer would be coordinated with the Rwandan authorities, who “had given assurances that they would receive all refugees from Tanzania.”<sup>11</sup>

The tripartite repatriation plan was unusual. Although the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol are designed to ensure that refugees decide when to return to their homes, this repatriation was not going to be voluntary. The joint statement declared that the government of Tanzania—not the refugees—had “decided that all Rwandese refugees can now return to their country in safety.”<sup>12</sup> As UNHCR spokesman Peter Kessler commented, “UNHCR is alerting the refugees in Tanzania that this is the time to begin their return.”<sup>13</sup> Human rights groups criticized the plan. Amnesty International attacked UNHCR for “effectively rubber-stamping” a decision which “contravenes its own basic principles of protection of refugees.”<sup>14</sup> UNHCR did not immediately respond to this critique. However, a series of unexpected events were about to unfold that would significantly change UNHCR’s role in the repatriation effort.

### *The Tanzanians Take Charge*

It took only a week for the repatriation plan to be undermined. On December 12 refugees abandoned their camps and headed not toward Rwanda but into the Tanzanian interior. Directed by their leaders, the flight of refugees away from the

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border, said a UNHCR official, was not “one of the scenarios that was in our plan.”<sup>15</sup> Yet the plan’s organizers quickly responded to this dramatic shift. The next day, Radio Rwanda reported that Dr. Ephriam Kabayija, chairman of the national commission in charge of refugee repatriation, had led a second Rwandan government delegation into Tanzania. He met with Tanzanian and UNHCR officials in Karagwe, just north of Ngara. According to one of the Rwandan delegates, the meeting “confirmed the total repatriation” of Rwandan refugees and reviewed how “Tanzania and the UNHCR [would] conduct the repatriation, while Rwanda and the UNHCR [would] deal with the reception of the Rwandan refugees.”<sup>16</sup> However, although aid agencies on the Rwandan side of the border prepared to receive the immense refugee influx<sup>17</sup> and Rwandan authorities seized 70 suspected Hutu *genocidaires* near Ngara,<sup>18</sup> the Tanzanian army took charge. From this moment on, UNHCR’s role was minimal.

Troops set roadblocks and sealed off access to the former camps. Helicopters redirected refugees toward the Rwandan army at the border. They had no choice but to return to their country. The rate of return soon reached 10,000 an hour, matching the rate of their entry into Tanzania 31 months earlier.<sup>19</sup> The Tanzanians carried out this military maneuver in the presence of few outside observers, because Tanzanian and Rwandan authorities had limited the access of aid agency officials and journalists on both sides of the border.<sup>20</sup> In response, UN officials focused not on the limited access issue (one merely commented that it was the “official policy” of the Tanzanian government)<sup>21</sup> but on how Rwandan refugee leaders had “fooled us incredibly” by herding terrified Rwandan refugees away from Rwanda.<sup>22</sup>

Members of the international community described the unfolding events in two different ways. Amid reports that Tanzanian authorities were employing tear-gas and batons to repatriate Rwandans, a reporter noted how UNHCR officials “appeared content to watch events take their course.”<sup>23</sup> “[Tanzanian] helicopters are circling around,” an UNHCR official reported, “but just look at how the movement is going.”<sup>24</sup> “Many people are walking in the right direction,” another UNHCR official observed.<sup>25</sup> A WFP document described

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Tanzanian authorities as merely “assisting with the return of Rwandan refugees.”<sup>26</sup> As the refugees crossed into Rwanda, President Pasteur Bizimungu greeted them: “Welcome, Rwanda is your home, help bring peace to rebuild Rwanda.”<sup>27</sup>

Many journalists and human rights organizations, however, were highly critical toward the activity. “At the border,” British journalist Louise Tunbridge reported, “Tanzanian and Rwandan officials kept similarly tight control,” adding that their message “was that nothing and nobody would be allowed to stop the dismantling of the camps.”<sup>28</sup> Another reporter wrote that two Roman Catholic priests from Europe were expelled from Tanzania “for allegedly opposing the forced repatriation of some 600,000 Rwandan refugees.”<sup>29</sup> A third observed that “the UN High Commission for Refugees and aid agencies were muted in their criticism of an operation few could define as voluntary.”<sup>30</sup> U.S. journalist Jennifer Ludden observed that “The forced return violates the international principle of voluntary repatriation. Yet even the United Nations refugee agency has approved Tanzania’s effort.”<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch described the event as a forced repatriation “that UNHCR and the international community have watched with little protest.”<sup>32</sup>

Human Rights Watch later reflected that the *refoulement* was “watched with virtually no protest by the international community.”<sup>33</sup> It also faulted the international community as having been “unwilling,” and the Tanzanian government as “unable,” to “screen out combatants or those suspected of genocide” from the larger refugee population since their arrival in Tanzania in 1994.<sup>34</sup> Yet during those years, Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups had treated Ngara as a refugee backwater, focusing instead on Rwanda and Rwandan refugees in Zaire. Its criticism of UNHCR and the Tanzanian government, though relevant, was very late in coming.

UNHCR downplayed its handling of refugee rights by emphasizing that the power of the Rwandan refugee leaders was so great, as one official commented, that “voluntary repatriation was never a possibility.” Agency officials described the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments in largely uncritical terms. One official explained that UNHCR had

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joined the initial repatriation plan “so that it could better protect and assist the refugees” that the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments had already decided to return home. Another emphasized how “the return followed bilateral contacts between Rwanda and Tanzania.”<sup>35</sup> A third blamed camp leaders for leaving “the Tanzanian government with little option but to contain this mass internal movement and redirect it towards the Rwandan border.” Emphasizing UNHCR’s reactive role, these officials also pointed out the decline in UNHCR’s influence on Rwandan refugee issues in Tanzania since the emergency in the spring of 1994. They also did not mention the donor governments who had sought to close the refugee camps.

### *Shifting Coordination Roles*

If, as one observer mentioned, “coordination rests where the power is, “ then the forced repatriation effort from Tanzania in late 1996 demonstrates how sudden, dynamic changes in power relations severely challenge coordinated responses. Over the course of a few weeks, UNHCR’s role as the primary coordinator for Rwandan refugee activities, carried out effectively over a period of 31 months with authority delegated by the Tanzanian government, was rescinded. The Tanzanian government, whose role at the outset of the emergency was limited to facilitating the UNHCR-led humanitarian response, took firm command of repatriation in December 1996, leaving UNHCR struggling to find its role.

Piecing together a comprehensive picture of coordination responsibilities for the repatriation effort is difficult. There are different recollections among officials in Ngara of what actually took place, and secrecy surrounds some of the activities. Within these constraints, the roles of five groups in the evolving coordination scheme—refugee leaders, the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments, UNHCR, and NGOs—will be analyzed in three separate stages.

*UNHCR and Rwandan Refugee Leaders.* In Ngara, Rwandan refugee leaders both helped and disrupted humanitarian efforts. The centralized coordination scheme relied on their ability to help distribute goods and resolve internal commu-

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nity problems. UNHCR officials defended their working with the leaders by arguing that they had no choice. However, the leaders' involvement with the humanitarian community (even if many aid officials found it distasteful) enhanced their legitimacy with other refugees, making voluntary repatriation even more difficult. UNHCR's emphasis on confidence-building measures to convince the refugees to return home<sup>36</sup> never persuaded the leaders, who worked actively for the opposite objective.

The leaders' power and influence on repatriation matters contrasted with UNHCR's eroding credibility with refugees. One analyst characterized UNHCR's attitude towards repatriation as ambivalent during the early months of the emergency. The agency relayed a succession of contradictory messages to the refugees: "safe, go now (mid-August, 1994); unsafe, do not go (mid-September 1994); safe again, go now (mid-December 1994)."<sup>37</sup> One NGO did not blame the refugees' growing skepticism about UNHCR since "the refugees have been lied to by UNHCR since day one" of their sojourn in Tanzania. Searching for answers, UNHCR occasionally sought assistance from NGOs to spur voluntary repatriation, in one instance asking NGOs to persuade particularly vulnerable refugees (e.g., widows and elders) to repatriate.<sup>38</sup> When NGOs asked a UNHCR official why UNHCR couldn't approach vulnerable refugees directly, one NGO recalled, the UNHCR official responded, "because the refugees don't trust us."

But the reality was more complicated. As another UNHCR official noted, the aid community in Ngara had collectively nudged refugees closer to their leaders by emphasizing the genocidal crimes that some had carried out while "pass[ing] no views on" the deaths of many refugee family members during the civil war that preceded the genocide. This, the official concluded, had effectively "reinforc[ed] the social cohesion and the role of the [refugee] leaders."<sup>39</sup> Overlooking civil war casualties may have seemed appropriate, given the immensity of the genocide, but in the eyes of refugees it also made the international community defenders of the Rwandan regime and opponents of the refugees.

