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EVIDENCE REPORT

No 205

A thin, light brown curved line starts from the left edge of the page, curves upwards and to the right, and ends near the top right corner.

The UN at 70, and the UK

Development Cooperation, Humanitarian Action, and Peace and Security: Lessons from Experience and Policy Recommendations

Academic Editors: Richard Jolly and Michael Askwith

October 2016

The IDS programme on Strengthening Evidence-based Policy works across seven key themes. Each theme works with partner institutions to co-construct policy-relevant knowledge and engage in policy-influencing processes.

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Broken Chair Monument, Palais des Nations, Geneva



THE UN AT 70, AND THE UK.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, HUMANITARIAN ACTION, AND PEACE AND SECURITY: LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Broken Chair Monument, Palais des Nations, Geneva

A symbol of interdependence:

*Development cooperation, humanitarian action, peace and security
and human rights*

This wooden sculpture is by the Swiss artist Daniel Berset and was constructed by the carpenter Louis Genève from a project by Paul Vermeulen, co-founder and director of Handicap International Suisse. Situated near the entrance to the Palais des Nations in Geneva, this monumental giant chair with one broken leg symbolises opposition to land mines and cluster bombs and is intended as thought-piece for politicians and other visitors.

Standing 39 feet high and weighing 5.5 tons it was erected in 1997 and dedicated to support the signature of an international treaty on a ban on cluster bombs in 2008 (the Convention on Cluster Munitions).

This Evidence Report reinterprets the meaning of the sculpture to illustrate some of the key themes of the UN at 70 Witness Seminar programme, to show:

- The interdependence of the four key pillars of UN support: *development cooperation, humanitarian action, peace and security* and *human rights*;
- The principle that these themes should be integrated together, and not considered as independent 'silos': if one or more themes are not adequately addressed, the total impact of UN support, norms and standards are weakened;
- The UN is uniquely placed to provide legitimacy, standards, norms and goals to address international challenges in all four areas.

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms of UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies ¹

The UN System is made up of the UN itself and many affiliated funds, programmes and specialized agencies, all with their own membership, leadership and budget. The funds and programmes are financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions. The specialized agencies are independent international organisations funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions.

1 Funds and Programmes

UNCTAD The *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* is the United Nations body responsible for dealing with development issues, particularly international trade – the main driver of development. (<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/Home.aspx>)

UNDP The *United Nations Development Programme* is the UN's global development network, focusing on the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and environment, and HIV/AIDS. The UNDP, with offices and staff in 177 countries, also coordinates national and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals. (www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html)

UNEP The *United Nations Environment Programme*, established in 1972, is the voice for the environment within the United Nations System. The UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. (www.unep.org/)

UNFPA The *United Nations Population Fund* is the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled. (www.unfpa.org/)

UN-Habitat The mission of the *United Nations Human Settlements Programme* is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all. (<http://unhabitat.org/>)

UNICEF The *United Nations Children's Fund* advocates for rights and goals for children and provides long-term humanitarian and development assistance to children and mothers. (www.unicef.org/)

UNODC The *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* helps member states fight drugs, crime, and terrorism. (www.unodc.org/)

UNRWA The *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees* has contributed to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees. Its services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict. It reports only to the UN General Assembly. (www.unrwa.org/)

UN Women *UN Women* merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN System, which focus exclusively on promoting and supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. (www.unwomen.org/en)

WFP The *World Food Programme* aims to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. It is the world's largest humanitarian agency. Every year, the programme feeds almost 80 million people in around 75 countries. (www.wfp.org/)

2 Specialized agencies of the UN

The specialized agencies of the UN are autonomous organisations working with the United Nations. All were brought into relationship with the UN through negotiated agreements. Some existed before the First World War. Some were associated with the League of Nations. Others were created almost simultaneously with the UN. Others were created by the UN to meet emerging needs.