In December 1996, with its powers of persuasion in decline and repatriation inevitable, UNHCR sought, in the words of

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one official, finally to “break the grip of the refugee leaders.” While building a transit facility for leaders who would be arrested by Tanzanian authorities, agency officials spoke directly with refugees, including their leaders, to “explain the situation” about the refugees’ impending return. Officials also hoped to facilitate the initial repatriation of approximately 15,000 Muslim refugees who had already indicated their desire to return to Rwanda.<sup>40</sup> But when the Rwandan refugee leaders unexpectedly drove the refugees away from the border, Tanzania took control of the coordination effort and sidelined UNHCR. A UNHCR official later reflected that “Our mistake was to make [UNHCR] too transparent and let the refugee leaders know what we had in mind.” It also appears that UNHCR did not anticipate that the Tanzanian government would reclaim its authority so completely.

*The Tanzanian and Rwandan Governments.* Following the November 1996 agreement in Dar es Salaam giving Rwandans until year’s end to repatriate, a meeting between the parties (Tanzania, Rwanda and UNHCR) in Ngara on December 12 transformed the arrangement from a collaborative effort into a military operation. A UNHCR official who was present recalled that the meeting focused on the details of the refugees’ return. Before lunch, the head of the Rwandan delegation, Dr. Kabayija, was persuaded to speak to refugees in the camps. The UNHCR official reported that Tanzanian and Rwandan officials drove “in a motorcade through the camps but never stopped anywhere. Maybe they were too afraid to talk.” After returning to UNHCR offices for lunch, the motorcade drove past the Rwandan camps again on its way to Rwanda. A half hour later, according to the UNHCR official, refugee leaders carried out what was clearly a well-coordinated plan of their own to create “absolute chaos.”

Leaders in the three main camps near Ngara “told refugees to go... in all directions.” This was their last stand, the official explained, an act of desperation reflecting the realization that they were losing their grip on the refugees. By forcing them to attempt a desperate escape, they hoped to create an outcry in the West that would lead people to come to their rescue.

At this point, in the mid-afternoon of December 12, the

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framework for coordination between the two governments and UNHCR ended. The response orchestrated by the refugee leaders ruptured the tripartite plans. Returning from Rwanda and with assistance from Rwandan officials, Tanzanian authorities immediately undertook a military response to the refugees' actions. In the process, Tanzanian officers turned on UNHCR, resurrecting a theme earlier voiced by U.S. government officials. They blamed UNHCR (and added NGOs to the criticism) for instigating the refugees' attempted escape because, as one UNHCR official recalled, "they thought the NGOs and UNHCR didn't want to lose their jobs" providing refugee services. UNHCR and the NGOs thereafter received only limited access to the refugees, whom the Tanzanians proceeded to round up and march to the Rwandan border.

*UNHCR and the NGOs.* In Ngara, UNHCR saw its role shrink. After the Tanzanian army moved to redirect the fleeing refugees towards Rwanda, the agency adjusted its mandated responsibilities to fit a difficult situation that had moved out of its control. Blaming the refugee leaders (not the Tanzanians) for ending what one UNHCR official called "the balanced repatriation plan that had been agreed after much negotiation," the agency assumed a secondary position in the repatriation effort. Its new role became "primarily one of attempting to ensure that the basic [refugee] rights were respected during this complex movement." But in the radically changed context, basic rights meant primarily providing food and water to refugees as they returned home.

It is worth noting how aid officials assessed Tanzania's actions. An NGO official in Ngara at the time recalled that "NGOs had to go along with UNHCR announcing [the Tanzanian move against Rwandan refugees] as a voluntary repatriation." Whether UNHCR officials actually believed it or not, this particular rationale, the official explained, was based on the following reasoning: "refugees had disobeyed by running into the forests... thus calling for disciplinary action involving [Tanzanian and Rwandan] armed forces." But some NGO and UNHCR officials also wondered whether appropriate disciplinary action against refugees should include *refoulement*. The judgment provided by a U.S. govern-

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ment official was more direct: “If you consider it was a forced repatriation, it was well run.”

As the Tanzanian military took control of the repatriation operation, each agency had to decide how to respond. One UNHCR official described how, after much soul-searching, local UNHCR staff decided “to do what we could to soften the return” of Rwandan refugees and to coordinate the effort. Most if not all NGOs agreed to work with UNHCR to assist the refugees during their return. One NGO director commented that once this was agreed, “the relationship between UNHCR and NGOs throughout the [subsequent relief] operation was very good.” Although the Tanzanian authorities prevented certain NGOs and a number of specific individuals from participating, most aid agencies were able to carry out the work.

Coordinating assistance to refugees during their march to Rwanda was spearheaded by a UNHCR official who had been involved with the Rwandan refugee repatriation from Zaire a few weeks earlier. He applied lessons learned from the Zaire repatriation, including the significance of keeping people moving (to avoid cholera caused by people clustering in one area); stationing food and water along the way; using string to keep children attached to their parents or child identification armbands to keep families together; and holding nightly meetings with all agency officials to adjust their work the following day.

In the end, what mattered most during the *refoulement* was not international rights or principles but power relations, and in this the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments won out. The forced repatriation appears to have inspired the Tanzanian government to continue ignoring international criticism and solve refugee problems by force if necessary. Soon after the Rwandan repatriation, Tanzanian security forces rounded up some 80,000 to 90,000 Burundian migrants and spontaneously settled refugees in Tanzania and sent them to camps in Tanzania for Burundian refugees. Once again, UNHCR was criticized for its response to the roundup.<sup>41</sup> And once again, scant international attention was paid to the Tanzanian government’s rough handling of refugees.

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## Coordinating Education: The Sierra Leonean Case

### *Supporting a Refugee Initiative*

Refugee camps are not only dismal and difficult places to live; they are also boring. Once systems are set up to supply basic necessities such as food, potable water, sanitation and shelter, the monotony of everyday life sets in. Waiting for food one day is followed by waiting for water the next. This routinized way of living is hardly stimulating, but it is particularly difficult for children. It is thus not uncommon to find refugee parents organizing informal education and sometimes even schools in the camps.

When Sierra Leoneans began to seek refuge in Guinea following the outbreak of war in 1991, they found Liberian refugees developing schools in nearby camps. Aid agencies soon became aware of these refugee schools. In April of that year during a joint delegation visit to West Africa by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and its sister NGO, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC), aid officials discovered that UNHCR was looking for an implementing partner to create an education program. IRC also found that, unlike other host governments, Guinea was prepared to approve the development of formal schooling for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees.

IRC started its program later that year with the 12,000 refugee students who had been attending schools formed by refugee communities. The coordination structure that it developed was cohesive and effective. With the education responsibilities delegated by UNHCR, IRC focused on working with refugee professionals to enhance and formalize the education system that the refugees themselves had already created. IRC also reinforced the existing structure by pledging material support to every existing school that met certain criteria. Before IRC would support an existing school, the refugee community needed to demonstrate its commitment by establishing a school on its own, retaining a student enrollment of at least 200, and organizing to build classroom walls. IRC then promised to pay teachers a stipend, deliver school supplies, and build roofs. It later expanded its package to include

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digging a well and latrine for each school, providing teacher training, and developing a health education curriculum. Seven years after the program began, IRC's emergency education program included 160 refugee schools and 72,000 students.

By gradually assuming control over the schools, IRC absorbed many of the education professionals in the refugee community—like many refugee populations, it contained a talented group of teachers, school principals, and government administrators—into the emerging IRC-led education system. IRC's coordination work then concentrated on the education ministries in Sierra Leone and Liberia. As increasing numbers of refugee schools received support, the next challenge was to respond to refugee concerns that the education received in camp schools be recognized in the refugees' countries of origin. A group of IRC curriculum experts developed a unified school curriculum for both Sierra Leonean and Liberian students. The team had the benefit of working with country curricula that were taught in the same language (English) and were aimed at preparing students for the West African Exam Council (WAEC) exams, a standardized test for all students in the six English-speaking countries of West Africa.

IRC then coordinated with education ministry officials in Sierra Leone and Liberia to ensure acceptance of the curriculum in both countries. With IRC facilitating interactions between refugee educators and ministry officials in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the two governments in the end not only approved the curriculum but recognized the teaching certificates and student transcripts issued to refugee returnees. A measure of the program's success came in 1998 when candidates achieved the highest pass rate in WAEC history (94 percent). UNHCR has written up the program as a model.<sup>42</sup>

There are those who wonder whether the IRC project, which has been supported by UNHCR and the U.S. government, has been too successful. It provides better education than is available in the refugees' communities of origin. Many in the aid community, donors in particular, believe that the emergency education in refugee schools constitutes a magnet that discourages repatriation.<sup>43</sup> While this viewpoint overlooks the 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child,

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which considers access to formal education the right of all children, there remains a certain legitimacy to the criticism. Refugees have indeed been reluctant to return to their homes in Sierra Leone and Liberia as long as schools there were not functioning.<sup>44</sup> With peace largely restored in Liberia, if not in Sierra Leone, efforts have begun to focus on repatriating Liberian refugees. But while UNHCR continues to support refugee schools in Guinea, it and other groups in Liberia have been slow to help the Liberian government attract refugee returnees by restarting village schools inside Liberia.