FAO The *Food and Agriculture Organization* leads international efforts to fight hunger. It is both a forum for negotiating agreements between developing and developed countries and a source of technical knowledge and information to aid development. (www.fao.org/home/en/)

ICAO The *International Civil Aviation Organization* sets international rules on air navigation, the investigation of air accidents, and aerial border-crossing procedures. (www.icao.int/Pages/default.aspx)

IFAD The *International Fund for Agricultural Development*, since it was created in 1977, has focused exclusively on rural poverty reduction, working with poor rural populations in developing countries to eliminate poverty, hunger and malnutrition; raise their productivity and incomes; and improve the quality of their lives. (www.ifad.org/)

ILO The *International Labour Organization*, founded in 1919, has tripartite membership comprising governments, employers and workers. It promotes the idea of decent work and supports international labour rights by formulating international standards on the freedom to associate, collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour, and equality of opportunity and treatment. (www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm)

IMF The *International Monetary Fund* fosters economic growth and employment by providing temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance of payments adjustment and technical assistance. (www.imf.org/external/index.htm)

IMO The *International Maritime Organization* has created a comprehensive shipping regulatory framework, addressing safety and environmental concerns, legal matters, technical cooperation, security and efficiency. (www.imo.org/en/Pages/Default.aspx)

ITU The *International Telecommunication Union* is the specialized agency for information and communications technologies. It is committed to connecting all the world's people – wherever they live and whatever their means. Through their work, they protect and support everyone's fundamental right to communicate. (www.itu.int/en/Pages/default.aspx)

UNESCO The *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* focuses on everything from teacher training to helping improve education worldwide to protecting important historical and cultural sites around the world. UNESCO added 28 new World Heritage Sites this year to the list of irreplaceable treasures that will be protected for today's travellers and future generations. (<http://en.unesco.org/>)

UNIDO The *United Nations Industrial Development Organization* is the specialized agency of the UN that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalisation and environmental sustainability. (www.unido.org/unido-united-nations-industrial-development-organization.html)

UNWTO The *World Tourism Organization* is the UN agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. (www2.unwto.org/)

UPU The *Universal Postal Union* is the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players. It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services. (www.upu.int/en.html)

WHO The *World Health Organization* is responsible for global vaccination campaigns, responding to public health emergencies, defending against pandemic influenza, and leading the way for eradication campaigns against life-threatening diseases like polio and malaria. (www.who.int/en/)

WIPO The *World Intellectual Property Organization* protects intellectual property throughout the world through 23 international treaties. (www.wipo.int/portal/en/index.html)

WMO The *World Meteorological Organization* facilitates the free international exchange of meteorological data and information and the furtherance of its use in aviation, shipping, security and agriculture, among other things. (www.wmo.int/pages/index_en.html)

World Bank The *World Bank* focuses on poverty reduction and the improvement of living standards worldwide by providing low-interest loans, interest-free credit, and grants to developing countries for education, health, infrastructure and communications, among other things. The World Bank works in over 100 countries. (www.worldbank.org/)

- World Bank Group
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
- International Development Association (IDA)
- International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)

3 Other entities

OHCHR The *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* works to promote and protect the human rights that are guaranteed under international law and stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

UNAIDS The *Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS* is co-sponsored by ten UN System agencies: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, the ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank and has *ten goals* related to stopping and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. (www.unaids.org/en)

UNHCR The *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* protects refugees worldwide and facilitates their return home or resettlement. (www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home)

UNOCHA The *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (formerly the *UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction*) serves as the focal point in the United Nations System for the coordination of disaster reduction. (www.unisdr.org/)

UNOPS The *United Nations Office for Project Services* is an operational arm of the UN, supporting the successful implementation of its partners' peace-building, humanitarian and development projects around the world. (www.unops.org/english/Pages/Home.aspx)

4 Related organisations

CTBTO The *Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization* promotes the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (which is not yet in force) and the build-up of the verification regime so that it is operational when the Treaty enters into force. (www.ctbto.org/)

IAEA The *International Atomic Energy Agency* is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field. The Agency works with its member states and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies. (www.iaea.org/)

OPCW The *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons* is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997. OPCW member states work together to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. (www.opcw.org/)

WTO The *World Trade Organization* is a forum for governments to negotiate trade agreements, and a place where member governments try to sort out the trade problems they face with each other. (www.wto.org/)

Main UN bodies

- General Assembly – GA President
- Security Council – SC President
- Economic and Social Council
- Secretariat – Secretary-General
- International Court of Justice
- Trusteeship Council

Main UN offices

- New York
- Geneva
- Nairobi
- Vienna

with regional offices located in Addis Ababa (Africa), Bangkok (Asia and the Pacific), Geneva (Europe), Beirut (West Asia/Middle East), and Santiago (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Abbreviations

AEP	Associate Expert Programme
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
BAFUNCS	British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BPPE	Bureau for Programme Planning and Evaluation
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
C4C	Campaign for Change
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CAS	(World Bank) Country Assistance Strategies
CBO	community-based organisation
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCBH	Centre for Contemporary British History
CEB	Chief Executives Board of the UN
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CMO	Chief Military Observer
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPD	Country Programme document
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
CSDHA	Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs
CSN	Country Strategy Note
CSO	civil society organisation
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DaO	Delivering as One process
DCMG	Dame Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George
DFI	(France) Délégation des Fonctionnaires Internationaux
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DIEC	Development and International Economic Cooperation
DND	Department of Narcotic Drugs
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR	Deputy Resident Representative
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
DTCD	Department of Technical Cooperation for Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EPTA	Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FUNDS	Future UN Development System

GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GAO	US Government Accountability Office
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccinations and Immunization
GDP	gross domestic product
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GNP	gross national product
GPPI	Global Public Policy Institute
HDR	Human Development Report
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
HLCP	High-Level Committee on Programmes
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
HR	human rights
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRuF	Human Rights up Front
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICDAIT	International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
IDA	International Development Association
IDNDR	International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMCO	Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISDR	International Strategy Disaster Reduction
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Programmes
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
KCL	King's College London
LNGO	local non-governmental organisation
MAR	Multilateral Assessment Review
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

MEFF	Multilateral Effectiveness Framework
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (renamed United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [MONUSCO], 2010)
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRA	non-resident agency
NSS/SDSR	(UK) National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OG	Outcome Group
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OISL	OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka
ONUCI	Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire
PDSRSG	Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
PSD	programme support document
PSVI	Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative
PVO	private voluntary organisation
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RR	Resident Representative
SCN	Standing Committee on Nutrition
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SL-IRP	Sri Lanka Internal Review Panel
SNGO	'Southern' non-governmental organisation
SR	Special Rapporteur
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
SWAP	sector-wide approach
TA	technical assistance
TAB	United Nations Technical Assistance Board
TCC	(UN) Troop Contributing Countries
TCPR/QCPR	triennial (later quadrennial) comprehensive policy reviews
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNA	United Nations Association
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNA-UK	United Nations Association-UK
UNAVEM	United Nations Angola Verification Mission
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation

UNCRP	UN Career Records Project
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDG	UN Development Group
UN DOCO	United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	UN Development System
UNDTCD	United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFDAC	United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIHIP	UN Intellectual History Project
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office in Vienna
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UNSF	UN Special Fund
UNTAB	UN Technical Assistance Board
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UPU	Universal Postal Union
USG	Under-Secretary-General
USP	unique selling point
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WCDDR	World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
WEOG	Western Europe and Others Group
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul, May 2016)
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WS	Witness Seminar
WSSCC	Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
WTO	World Trade Organization

Note

¹ www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html.

Dedication to Margaret Anstee, DCMG, 1926–2016

This special UN at 70 IDS Evidence Report is dedicated to Margaret Anstee DCMG, a tireless, imaginative and inspiring servant of, and advocate for, the UN for over 50 years. She contributed papers to each of the three Witness Seminars and participated in WS1 at IDS.

Margaret Joan Anstee – the UK’s most experienced and senior woman in the UN

Margaret Anstee was a pioneer in opening up for women diplomatic and international posts previously the exclusive domain of men, first with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Latin American Department in 1948. She had a first posting abroad in 1952, but as the spouse of a British diplomat in the Philippines. In Manila she joined the newly opened office of the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) as a local staff member, and administrative officer until 1954, while also serving as Officer-in-Charge on several occasions.