It is here, in the linkage between international aid agencies and national governments, that coordination broke down. A former UNHCR consultant, sent to Liberia in 1998 to investigate how to shift the IRC's educational success in the refugee camps to areas within Liberia to which refugees would repatriate, identified two constraints. The first involved a certification issue. The Liberian education ministry was not particularly concerned about the certification of refugee students; it happened automatically when refugee students passed the internationally recognized exams. The ministry focused instead on the certification of Liberians who had been trained as teachers in the refugee camps.

The central problem the consultant observed was that the IRC lacked documentation for refugee teacher training. The ministry required documentation of the number of hours of training received and its specific content. But attendance lists and time sheets did not exist, nor were many teacher training manuals on file. Ministry officials also expressed concern about the pay differential for Liberian teachers. They found that the IRC was paying refugee teachers in their program seven times the salary that teachers received in Liberia (US \$70 per month in the camps, US \$10 in Liberia). The Liberian Teachers Union would surely complain about such inequity and perhaps demand a sevenfold increase in salary, which, given the ministry's limited resources, was unlikely to occur. Taking the lack of teacher certification and the pay differential into account, the consultant concluded that "there's no incentive for [refugee] teachers to return to Liberia."

The second problem, the consultant continued, involved the anticipated role of the IRC following repatriation. The IRC

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had proposed to accompany the repatriating refugees into Liberia and Sierra Leone and restart schools with the returnees.<sup>45</sup> The difficulty the UNHCR consultant identified was that the IRC would be operating in Liberia with far more resources than the country's Ministry of Education. "How can the Ministry of Education be the lead agency if it has few resources?" he asked. Armed with donor funding, IRC could undermine the Ministry in the areas where IRC worked. It would essentially become the Ministry of Education there because, the consultant reasoned, if the ministry has no resources and presence, it has no authority. A second question was equally perplexing. If the IRC education program did not accompany refugees back to Liberia, would refugees return to their former Liberian communities? Probably not, it appeared. Whether IRC's successful education program in refugee camps in Guinea can be transferred into Liberia remains to be seen. Negotiations with the Liberian government continue.

### *Refugee Education in Ngara: A Contrast*

A comparison between the coordination of emergency education in the Sierra Leonean and Liberian camps in Guinea and that of the education program in Ngara is illuminating. The Ngara program, too, has received a relatively high degree of attention, nearly all of it positive.<sup>46</sup> Yet while both programs also reached an unusually high number of refugee children, they were fundamentally different. The Ngara approach was fairly prescriptive and unusually proactive, organized early in the emergency phase of the refugee crisis (June-July 1994). The program in Guinea, by contrast, was reactive, entering the refugee camps in Guinea long after refugees had arrived and started their own schools. The formats also were different. The emergency educators who assembled at Ngara sought to adapt for Rwandan refugees UNESCO-PEER's<sup>47</sup> Teacher Emergency Package (TEP), a three-to-six-month literacy and numeracy-based approach developed during the Somali emergency.<sup>48</sup> A gradual return to teaching the Rwandan curriculum would follow. The Ngara approach was also ambitious: the organizers envisioned that TEP schools could reach 40,000 to 50,000 refugee students, a goal that was eventually achieved.

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The Ngara program also involved a much wider array of agencies in a coordination structure similar to the CFA in Sierra Leone. Like the CFA, the top and middle segments of the structure were dominated by international aid agencies. The Ngara structure was led by the education program management unit (EPMU), which contained UNESCO-PEER, UNICEF, and the German government donor GTZ. The EPMU was tasked with the day-to-day, week-by-week supervision of the education program which included providing technical advice and guidance to the NGOs and Rwandan educators who implemented the program. Also, the EPMU served the education coordination committee, which included representatives of all international agencies participating in the program. Also involved in the coordination scheme was UNHCR's education officer, a position filled, in an unusual arrangement, by the ECHO field officer. The education program was also part of the community services committee, a coordinating body run by UNHCR.

Like its counterpart in Guinea, the UNHCR sub-office in Ngara gave the education sector a high degree of independence. A UN official involved in developing the program credited sub-office head Maureen Connelly for "personally making a difference by virtue of allowing greater openness, user-friendliness and flexibility, with an orientation towards finding practical solutions." At the same time, the three NGOs working in the Rwandan refugee camps in Ngara, each responsible for the education program in a different camp, "probably experienced the EPMU as too 'top-down' and authoritarian."

The original developers of the program, a group of UN and donor officials but not NGOs, were concerned that "the 'bottom-up' orientation and community-sensitive proclivities of the NGOs needed to be tempered by a well-defined framework to which they signed up and were responsible for." The final link in this coordination structure, interacting with both the EPMU and the NGOs, were project development officers, "the key Rwandan focal point for the education program in each camp."

The Ngara approach was comparatively more complex and hierarchical than the ICRC model in Guinea, with refugee

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communities and educators on the receiving end of international agency directives. This may appear unfair to the Rwandan educators, but it was probably quite appropriate; for evidence from Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire indicates that the IRC model could not have succeeded with Rwandans. There, Rwandan refugee leaders started the refugee schools, as aid agency officials were largely uninterested in education. It was widely assumed that these leaders used the schools primarily to promote the sort of ethnic history that had provided the rationale for genocidal killing in Rwanda.<sup>49</sup>

The limited degree of Rwandan refugee contributions to the coordination structure has been identified as a weakness of the Ngara model. A UN education official present there later observed that Rwandan refugee teachers asked, "Why are you giving us [TEP]? It's not Rwandan." They would have preferred to resume teaching in camps immediately according to the Rwandan curriculum. It would be unwise, however, to say that reactive, refugee-responsive program models are always better. In terms of program coordination, the IRC approach was simpler and more responsive to refugee initiatives. It involved one NGO interacting with many refugee communities while the government and UNHCR remained in the background.

The Ngara education approach, as well as the Tanzanian government-led *refoulement* in December 1996, shed light on the utility of proactive programming when refugee populations are led by people as dangerous and difficult as those in the Rwandan camps. The *refoulement* experience in Ngara also highlights the importance of the careful maintenance of good relations between international humanitarian actors and national governments. In this case, UNHCR's relations with the Tanzanian government were generally good throughout, and it should be commended highly for this. Still, subsequent events suggest that the government's role may have been too peripheral at the start. Like other governments, the Tanzanian government is naturally sensitive about sovereignty issues, and providing it with a substantive coordination role from the outset may have reduced the force of the government's later responses.

Inconsistent relations between international NGOs and

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the Tanzanian government certainly did not improve matters, nor did donor warnings in 1996 that they wanted to withdraw support for Rwandan refugees in Tanzania. But the irony is that refugees, so often passive recipients of humanitarian support from powerful international actors, ultimately hold such sway over humanitarian actors when repatriation issues are concerned. In both the Tanzanian repatriation program and the repatriation problem for the IRC's refugee education program in Guinea, prominent refugee leaders (politicians in Ngara, teachers in Guinea) wielded considerable power over the timing and nature of refugee returns.

And for both sets of leaders, the nature of this power negatively impacted repatriation efforts. In Ngara, Rwandan refugee leaders ultimately overplayed their hand, as their plan to drive refugees into the Tanzania countryside opened the doors for the final *refoulement* exercises. In refugee camps in Guinea, Liberian refugee teachers' reluctance to return to Liberia and the IRC's difficulties with Liberia's Ministry of Education eventually transformed the IRC's acclaimed education program into a magnet keeping refugees in camps and operating as a disincentive against repatriation.

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## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordination should not, in principle, be difficult to orchestrate. Humanitarian organizations, after all, are on the scene of humanitarian crises to provide emergency assistance and to protect the human rights of victims of violence, persecution, and other misfortunes. The quality and effectiveness of their efforts stands to be enhanced if they work together in a systematic way.

The two cases described in this study, however, demonstrate the difficulties humanitarian actors face in coordinating their work. Rapidly evolving changes in Sierra Leone and in Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania called for creative responses. Humanitarian actors were sometimes equal to the challenge, but on other occasions failed to keep pace with—much less to anticipate—changes in the political, military, and humanitarian situation on the ground. Experiences were both positive and negative at each of the three levels of coordination examined: among organizations, among functions, and within programs.