After an interlude in the UK toying with the possibility of returning to an academic career, she accepted an invitation to take the post of UN Deputy Resident Representative in Colombia, where she served from 1956–57, the first international woman field officer to take up a representational position in the UN, thus starting a long association with Latin America. This was followed by rapid promotion to Resident Representative (RR) in Uruguay (1957–59), and simultaneously as acting RR in Argentina (1958–59) followed by Bolivia (RR) (1960–65) and Ethiopia (RR) (1965–67).

Margaret, or as she was also known, Joan, had a further interlude from UN service from 1967–68 when she was invited by the late Thomas Balogh, the head of the new Think Tank in No. 10 Downing St, the first of its kind, set up to provide independent support and advice to the prime minister, Harold Wilson on economic and other issues, as his deputy.

Faced thereafter with the choice of staying in the UK, either in the political sphere or the civil service, she accepted UNDP’s offer of the Resident Representative post in Morocco, but not before agreeing to an invitation from the UNDP Administrator to assist Sir Robert Jackson in the drafting of UNDP’s path-breaking *Capacity Study of the UN Development System* (UN, 1969). Margaret spent a year in Geneva (1968–69) on this assignment before taking up her fourth Resident Representative’s post in Morocco (1969–72). She returned to Latin America as UNDP Resident Representative in Chile (1972–74), subsequently moving to New York as Deputy Director of UNDP’s Latin America Bureau (1974–77) and then Assistant Administrator of the Bureau of Programme Planning and Evaluation, the first woman to reach that level in the UNDP.

In 1978 Margaret moved from UNDP to the UN as Assistant-Secretary General responsible for the operations of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD), UNDP’s second largest executing agency (1978–87). She was then appointed Director General of the UN Office in Vienna (UNOV) (1987–91), with the rank of Under-Secretary General (USG), the first woman USG, and the most senior British woman in the UN. She was also Head of the UN Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and Coordinator of all UN drug-related activities. She also served as the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to Bolivia and Peru, and for disaster relief operations after the Mexican earthquake (1985), Chernobyl (1991) and the Kuwait burning oil wells (1991).

Margaret concluded her UN career as Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) responsible for the UN Verification Mission in Angola (UNAVEM II) in 1992; again the first woman to lead a military peacekeeping mission. She was made a Dame in 1994 and has continued to lecture and write about the UN as well as participate in training exercises on peacekeeping. She wrote of her UN career in *Never Learn to Type* (Wiley, 2004). She died on 25 August 2016.

Notes on Contributors

Dame Margaret Anstee's UN service (1952–93) covered development, humanitarian, and peace/security matters. She served in eight countries (1954–74), including as UNDP Resident Representative in *Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Morocco* and *Chile*. From 1974–87 she occupied senior UNDP and UN positions in *New York*, and as Director-General of the UN Office in *Vienna* (UNOV) (1987–92) the first woman Under-Secretary-General. From 1992–93 she was the Secretary-General's Special Representative in *Angola* (UNAVEM II), the first woman head of a UN peacekeeping mission. She was responsible for humanitarian/disaster relief programmes in *Bangladesh* (1973), *Zambia* (1973), *Chernobyl* (1991), *Mexico* (1985), *Kuwait* oil wells (1991).

Michael Askwith served with UNDP (1968–98) in *Algeria, Chad* (UNA-UK volunteer), *Haiti, Guyana, Congo (Brazzaville)* (twice), *Mauritania, Saudi Arabia* and *Equatorial Guinea*, with three assignments in *Headquarters*. He was UN RC/UNDP RR in the *Congo (Brazzaville)* and *Equatorial Guinea*, and Head, UNDP Liaison Office and Representative, UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in *Eritrea*. Since 2000, he has carried out consultancies for UNDP, UNDG, UNESCO, UNV and NGOs, most focusing on UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), UNDP and UNESCO country programming and projects. He is Coordinator of the UN Career Records Project and helped to coordinate the Witness Seminar programme.

Martin Barber started with UNHCR (*Laos, Thailand*) (1975–81), and later as Director, British Refugee Council in *London* (1981–88). He then rejoined UN to work with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) in *Afghanistan* based in Islamabad (1989–96), including as Humanitarian Coordinator (1995–96), initiating the first UN mine action programme. He was Deputy SRSG, *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (1996–98) before transferring to *New York* as Chief, UNOCHA Policy Development and Advocacy Branch and later as Director, Mine Action Service (2000–05). He is presently Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh. His autobiography, *Blinded by Humanity* was published in 2015. He helped to coordinate WS2.

Stephen Browne started with the UN in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in *Bangkok*. He then served with UNDP in *Somalia, New York, Ukraine* (as the first UN Representative), and as UNRC/UNDP RR in *Rwanda*, before returning to ESCAP. He concluded his career as Deputy Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC), *Geneva*. He is presently Co-director of the Future of the UN Development System (FUNDS), and lectures in Institutes for International Studies in *New York* and *Geneva*. He is the author of seven books and many articles on development and the UN.

John Burley started with UNDP in *New York* in 1972 as technical adviser in economic planning after serving as an ODI development economist in *Uganda*. He then worked in the UN Office for Development and International Economic Cooperation (DIEC) in *New York*, helping to establish the UN Resident Coordinator system and strengthen reporting on UN operational activities. He transferred to UNCTAD, *Geneva*, in charge of Technical Cooperation and Interagency Affairs (1988–99) and of the Resource Management Service (1999–2003), serving as Director, Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency (2003–04). Since 2004, he has worked as a consultant.

Jeffrey Crisp was formerly Head of Policy Development and Evaluation at UNHCR, *Geneva*, and is currently a Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Centre, *University of Oxford*, and an Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. He has also held senior positions with Refugees International (Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy) and the Global Commission on International Migration (Director of Policy and Research) as well as working for the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, the British Refugee Council and Coventry University.

Nicola Dahrendorf has worked with UN organisations (UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations); NGOs (Conciliation Resources, Save the Children and Oxfam); the UK Government (DFID); and in academia (School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and King's College London. In the UN she worked primarily on humanitarian emergencies and in six peacekeeping operations (*Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo* and *Haiti*), focusing on peace-building, conflict resolution, security and justice reform, civilian protection, and the reduction of sexual and gender-based violence. She is presently a consultant and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, King's College London.

Alan Doss CMG started as a UNA-UK volunteer in *Kenya*. This was followed by assignments in *UNDP Headquarters, Vietnam, and China* before serving as UNRC/UNDP RR in *Benin, Zaire and Thailand* and Director of the UN Border Relief Operation, for resettlement of displaced Cambodian refugees in *Thailand* (1990–93). He was then appointed Director of the UNDP European Office in *Geneva*, later becoming the first Director of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in *New York*. He then held four senior Representative appointments on behalf of the Secretary-General, responsible for development, humanitarian support and peacekeeping in *Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Liberia*, (with the rank of Under-Secretary-General (USG), and *Democratic Republic of Congo* (also USG). He is presently Executive Director of the Geneva-based Kofi Annan Foundation. He was awarded the CMG in the 2011 New Years Honours, for services to the UN.

Robert England, started his UN career with UNDP as a UNA-UK Volunteer in *Uganda*. This was followed by four field assignments in *Tanzania, Zambia, Thailand* and *Bangladesh* and six years in *New York* as UNDP's Budget Director (1984–90). Between 1990 and 2004 he served as UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in *Sri Lanka* (1990–95), *Pakistan* (1995–99) and *Thailand* (1999–2004). Since retiring from UNDP in 2004, he has carried out many consultancy missions for UN organisations, the latest being to assist preparation of a strategic framework for UN work in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock was a career diplomat from 1969–2004, serving in a number of postings, including in *Dubai, Washington, Saudi Arabia, Paris* and *New York*. He served as FCO Political Director in *London* (1996–2003), as UK Ambassador to the UN in *New York* (1998–2003) and as UK Special Envoy for *Iraq* (2003–04). After retiring from government service, Sir Jeremy directed the Ditchley Foundation, Oxford from 2004 to 2010. He served as Chairman of the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) (2010–16).

Sir Richard Jolly was IDS Director from 1972 to 1981. He then joined UNICEF as Deputy Executive Director, and Assistant Secretary-General (1981–96), during which he co-authored the path-breaking *Adjustment with a Human Face* (2012). From 1996–2000 he was Special Adviser to the UNDP Administrator and Director of the Human Development Office, responsible for the annual UNDP Human Development Reports. In retirement, as co-director of the UN Intellectual History Project, he oversaw work on the 14-volume history of the UN's contributions to economic and social development since its inception. He is a former Chairman of UNA-UK and BAFUNCS.