Regarding the coordination of humanitarian organizations, relationships among agencies and the people in positions of responsibility facilitated the creation of agile arrangements. The *esprit des corps* that emerged among agencies and donor officials at the outset of the Rwandan refugee emergency in Ngara District provides one example of this tendency. Conversely, however, relationships also impeded coordination. The logjam created by three separate UN coordinating entities jockeying for position in Sierra Leone provides a second example. Regarding the coordination of basic humanitarian functions, the experience was also mixed. Although strategic planning for the food sector in Sierra Leone was largely successful, coordinating the consolidated appeal process had serious limitations. Regarding the coordination of humanitarian programs, the repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania illuminated how dynamic changes in the political context could severely strain constructive partnerships and alter relationships among the actors involved. On

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the other hand, the IRC's educational programming in Guinea stabilized the lives of many Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees while constraining repatriation efforts.

Three commonly held beliefs about coordination emerged among many of those interviewed. First, most assumed that the task of coordination naturally centered on UN agencies and international NGOs, not donor and national governments. In point of fact, it was both sets of governments that established and managed the framework for coordination. Second, many officials countered that money impeded coordination, since institutions seek to command the lion's share of the action in a particular sector, camp, or region, even at the expense of coordination with other humanitarian actors. Yet UNHCR's control over resources had positive effects in Ngara while, conversely, the absence of similar resources and authority vested in Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit in Sierra Leone undermined its coordination prowess. Finally, many officials assumed that coordination depended foremost on the personalities of those at the helm, while coordination structures were of secondary importance. The dynamics on the ground, however, underscored the importance of agreed coordination structures that reinforce assertive and creative leadership. The following are conclusions that address these and other issues emerging from the study.

### **Coordination: Donor and National Government Roles**

Donors and national or host governments often seem on the periphery of coordinated humanitarian action. The two cases examined here demonstrate, however, that governments are absolutely crucial to providing the framework within which the challenge of humanitarian coordination is set.

#### *The Power of Donors*

No single set of humanitarian actors has more power to influence coordination positively than donors. Through their decisions, they sculpt humanitarian action. Donors can stabilize an entire coordination system, such as when BPRM and OFDA put their funding through UNHCR for the Rwandan

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refugee response in Ngara. They can enforce sector coordination, as when OFDA and ECHO mandated that all agencies receiving food aid participate in CFA coordination or risk a cutoff in assistance. They can also influence power relations between other actors, as in their decision to favor NGOs over government ministries in Sierra Leone or to help force UNHCR's hand in Ngara in 1996 by insisting that Rwandan refugee asylum in Tanzania end soon, setting the stage for the military-led repatriation just before Christmas.

In these instances, the U.S. government (OFDA in Sierra Leone and the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration in Ngara) and the European Community worked together well. One donor official reflected that in Sierra Leone "[we] actually compare notes on what we'll fund for the same NGO. I've never done this before in other countries. The NGOs often hate this, as in Liberia where we discovered that we were double-funding" the same NGOs to carry out the same activity.

An indicator of donor power is the hesitancy of other actors to criticize them. Sierra Leonean officials challenged international NGOs but not the donors who had favored NGOs over the local government. Criticism for the Ngara repatriation was directed at UNHCR and the Tanzanian authorities, not at the U.S. and the EU, which had announced an imminent cutoff of aid for the refugees. Although it is hardly surprising that recipients of largesse are reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them, the results of donor decisions receive far more attention than the decisions themselves, even when they have significant humanitarian fallout.

### *The Roles of the National Government Authorities*

How should international agencies involve host governments in humanitarian work? The coordination structures reviewed here intentionally restricted host government contributions. Indeed, the two cases suggest that international actors viewed humanitarian coordination as working best when national governments are marginalized from the process. Host governments that are low-profile and pliant rather than fully engaged—such as the Tanzanian authorities letting

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UNHCR decide which NGOs would be admitted—are seen as making for better coordination.

This approach is shortsighted in two respects. First, it provides international humanitarian action with a fragile local base. Since national governments are the ultimate arbiter of actions on their territory, they can reassert themselves whenever they wish. That became crystal clear in Ngara. While initial coordination arrangements were without doubt facilitated by the Tanzanian government's limited participation, the languishing repatriation effort was simply taken over by the Tanzanian government and military in late 1996, who orchestrated the *refoulement* on their terms. In Sierra Leone, the Kabbah government's simmering resentment against "Junta NGOs," whom it accused of secretly supporting the RUF, eventually boiled over. In January 1999, it expelled the ICRC for assisting the RUF, a charge the ICRC strongly denied. It took months for the ICRC to negotiate its return and resume operations.

Second, relief agencies tend to focus on short-term humanitarian needs instead of longer-term reconstruction or development work. Even though they are often preoccupied with limiting the dependence of displaced populations on foreign aid, they are far less concerned about the dependent and even subordinate relations they often create with national governments. Struggling to provide food to Sierra Leonean citizens, CFA members felt that including government officials would hamper and politicize their work. Yet despite the low priority on capacity building, the CFA will ultimately have to hand over its responsibilities to the Sierra Leonean government.

Indeed, the urge towards pragmatism in humanitarian action—to empower those actors with the best potential to get things done—carries a heavy cost. In the Rwandan refugee camps, collaboration with indigenous leaders had major political and humanitarian complications. In Sierra Leone, the decision by donors to fund international NGOs, creating what the authorities view as a parallel system with government, may create serious governance problems in the future. A coordination apparatus that functions smoothly by virtue of sidelining the national and local authorities may reap short-

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term gains but undermine national government authority and limit its capacity.

In the Sierra Leone and Ngara cases alike, the roles played by governments—the donors of resources and the host governments in the crises—form the backdrop for the coordination efforts of humanitarian organizations. The following conclusions are arranged according to the three focal points of coordination analyzed in the study: coordination among organizations (Chapter 3), among functions (Chapter 4), and within programs (Chapter 5).

### **Coordination Among Organizations**

In Sierra Leone, UNOMSIL stood as the leader of the UN family, UNDP's head served as humanitarian coordinator, and HACU carried out a variety of coordination operations. It was a confusing and dysfunctional combination.

UNDP was a lightning rod for coordination controversy, largely because it resolutely retained development principles and objectives while coordinating humanitarian activities. Its close association with the Sierra Leonean government extended UNDP's prewar development policies into the conflict years. By inflaming humanitarian actors seeking to operate as neutral providers of humanitarian assistance in government and rebel-controlled areas alike, UNDP undermined its role as coordinator of humanitarian action. This situation also illuminated a longstanding weakness in humanitarian coordination: the fact that the UN and NGO agencies lack any set of formal arrangements for humanitarian coordination. Though a recent report highlighted the problem with regard to UNHCR in refugee settings, the same problem plagues UN-NGO relations inside countries overwhelmed by humanitarian crises: "The formal authority enshrined in the lead [UN] agency designation does not extend to the NGOs."<sup>1</sup>

HACU had more success coordinating with an array of international and national actors, particularly at the sector level. But the Consolidated Appeals Process exposed its difficulties vis-à-vis other UN agencies. HACU had the responsibility of assembling the CAP but lacked the authority to ensure that the UN activities presented in the appeals were coordinated among individual agencies.

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In Ngara, by contrast, the two major donors funneled their support through UNHCR. The Tanzanian government delegated to UNHCR the authority to select all NGO partners that would work with Rwandan refugees there. UNHCR in Ngara seized this rare opportunity to centralize control and it created an impressive coordination structure. The unusual arrangement worked out both for donors and for the Tanzanian government and it illuminated three important coordination issues. First, it shed light on the difficulties of working with powerful but not necessarily popular Rwandan refugee camp leaders who earned their “intimidators” nickname. Although UNHCR may have initially had little choice but to work with them, it did little to alter its relationship with these leaders over time or to cultivate others for leadership positions, and this eventually hurt its credibility with the refugee population. Second, the Ngara arrangements illuminated the importance of the national government’s role in coordination. Though the Tanzanian authorities ceded some powers to UNHCR during the initial stages of the refugee crisis, the repatriation showed how provisional UNHCR’s powers ultimately were. Third, the Ngara experience shed light on the role personalities play in coordination. In UNHCR Sub-Office Head Maureen Connelly and Deputy Head Francois Franquin, UNHCR initiated its work with two extremely capable officials. Though the contributions of others were crucial—the Tanzanians allowed, donors reinforced, and NGOs accepted the coordination structure—UNHCR’s forceful and focused leaders created an unusually well-coordinated humanitarian response.

By contrast, the attacks on Elizabeth Lwanga, head of UNDP in Sierra Leone, which were particularly strident from NGO members, ultimately personalized an institutional problem. There was a built-in contradiction between a coordinator of humanitarian action premised on neutrality who was also charged with maintaining close relationships with the government authorities in the midst of a civil war. While Ms. Lwanga’s management style may have antagonized NGOs and exacerbated coordination, UNDP’s presence at the coordination helm proved to be a bad fit.