Richard Longhurst is a development economist with specific areas of expertise in rural poverty, agriculture, food and nutrition, child health and child labour, mainstreaming human rights and humanitarian programming. He has worked as a staff member for the World Bank, Ford Foundation, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Office (ILO) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, where he was manager of the evaluation unit, and consultant for international organisations, (IFAD, IMO, DFID, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO). His work has been published in edited books, chapters, journal articles and project reports. He is presently a Research Associate at IDS.

Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, started as political correspondent at *The Economist*, then worked for UNHCR in *Thailand*. After becoming founding editor of the *Economist Development Report* and working with a US-based communications consultancy, he became World Bank Vice-President, External Affairs in 1994, which included responsibility for UN relations. Appointed Administrator of UNDP in 1999, (serving concurrently as *Chef de Cabinet* to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan from January 2005), he served as UN Deputy Secretary-General (April–December 2006). He was knighted in 2007, becoming a peer (June 2007) on joining the Gordon Brown's Government as Minister of State with responsibility for Africa, Asia and the UN. His autobiography, *The Unfinished Global Revolution* was published in 2011.

Edward Mortimer CMG was foreign correspondent and editorial writer at *The Times* for 18 years, and foreign affairs commentator for the *Financial Times* (1987–98). From 1998 to 2006, he served as Kofi Annan's Chief Speechwriter, and concurrently as Director of Communications from 2001. After leaving the UN, he worked as Senior Vice-President and Chief Programme Officer of the Salzburg Global Seminar (2007–12) and chair, Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice (2010–15). He is a Distinguished Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford since 2013 and President of the British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants (BAFUNCS).

Angela Raven-Roberts' career spans 30 years of work with NGOs, the UN and academia in the humanitarian sector. She worked for UNICEF *New York* in the Office of Emergency Programmes (1991–98) covering the Horn of Africa, Mozambique and Angola. She was Chief of Emergencies, UNICEF Regional office in *Geneva* covering East/Central Europe and Central Asia (2004 and 2010). In 1998 she took a leave of absence from UNICEF to join Tufts University as Director of Academic Programmes for the Feinstein International Famine Centre. She is currently a Research Associate at the Institute of Gender Studies, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

Professor Sir Adam Roberts is Senior Research Fellow in International Relations and Emeritus Fellow, Balliol College, Oxford. He was President of the British Academy (2009–13). With interests in civil resistance, international law, the UN, strategic studies, and the history and theories of international relations, his UN-related articles and books include *United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations* (1993); *The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945* (2008); Chapter on *The Use of Force: A System of Selective Security* in *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century* (2016).

Natalie Samarasinghe has been UNA-UK Executive Director since 2006, the first woman to hold this role. She has authored or edited publications for UNA-UK and external outlets, and is editor-at-large for the Association's flagship magazine, *New World*. In 2015, she co-edited an eight-volume compendium of articles on the United Nations for SAGE Publications. She has partnered with the UK National Commission for UNESCO on UN teaching materials; and undertakes consultancy work for UN-related projects. In 2013, she co-founded the 1 for 7 Billion campaign to select the next UN Secretary-General. She helped to coordinate WS3.

David Whaley started as a UNA-UK volunteer with UNDP in *Gabon*, continuing in *Togo*, *Burkina Faso* and *Madagascar* and as UNRC/UNDP RR in *Benin* and *Algeria*. Transferred to *New York*, he served as Director, Operational Activities, UN DIEC and as Deputy Assistant Administrator/Deputy Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and Europe. He continued as UNRC/UNDP RR in *Kenya* and *South Africa*, the first holder of that position. In retirement he assisted the UN in *Pakistan*, *Sri Lanka* and *Nepal* on post-conflict transition and governance, and been active in the promotion of human rights, particularly in *Sri Lanka*.