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## Coordination Among Functions

The three specific functions reviewed were strategic planning, resource mobilization, and security information management.

The examples of strategic planning cited were innovative and worthy of adaptation to other contexts. In Sierra Leone, the CFA, apart from its weak links to the government authorities, represents an impressive innovation for food sector coordination. Indeed, the coordination framework was adaptable to other sectors as well. In Tanzania, the value of a clear delegation of authority by the government to UNHCR and of a reduced number of NGO actors were noteworthy innovations.

In the Ngara case, however, a cautionary lesson is also involved. The value of UNHCR doing more to integrate the Tanzanian authorities into the coordination scheme and of NGOs doing more to respect the Tanzanian government's roles is clear. Indeed, the experience as it played out was such that the Tanzanian authorities, faced with a similar emergency in the future, might not again grant such broad powers to international humanitarian organizations.

With respect to resource mobilization, it is distressing that ECHO viewed coordinated funding with the U.S. State Department's funding in Ngara—by its own account, positive in its outcomes—as an exception to its customary direct funding of NGOs. The impressive ECHO-OFDA coordination in the case of Sierra Leone should be attempted in other settings rather than viewed as exceptional. BPRM's funding of UNHCR's work in Ngara made a positive contribution on the coordination front.

Donor skepticism of the CAP process, as evidenced in Sierra Leone, and the general view of UNHCR officials by some donor agencies also signals a major problem between UN agencies and donors that requires attention. The consolidated appeals for Sierra Leone lacked both cohesion among UN agencies and with non-UN aid groups working in the same sectors. While HACU was more successful in reaching outside the UN system, it lacked the authority within the UN to manage coordination efficiently.

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As for security information management, in both Ngara and Sierra Leone successful management of security information took place only after UN regulations aimed at preventing UN agencies from sharing information and coordinating security with NGOs were circumvented.

The politicization of information management regarding shared security problems in Sierra Leone, which became especially difficult during the junta period, highlighted both the significance of this issue and the seemingly intractable task of coordinating humanitarian work with actors divided between political partisanship and neutrality. In Conakry, no institution provided the necessary leadership to resolve the dispute between these two sets of actors. The refusal by many UN and international institutions to take seriously security information provided by the ICRC and NGOs based inside Sierra Leone greatly hampered coordination efforts and undermined everyone's credibility. Ironically, the dispute was resolvable in that the two sets of findings were largely complementary: the ICRC-NGO group mostly reported on conditions outside of Freetown while the Conakry group concentrated on activities in Freetown.

Following the return of aid agencies to Sierra Leone, UNOMSIL's involvement in coordination issues, otherwise mostly peripheral, attracted considerable attention for its role in managing security information. UNOMSIL made little effort to work with humanitarian actors, particularly NGOs. Its disinterest in coordination exacerbated problems in resolving security problems and was unnecessary and counterproductive. The situation highlighted a condition that undermined coordination—the tendency of humanitarian actors to go their own way rather than resolve differences. UNOMSIL, in short, carried on military observer and human rights monitoring work that promised to affect the security of humanitarian actors, yet failed to coordinate with them.

In Ngara, overlooking security issues at the outset of the refugee crisis was a mistake, if an understandable one, given the magnitude and urgency of the situation at the time. The Gatete incident, however, revealed how humanitarian actors can learn from such mistakes. The experience suggests that working swiftly at the onset of emergencies to separate actual

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or suspected fugitives from justice from bona fide refugee or IDP populations.

### **Coordinating Within Programs**

The seeds of UNHCR's problems in the unfortunate *refoulement* fiasco of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania in late 1996 started with difficulties in repatriating refugees in timely fashion and coordinating work with refugee leaders. In addition, more active collaboration earlier on with the Tanzanian authorities might have helped avoid or minimize the ensuing difficulties.

UNHCR's options by November 1996 were seriously constrained by donors and the Rwandan and Tanzanian governments. The refugee leaders with whom the agency tried to negotiate exercised a constraint as well, especially after they disbursed half a million Rwandans into the Tanzanian interior. At that point, UNHCR muted criticism of the Tanzanian government for its rough handling of the refugees. Although this approach was regrettable, UNHCR should not be singled out. Western governments who funded the Rwandan refugee camps also shied away from criticizing Tanzania's treatment of the refugees. From the point of view of the Tanzanian and Rwandan authorities, the repatriation effort was a success. UNHCR and its partner NGOs in Ngara coped with an extremely difficult situation well. On balance, the assessment of a U.S. official is probably about right: for a forced repatriation, it was well run.

Coordination of the schooling mounted by the IRC, which involved educators among the refugees, UNHCR, and the governments of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, was generally successful and innovative. IRC negotiations with the three governments in developing a standardized curriculum and facilitating student participation in regional exams made a positive contribution to the stabilization of the refugees' situation. The approach bears replication elsewhere if two problems are addressed. First, refugee schools should be engaged only if they are not being used to promote violence, as was the case in Goma, Zaire. Second, IRC's negotiation of teacher certification and salaries did not align with those existing in

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the refugees' country of origin. Coordination with education ministries in the refugees' home countries should begin early so that there is greater consonance on matters of certification and salaries between camps outside and the situations back home.

### **Recommendations**

The Sierra Leone and Ngara cases illuminate the importance of a command element in humanitarian coordination. In both contexts, strong authority represented a necessary ingredient in successful coordination. UNHCR's dominant role in Ngara demonstrated this best: the agency received the authority to create a coordination structure and generally used that authority effectively. Conversely, HACU's attempts to develop consensus among UN agencies for consolidated appeals failed because HACU lacked the authority to enforce coordination. The CFA in Sierra Leone, born out of a shared agency conviction that arrangements beyond business-as-usual were imperative, benefited from the requirement by donors that agencies receiving food aid actively participate in the coordination process.

These two cases also highlight the importance of establishing collegial and effective working relationships with national authorities. In the Tanzania case, an effective delegation of authority to UNHCR by the Tanzanian government was ultimately rescinded. In Sierra Leone, the weak relations that many humanitarian actors had with the national government undermined linkages with development initiatives and nurtured discontent among Sierra Leonean government officials and disregard among many international humanitarian officials.

Each of these recommendations—the need to incorporate a command element and to engage the national political authorities in the coordination framework—has major implications for each of the sets of humanitarian actors listed below.

#### *Donor Governments*

- Higher levels of confidence are needed vis-à-vis UN agencies. The serious doubts expressed by donors

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regarding the consolidated appeal process and the security of personnel should be discussed and resolved. Important innovations such as the joint ECHO-U.S. government funding of UNHCR in Ngara would then become more replicable, and ECHO's hesitancy to work routinely with UNHCR and other UN agencies would be addressed.

- Efforts should also be made to replicate the excellent field coordination between OFDA and ECHO in Sierra Leone.

#### *National Actors*

- The limited participation of national governments in humanitarian coordination in these two settings calls for careful reconsideration of the urge among international organizations to "get things done." National governments need a well-defined, appropriate and, most important, recognized coordination role. Concerns over limited capacity or corruption should be discussed openly. Greater involvement may help demonstrate some of the synergies between relief and development and reduce the likelihood that national governments will disrupt humanitarian action. The CFA should be adapted for replication elsewhere, provided its blind spot on indigenous involvement is addressed.
- National NGOs played an insignificant role in humanitarian action and coordination in Sierra Leone and Ngara. Local capacity-building was defined by international humanitarian organizations mainly as the hiring and training of local personnel to work for them. International actors should expand their support of civil society by working with national NGOs to identify and expand their roles.

#### *United Nations Agencies*

- Although UNDP has an important role to play in humanitarian emergencies, the opportunity costs of the UNDP resident representative serving as humanitar-

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ian coordinator are too high. Since UNDP's institutional orientation is a poor starting point for creating cohesive coordination arrangements with humanitarian actors seeking positions of neutrality, positioning the Resrep as humanitarian coordinator should be avoided.

OCHA is the logical choice for humanitarian coordination responsibilities, particularly if, as OCHA's HACU office did in Sierra Leone, it works to include a wide range of humanitarian actors in coordination structures outside as well as inside the UN. To succeed, however, OCHA should be given the authority to persuade, and, if necessary, compel, UN agencies to coordinate their activities. UNDP could then apply its expertise to support the national government and help reconstruct war-torn countries, but only after OCHA identifies the appropriate time for starting such activities.

- Since the lack of formal coordination arrangements between the UN and NGOs undermines the effectiveness of humanitarian activities, a generic memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the UN and NGOs should be developed. This MOU should be applicable early in humanitarian emergencies when agencies are setting out their relationships, and could be adapted to the specifics of each setting. It should incorporate the reform of security coordination to include NGOs in information-sharing measures.
- The consolidated appeal process is a weak coordination mechanism, reflecting the coordination weaknesses of the UN system itself. Although the concept is sound, the Sierra Leone experience highlights the problems inherent in OCHA's lack of authority to coordinate other UN agencies, some of which did not wish to be coordinated. Reforming the process both to ensure interagency discipline and to connect UN actions with non-UN actors would constitute a significant coordination advance. Until this and other institutional disconnections within the UN system are solved—including the conceptual confusion over how humani-

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tarian action relates to development and peacekeeping on the ground—coordination will continue to be frustrated.

### *NGOs*

- Of all major humanitarian actors, the international NGOs' disregard of national government actors in both the Sierra Leone and Ngora cases is a cause for particular concern. This approach is counterproductive for both humanitarian action and development linkages. All actors, but especially international NGOs, need to dramatically improve their working relationships with national government counterparts and appreciate the sovereignty concerns that national governments naturally and appropriately maintain.
- Narrowing the number of NGOs in a particular humanitarian theater, as demonstrated by the Ngora case, is an innovation that should be widely replicated. Yet this runs the risk of making the larger, more established NGOs even more dominant than they are now. As a safeguard, NGOs should develop, together with UN agencies and donor governments, a system for rotating NGO participation in humanitarian emergencies. Precautions would ensure that institutional capacity and specialization are recognized and used. In such a system, an NGO already responsible for the water and sanitation sector in one humanitarian emergency would not be eligible to do so in the the next, provided another NGO with similar expertise could be identified. Limited NGO participation in each emergency would thus not limit the worldwide contributions of NGOs more broadly.

Changes in humanitarian coordination along the lines outlined above would position the international community to respond more dynamically to future emergencies.



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## NOTES

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2. Antonio Donini, *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda*, Occasional Paper #22 (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1996): 97.

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4. Larry Minear, U.B.P. Chelliah, Jeff Crisp, John Mackinlay, and Thomas G. Weiss, *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis, 1990-1992*, Occasional Paper #13, (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1992): 3.

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2. Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1994): 44-76.

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5. For more information, see especially Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (London: James Currey, and Portsmouth, N.H.: Heineman, 1996), still the most extensive and significant research on the RUF and the war. See also Jan Goodwin's "Sierra Leone is No Place to Be Young," *New York Times Magazine*, February 14, 1999, Section 6, 48-51; Marc Sommers' "Fighting children in Sierra Leone," *Providence Journal*, January 15, 1999, B6; Marc Sommers, "Beware the Children's War," *St. Petersburg Times*, August 10, 1997, 6D; and Marc Sommers, *The Children's War: Towards Peace in Sierra Leone* (New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1997).

6. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Guinea, Liberia*,

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- Sierra Leone 1997-98* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997): 44.
7. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile*, 45.
  8. Mark Bradbury, "Rebels Without a Cause? An Exploratory Report for CARE Britain on the Conflict in Sierra Leone," 22.
  9. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 4.
  10. See Sommers, *The Children's War*.
  11. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 1.
  12. Sommers, *The Children's War*, 4.
  13. See, for example, "West Africa according to Mr. Taylor," *Africa Confidential* 40, no. 2 (January 1999): 2.
  14. From "Sierra Leone: A Brief Overview," an unpublished document by Joseph Opala, Freetown, April, 1996.
  15. Norimitsu Onishi, "Pacts Reached on Congo and Sierra Leone," *New York Times*, July 8, 1999, A8.
  16. See, for example, African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, despair and defiance* (London: African Rights, 1994/95); Basil Davidson, "On Rwanda," *London Review of Books*, August 18, 1994; A. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York, Washington, London, Brussels: Human Rights Watch, and Paris: International Federation of Human Rights, 1999); A. Destexhe, *Rwanda and genocide in the twentieth century* (London and East Haven, Conn: Pluto Press, 1995); F. Keane, *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey* (London, New York, Victoria, Toronto, and Auckland: Viking, 1995); P. Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1998); G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); F. Reyntjens, "Rwanda: Background to a genocide," *Bulletin des seances*, Academie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, Brussels, April, 1995; and P. Watson, "Purging the Evil," *Africa Report* (November-December 1994).
  17. *The United Nations and Rwanda*, The United Nations Blue Books Series 10 (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1993-1996): 73.
  18. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 136.
  19. Marc Sommers, *Reconciliation and Religion: Refugee churches in Rwandan camps*, Occasional Paper (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 1998).
  20. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 265.
  21. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 257.
  22. Jean-Pierre Chretien, cited in Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 247.
  23. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.
  24. Sommers, *Reconciliation and Religion*.
  25. Larry Minear and Phillippe Guillot, *Soldiers to the Rescue: Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda* (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, and Paris: Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996): 175.

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## Chapter 3

1. The UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs signs off on all humanitarian coordinator appointments, which are also vetted by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

2. The assumption of the UNDP resident coordinator as humanitarian coordinator has been the approach taken by the UN to the coordination task in many major emergencies. However, in some countries, the major operational agency (e.g. UNHCR, UNICEF, or WFP) may be given humanitarian coordination responsibilities. The various models and their effectiveness is currently being reviewed by OCHA.

3. Emergency Response Division, UNDP, *Building Bridges Between Relief and Development: A Compendium of the UNDP Record in Crisis Countries* (New York: Emergency Response Division/United Nations Development Program, [undated]).

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5. Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (HACU), *National Humanitarian Coordination Structure* (Sierra Leone: HACU, 1998).

6. "ECOWAS Six-Month Peace Plan for Sierra Leone," 23 October 23, 1997-April 22, 1998.

7. "Interim report of the inter-agency mission to Sierra Leone." UN Security Council Document S/1988/155, February 25, 1988.

8. These observations reflect comments made at an informal OFDA-ECHO dialogue on October 28, 1998, which was facilitated by the Humanitarianism and War Project.

9. Antonio Donini, *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda*, Occasional Paper #22 (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1996): 14.

10. Malkki observes that UNHCR estimated that 245,000 Burundians had crossed into Tanzania in late 1993 and early 1994, while the government of Tanzania claimed there were more than half a million new Burundi refugees in Tanzania. Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 287.

11. John Borton, Emery Brusset, Alistair Hallam, et. al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects, Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR) Report: The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Experience 3" (Copenhagen: Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance

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12. Borton, et al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects," 29.

13. Borton, et al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects," 130.

14. Borton, et al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects," 130.

15. Borton, et al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects," 29.

16. Borton, et al., "Humanitarian Aid and Effects," 29.

17. "UNHCR Mission Report: Ngara, Tanzania," April 15-July 17, 1994.

18. Maureen Connelly, NGO coordinator, UNHCR; formerly UNHCR sub-office head for Ngara.

19. "UNHCR Mission Report," 3, 1.

20. "World Disasters Report: 1997," International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 13.

21. "UNHCR Mission Report."

22. "World Disasters Report: 1997," 13.

23. "Humanitarian Aid and Effects, (JEEAR) Report," 128.

24. "Humanitarian Aid and Effects, (JEEAR) Report."

25. For more information, see Marc Sommers. *Reconciliation and Religion: Refugee churches in Rwandan camps*, Occasional Paper (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 1997).

26. See also Bonaventure Rutinwa, "Beyond Durable Solutions: An Appraisal of the New Proposals for Prevention and Solution of the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9, no. 3 (1996): 312-325.

## Chapter 4

1. Based on the CFA's "Memorandum from the National Technical Committee on Food Aid to Members of the Committee on Food Aid," September 29, 1998, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

2. Lance Clark, *Key Issues in Post-Emergency Refugee Assistance in Eastern and Southern Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Refugee Policy Group, September 1987): 14.

3. Maureen Connelly Senior Emergency Officer, *Emergency Response Mission, Kagera, Tanzania, 15 April-17 July 1994, UNHCR Mission Report, No. 94/006*, UNHCR, unpublished document, 1.

4. Tony Waters, "The Relief Effort Winds Up, October 1993-October 1994," unpublished draft of *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, forthcoming): Chapter 2.

5. Tony Waters, "The Relief Effort Winds Up," 3.

6. Nan Buzard, "Information-sharing and coordination between NGOs working in the refugee camps of Ngara and Kibondo, Tanzania, 1994-1998," unpublished manuscript prepared for the MIT-Mellon

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Program on Forced Migration and NGOs, 1999: 6.

7. John Borton, "An Account of Co-ordination Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance During the International Response to the 1994 Crisis in Rwanda," *Disasters* 20, no. 4 (1996): 312.

8. Borton has noted that "World Vision distributed food and blankets to refugees who had just crossed the border en route to the camps. This was contrary to the policy adopted by UNHCR and the 12 agencies as it raised the possibility that refugees would settle near the border away from the main camps." Borton, "An Account of Co-ordination," 322.

9. United Nations, "United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance to Sierra Leone: March 1- December 31, 1998," June 1998, 4.