Preface, Melissa Leach, Director IDS

It was a pleasure to welcome to the IDS in May 2015 the participants of the Witness Seminar on the UK and the UN in Development Cooperation, the first of three such seminars to commemorate the UN's 70th Anniversary. At a time of tumultuous global change and interconnectedness, when the role of global governance and the UN are both more necessary than ever yet acutely questioned, this Seminar was opportune indeed. By bringing together rich personal experiences and reflections, it enabled truly insightful discussion of opportunities and challenges, both past and future. These were well-summarised in the Report of the Seminar and the rich and comprehensive Compendium of Working Papers and Career Summaries prepared in conjunction with this event. I have also been pleased to follow the successful organisation of the two subsequent Witness Seminars on Humanitarian Action, in Oxford on 16 October 2015, and on Peace and Security in London, on 13 January 2016, with similarly compelling reports and documentation.

It is in this context that I invited the compilation of an IDS Evidence Report to capture some of the main themes of all three seminars, drawing out key lessons learned. This report, 'The UN at 70, and the UK' is the result. It includes a series of articles which highlight some of the key messages of the seminars, as well as a range of global perspectives on the changing role of the UN, and a set of specific recommendations communicated with the relevant British Government departments and UN organisations – but also, I hope, of broader significance and interest to scholars and policymakers around the world.

This IDS Evidence Report is a worthy follow-up to the *IDS Bulletin* issued to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UN in 1995, entitled 'Fifty Years On: The UN and Economic and Social Development' (26.4, October 1995, <http://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/idsbo/issue/view/111>). It is also a suitable publication for IDS' own 50th Anniversary year, given how intertwined our own intellectual and institutional history has been with that of the UN. This report bridges the worlds of scholarship, policy and practice. The emphasis on the UK and the experiences of British citizens means fewer voices from the global South than is usual in the IDS Evidence Report series. Indeed what we find here is one set of experiences and accounts of the UN at 70, amongst many possible alternatives. But it is certainly a valuable set, offered with candour as well as expertise, and I hope you will enjoy reading them as much as I have.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations which have been part of this process, the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS) and the UN Career Records Project (UNCRP); the Weston Library (Bodleian), Oxford; King's College London and the Witness Seminar Programme of the Institute of Contemporary British History; All Souls College, Oxford; UNA-UK and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

In addition, the financial contributions of the Department for International Development (DFID) under its Accountable Grant to the IDS for support to WS1; of All Souls College and the Bodleian Library for WS2; and of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) under its grant to UNA-UK for WS3, are gratefully acknowledged. Without this support the seminars and this IDS Evidence Report could not have happened.

The IDS is proud of its long association with the UN, and its many and varied contributions to international development in connection with UN-assisted programmes and projects.

It is our wish that these links will be consolidated and strengthened as the UN enters its eighth decade, and in the context of mutual collaboration and support in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Professor Melissa Leach
Director, IDS

Forewords

Edward Mortimer, President, British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS)

As the UN celebrates its 70th Anniversary, BAFUNCS and its UN Career Records Project (UNCRP) – carried out jointly with the Bodleian Library, Oxford – are very proud to have been involved in organising the series of three Witness Seminars which took place in May and October 2015 and January 2016, covering respectively development cooperation (WS1), humanitarian action (WS2) and the promotion of peace and security (WS3).

The process of bringing together people (mostly UK nationals) who have been witnesses and participants in a vast array of UN-related activities over the past 50 years, to share their experiences and lessons learned, in conjunction with others from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, research institutions, and government, has been both exciting and instructive. There have been many valuable products, in the form of reports, working papers, witness briefs and memoirs. All of these represent significant contributions to the UNCRP and to our collective knowledge of the UK's support to the UN. They also help to raise awareness of the roles of UK nationals in moulding, guiding and making the UN operational in all its complexity and variety.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the IDS, both for hosting the first of the three seminars and for allowing us to use this special UN 70th Anniversary IDS Evidence Report to present some of our findings. We also thank DFID, whose financial support has made this possible, as well as the partner organisations which supported the Seminars themselves. And let me add a personal word of thanks to Richard Jolly and Michael Askwith for their heroic labours in editing this IDS Evidence Report.

We hope that it will be widely read, and that the various contributions will help the UN and its participating agencies, funds and programmes to continue improving and focusing their work, while also encouraging the UK Government to continue supporting it.