10. United Nations, "United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance to Sierra Leone: March 1-May 31, 1998," March 1998: 10.

11. United Nations, "United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal," 8.

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16. Tony Waters, "The Relief Effort Winds Up," 7.

17. For a discussion of the problems of insecurity in the refugee camps and the Zairian Camp Security Contingent of Zairian troops assembled by UNHCR, see Mark Frohardt, Diane Paul, and Larry Minear, *Protecting Human Rights: The Challenge to Humanitarian Organizations*, Occasional Paper # 35 (Providence, R.I., Watson Institute, 1999): 69.

## Chapter 5

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how some refugees “laughed when Carter told them: ‘I think I can assure the refugees that they will be well-treated when they go back to Rwanda.’”

3. For more information on the repatriation attempts, see Johan Potier, “Relief and Repatriation: Views by Rwandan Refugees; Lessons for Humanitarian Aid Workers,” *African Affairs* 95, no. 380 (July 1996): 403-429 and Marc Sommers, “Reconciliation and Religion: Refugee Churches in the Rwandan Camps,” Occasional Paper (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 1998).

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5. Victor Antonie, “Tanzania warns Rwandan refugees of brief stay only,” *Reuters World Service*, January 20, 1996.

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18. David Fox, “Babies born on roadside amidst exodus from

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19. "Rwandan refugees crossing from Tanzania at 10,000 an hour," Agence France Presse, December 16, 1996.
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21. James C. McKinley, Jr., "Tide of Rwanda Refugees Flows Back to Tanzania Camps," *New York Times*, December 14, 1996, Section 1, 6.
22. Chris McGreal, "Tanzanian Keeps up Pressure on Hutu Refugees," *The Guardian*, December 14, 1996.
23. Louise Tunbridge, "Aid teams kept away as Hutus file home," *Daily Telegraph*, December 17, 1996.
24. Tunbridge, "Aid teams kept away."
25. David Fox, "Tanzania drives 200,000 refugees toward Rwanda," *Canadian Financial Report*, December 15, 1996.
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28. Tunbridge, "Aid teams kept away."
29. "Tanzania deports priests opposed to repatriation of refugees," Agence France Presse, December 17, 1996.
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31. "Rwandan Refugees Return from Tanzania," National Public Radio (Morning Edition), December 16, 1996.
32. Human Rights Watch, "East Africa: Amnesty: Tanzania and UNHCR Must Respect International Law," in *Africa News*, December 17, 1996.
33. Human Rights Watch, "Tanzania: In the Name of Security: Forced Round-Ups of Refugees," *Human rights Watch Africa* 11, no. 4 (Tanzania), in a section titled "Background: From Offers of Citizenship to Increased Hostility" (July 1999): 2.
34. Human Rights Watch, "Tanzania: In the Name of Security."
35. Dennis McNamara, director, UNHCR Division of International Protection, to the House Committee on International Relations, Sub-Committee on International Operations and Human Rights; Hearing on "Rwanda: Genocide and the Continuing Cycle of Violence," May 5, 1998, Washington, D.C.
36. Profile of Repatriation Activities, UNHCR Sub-Office, Ngara, Tanzania, March 15, 1996.
37. Johan Pottier, "Relief and Repatriation: Views by Rwandan Refugees; Lessons for Humanitarian Aid Workers," *African Affairs* 95 (1996): 403-429, esp. 423.
38. Another example involved UNHCR's attempt to activate the

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“Tripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Repatriation of Rwandese Refugees from Tanzania,” signed by UNHCR and the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments in April, 1995. The agreement stated that “voluntary repatriation, where feasible, constitutes the best durable solution for the refugee problem” and contained pledges of support from the two governments to guarantee refugee protection during and after the return. Circulating the document in 1996, the UNHCR head of sub-office invited NGO “comments and suggestions on what may be done” to speed the repatriation process “in light of the current situation in Rwanda.” (“Discussions/Consultations Concerning Voluntary Repatriation,” UNHCRMemo NGA/HSO/404/96, October 2, 1996, Ngara.)

39. Connelly, “Refugees or Hostages?”

40. In reality, this was the Muslim refugees’ second attempt to repatriate — they had tried in 1995 as well, but that effort, for reasons that are unclear (those present in Ngara at the time variously blamed UNHCR or the Rwandan government) never got off the ground.

41. For more information, Human Rights Watch, “Tanzania: In the Name of Security.” See also Marc Sommers, “A Child’s Nightmare: Burundian Children at Risk” (New York: Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1998).

42. Ellen Lange, “The International Rescue Committee Education Programme for Refugees in Guinea, 1991-98: A Best Practice Study,” (Geneva: UNHCR/PTSS, 1998).

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44. If donors are reluctant to support emergency education for refugees, they may be even more reluctant to support education for IDPs. This has certainly been the case in Sierra Leone, where the quality of education in IDP camp schools and across the country was generally very low while in counterpart schools in refugee camps was comparatively high.

45. A similar challenge awaited the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), which was in charge of education for Liberian refugees in the Ivory Coast.

46. See, for example, Pilar Aguilar and Gonzalo Retamal, “Rapid

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Educational Response in Complex Emergencies: A discussion document” (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1998); Pilar Aguilar and Mark Richmond, “Emergency Educational Response in the Rwandan Crisis,” in Gonzalo Retamal and Ruth Aedo-Richmond, eds., *Education as a Humanitarian Response* (London and Herndon, Va.: Cassel, 1998): 119-141; Jo Boyden and Paul Ryder, “The Provision of Education to Children Affected by Armed Conflict,” Oxford, UK (June 1996); and Graca Machel, “The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Report of the Expert of the Secretary-General,” submitted pursuant to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly A/RES/48/157 to the Fifty-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Advance Copy), 1996. An assessment of Teacher Emergency Package’s (TEP) advantages and challenges can be found in Marc Sommers, “Emergency Education for Children,” Working Paper, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on NGOs and Forced Migration, Cambridge, MA, 1999.

47. The UNESCO-PEER office is based in Nairobi, Kenya. PEER stands for Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction.

48. UNESCO-PEER’s TEP is an educational model that has been generically labeled a “school kit,” and is similar to UNICEF’s School-in-a-Box. School kits are actually only the best known component of a larger, more integrated educational approach, beginning with a recreational kit and followed by the TEP and then the reintroduction of the appropriate curriculum into schools. The most detailed description of this larger model is Pilar Aguilar and Gonzalo Retamal’s “Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies: A discussion document,” Geneva, International Bureau of Education, 1998.

49. For more information on this subject, see Sommers, “Emergency Education for Children.”

## Chapter 6

1. Astri Suhrke, et al., *The Kosovo refugee crisis: An independent evaluation of UNHCR’s emergency preparedness and response* (Geneva: UNHCR [Pre-Publication Edition], February 2000): 73.



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## APPENDIX I

### ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (Sierra Leone)
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (U.S. State Department)
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CFA	Committee on Food Aid (Sierra Leone)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [before January 1998]
DRA	Disaster Relief Agency (Tanzania)
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPMU	Education Program Management Unit (Tanzania)
ERD	Emergency Response Division (UNDP)
ERT	Emergency Response Team (UNHCR)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNP	Gross national product
HACU	Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (OCHA)
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator (UN)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JEEAR	Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières

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NCRRR	National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation (Sierra Leone)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NTC	National Technical Committee (Sierra Leone)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)
PEER	Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (UNESCO)
RC	Resident Coordinator (UNDP)
ResRep	Resident Representative (UNDP)
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTC	Regional Technical Committee (Sierra Leone)
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SMT	Security Management Team (UN)
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TCRS	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
TEP	Teacher Emergency Package (UNESCO-PEER)
UAC	Unaccompanied children
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Exam Council
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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## APPENDIX II

### CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS

#### Ngara/Rwanda

- Oct. 1, 1990      Rwandan Patriotic Front troops enter Byumba Prefecture, Rwanda, from Uganda, commencing a civil war.
- Aug. 1, 1992      A cease fire and preliminary peace accord is signed between the Rwandan government and the RPF.
- Aug. 4, 1993      After months of negotiations, the Arusha Accords are signed in Arusha, Tanzania, between the Rwandan government and the RPF.
- Oct. 21, 1993      Melchior Ndadaye, Burundi's recently elected president, is assassinated. In the ensuing ethnic violence, 50,000 Burundian people are killed, nearly all civilians.
- December 1993      With estimates of a million or more Burundians displaced from their homes, Burundi refugees pour into Rwanda and Tanzania. The camps in Tanzania are remote and difficult to reach, the humanitarian response is underfunded and poorly organized. Estimates of the refugee population range from 245,000 to more than 500,000.
- February 1994      Facing disease and starvation, most of the Burundi refugees return to Burundi. About 40,000 remain in Tanzania. Most are eventually transferred to Lukole Camp in Ngara District.

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April 6, 1994	The airplane carrying presidents Ntaryamira of Burundi and Habyarimana of Rwanda is shot down near the Kigali airport. Rwanda's genocide begins later in the day.
April 28, 1994	About 250,000 Rwandans cross the Rusumo Bridge at the Tanzanian border in 24 hours. They are placed at a site called Benaco in Ngara District. The Rwandan refugee population will eventually total more than a half million.
July 1994	Rémy Gatete, former Kibungo Bourgmestre, suspected <i>genocidaire</i> , and leader in the Rwandan refugee camps, organizes a demonstration after UNHCR asks him to report to its office in Benaco refugee camp. He is subsequently arrested and removed from Ngara District.
April 1996	European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Emma Bonino and USAID Administrator Brian Atwood visit the Rwandan refugee camps in Ngara District and insist that the Rwandan's stay in Tanzania "must be temporary."
November 1996	About 600,000 Rwandan refugees return to their country from Zaire in the wake of clashes near the refugee camps involving the Zairian national army and former Rwandan government soldiers against Zairian insurgents led by Laurent Kabila and the Rwandan national army.
Dec. 5, 1996	Tanzanian government and UNHCR officials announce a plan to repatriate the Rwandan refugees by year's end. The plan involves coordination with the Rwandan government.

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Dec. 12, 1996      More than 500,000 Rwandan refugees in Ngara District abandon the refugee camps and head into the Tanzanian interior. The Tanzanian army acts swiftly to reverse their direction and forcibly turns them towards Rwanda. As the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments had wished but in a fashion that marginalized the international humanitarian community, nearly all the refugees were repatriated to Rwanda before the end of the month.

### **Sierra Leone**

March 1991      The RUF enters Sierra Leone from Liberia with Foday Sankoh at the helm, thus beginning the RUF's insurgency against the government.

April 1992      Sierra Leonean Army Captain Valentine Strasser overthrows President Joseph Saidu Momoh in a military coup and assumes the presidency.

November 1994      The UN declares Sierra Leone a humanitarian emergency months after some UN and international NGO agencies have begun to shift their operations from development to emergency work.

January 1996      Strasser is overthrown by Brigadier Julius Maada Bio in a military coup.

February 1996      Multi-party parliamentary and presidential elections end four years of military rule.

March 1996      Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a career UNDP official, becomes president in a runoff election.

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November 1996	Kabbah and Sankoh sign the first peace agreement between the government and the RUF.
May 1997	A military coup led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council forces Kabbah into exile.
June 1997	Koroma invites the RUF to join the junta government in Freetown. Sankoh, under arrest in March 1997 in Nigeria on an arms charge, is made Koroma's vice-president in absentia.
October 1997	A second peace treaty is signed between Kabbah and the AFRC-RUF coalition.
February 1998	The Nigerian-led ECOMOG force chases the AFRC and RUF from Freetown, returning them to their forest hideaways. Kabbah is reinstated as president.
October 1998	Foday Sankoh is sentenced to death by the High Court in Sierra Leone. Kabbah calls for rebel forces to surrender and offers amnesty.
January 1999	The RUF, with AFRC support, invades Freetown a second time, leaving waves of atrocities and mutilations in their wake, but ECOMOG eventually chases them from the capital.
July 1999	The third peace treaty between Kabbah and the RUF is negotiated, awarding the RUF key positions in the government.
May 1, 2000	Five hundred UN peacekeeper troops are taken hostage by the RUF. Most are soon released, yet the peace treaty unravels and insecurity plagues the countryside.

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### APPENDIX III

#### AGENCIES CONSULTED

In addition to independent regional and humanitarian experts, refugees, and IDPs, officials from the following organizations were interviewed.

Action Contre la Faim  
CARE  
Catholic Relief Services  
Concern Universal  
European Community Humanitarian Office  
Economic Community of West African States  
Monitoring Group  
Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
International Federation of Red Cross  
and Red Crescent Societies  
International Crisis Group  
International Rescue Committee  
Lutheran World Federation  
Merlin  
Médecins sans Frontières-Belgium  
Médecins sans Frontières-Holland  
Oxfam Great Britain  
Programme for Education for  
Emergencies and Reconstruction  
The Sierra Leonean and Tanzanian governments  
Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service  
USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance  
and Office of Transition Initiatives  
United Nations Development Program  
United Nations Children's Fund  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian  
Affairs, including Humanitarian Assistance  
Coordination Unit in Sierra Leone  
United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone  
United Nations Security Office

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U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees  
and Migration  
World Food Programme  
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
World Bank  
World Vision

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## APPENDIX IV

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND RESEARCH INSTITUTION

**Marc Sommers** has worked on a number of humanitarian, human rights and security issues, including urban refugees, conflict resolution, emergency and peace education, the impact of war on children and youths, the right to work and civilian-military relations. A research fellow at Boston University's African Studies Center, he has served as a consultant for a wide range of agencies, including the Academy for Educational Development, CARE, Conflict Management Group, Oxfam America, UNESCO, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Dr. Sommers has carried out fieldwork in a number of African, Latin American, and European countries, including Sierra Leone in 1997 and 1998 and Ngora District, Tanzania, in 1994, 1996, and 1998. His research has been supported by the Ford, H.F. Guggenheim, Mellon and Rotary Foundations and the Social Science Research Council. A forthcoming book, entitled *Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania*, will be published by Berghahn Books in 2001.

**The Humanitarianism & War Project** is an independent policy research initiative underwritten by some 50 UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and foundations. Since its inception in 1991, it has conducted thousands of interviews on complex emergencies around the world, producing an array of case studies, training materials, books, articles, and opinion pieces for a diverse audience.

The project is currently examining the process of institutional learning and change among humanitarian organizations in the post-Cold War period and highlighting innovative practices devised by individual agencies to address specific challenges. Current research builds on case studies, both geographical (the Persian Gulf, Central America and the Caribbean, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, the Great Lakes Region, and the Caucasus) and thematic (the interface between humanitarian action and peacekeeping, and the roles of the media and the military in the humanitarian sphere). Re-

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search is tailored to the expressed needs of humanitarian organizations, the primary constituency of the project.

Intergovernmental organizations that have contributed to the project are the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), OECD Development Centre, United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), DHA, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, the UN Special Emergency Program for the Horn of Africa, UN Staff College, UN University, UN Volunteers, WFP, and WHO.

NGO contributors are the American Red Cross, CARE-US, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Canada), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee (U.S.), Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), Mercy Corps International, the Nordic Red Cross Societies, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam-UK, Save the Children-UK, Save the Children-US, Trócaire, and World Vision-US.

Project donors also include the governments of Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Generous support has come as well from the Arias Foundation, Ford Foundation, Fourth Freedom Forum, Howard Gilman Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, John D. and Catherine T. Rockefeller Foundation, and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The Project is an activity of Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, which was established in 1986 to facilitate analysis of global problems and to develop initiatives to address them. Additional information about the Institute and the Project may be found at <[http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute)>. As of September 2000, the Project will be located at the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University's School of Nutrition and Science Policy. More information will be available from <<http://www.hwproject.tufts.edu>>.

- #19: *Mexico: The Artist is a Woman* by Lucretia Giese, Carmen Boulosa, Marjorie Agosin, Sandra Berler, Elena Gascón-Vera, Laura Riesco, and Margo Glantz; edited by Regina Cortina
- #20: *Humanitarian Action and Security in Liberia 1989-1994* by Colin Scott, in collaboration with Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss
- #21: *Armed Conflict in Georgia: A Case Study in Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping* by S. Neil MacFarlane, Larry Minear, and Stephen Shenfield
- #22: *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda* by Antonio Donini
- #23: *Haiti Held Hostage: International Responses to the Quest for Nationhood 1986-1996* by Robert Maguire (team leader), Edwige Balutansky, Jacques Fomerand, Larry Minear, William G. O'Neill, Thomas G. Weiss, and Sarah Zaidi
- #24: *Imagining a Free Cuba: Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and José Martí* by Cathy L. Jade, George Monteiro, Nelson R. Orringer, Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Ivan A. Schulman, Thomas E. Skidmore, and Wayne S. Smith; edited by José Amor y Vázquez
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- #36: *NATO and Humanitarian Action in the Kosovo Crisis* by Larry Minear, Ted van Baarda, and Marc Sommers
- #37: *Humanitarian Action: Social Science Connections* by Stephen C. Lubkemann, Larry Minear, and Thomas G. Weiss
- #38: *When Needs Are Rights: An Overview of UN Efforts to Integrate Human Rights in Humanitarian Action* by Karen Kenny
- #39: *Humanitarian Action: A Transatlantic Agenda for Operations and Research* by Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss
- #40: *The Dynamics of Coordination* by Marc Sommers

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