Edward Mortimer

President, BAFUNCS, and former Director of Communications, Executive Office of the Secretary-General

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Chairman, UNA-UK

On behalf of UNA-UK, I too am proud and honoured that our Association has contributed to the organisation of all three Witness Seminars. As the primary NGO in the UK responsible for promoting the cause and the principles of the UN, we are delighted to have been able to integrate these seminars into the special activities organised by the UNA-UK to commemorate this landmark anniversary, thereby strengthening its significance to target audiences.

The UK's special historical links with the UN are well known, starting with the first meeting of the General Assembly in the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, and the first preparatory meetings of the Security Council at Church House, Westminster in January 1946. In addition, our many concrete contributions to international peace and development as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council create a record of real achievement and leadership, in a world where consensus-building presents unique challenges.

Given the continuing scope, variety and complexity of the issues facing the international community in the areas of development cooperation, humanitarian action and conflict prevention and in the promotion of human rights in all three areas, the need for a strong and well-staffed United Nations has never been greater. The UNA-UK will continue to lobby for the British Government to play a fully effective role, including through the provision of well-qualified staff to UN specialised agencies, funds and programmes.

Jeremy Greenstock

Chair, UNA-UK, and former UK Permanent Representative to the UN

Introduction: The UN at 70, and the UK

Richard Jolly and Michael Askwith

2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the UN, a good moment for reflection about the strengths, weaknesses and priorities for change needed in the world's most all-embracing international organisation which had already existed for over three times longer than the League of Nations. Such reflections are needed from each of the UN's member countries – and in this IDS Evidence Report, they are insider reflections by UK citizens who have in different ways spent much or all of their careers working for or closely with the organisation, often in many parts of the world.

The three Witness Seminars organised in May and October 2015 and January 2016 capture both personal experiences in a wide diversity of countries and situations, and informed thinking about the international organisation, both of its past and its future. Most of the pieces end with recommendations about ways to strengthen the UN – and, in particular, ways in which the United Kingdom as a major funder and permanent member of the Security Council, could use its influence and resources to help the UN better to adapt to meet future challenges.

The full records of these Witness Seminars and much other background material will be added to the archive records of the UN kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, as part of the UN Career Records Project (UNCRP) and are thus available both historical and further research purposes.

Box 1 What is a Witness Seminar?

'Witness seminars are best described as exercises in oral history. Key participants meet around the seminar table to discuss and debate the issues surrounding the chosen topic as they remember them. Witness seminars thus operate as group interviews, chaired by a senior academic, which are recorded. These recordings are made available to scholars.

ICBH Witness Seminars are widely regarded by contemporary historians and social scientists as among the most useful and innovative forms of oral history. They often prove to be of more value than one-on-one interviews because of the interaction between witnesses stimulated during these discussions. They have been adopted by other institutions, both in Britain and abroad.'

Michael Kandiah, Director, Witness Seminar Programme, Institute for Contemporary British History (ICBH), King's College, University of London

By their nature Witness Seminars ask individuals to review their experiences, with frankness and openness. By definition, their judgements on many issues will be subjective, without the footnotes or sources expected in a normal scholarly article. Their opinions are all the more interesting and important because they have emerged from real experiences. We hope articles in this IDS Evidence Report live up to this – though more than usual, we must point out that the opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

This report starts with Part A. **Global perspectives:** Mark Malloch-Brown, as a former UNDP Administrator and UN Deputy Secretary-General and the UK's most senior former UN official reflects on 'A UN Career, the UN's Four Lives and the Challenges Ahead'. This is followed by reflections on 'The Lessons of Leadership in the UN' by Margaret Anstee, who in a UN career of 41 years became the UK's most senior woman in the UN and first woman to be appointed to Under-Secretary-General. 'A Personal Reflection on Managing Crises' by Alan Doss follows, with 'The Role of Human Rights – The UN's Elusive Third Pillar' following by

David Whaley, who stresses the need for increased attention to human rights in all areas of the UN's work. Natalie Samarasinghe reviews the data on 'UK Representation Within the United Nations System' and the need for the UK to continue to provide highly qualified nationals to provide the leadership and quality of service which the organisation requires for the next phase of its development.

In **Part B Witness Seminars**, the report includes a number of papers drawing on themes and discussions of each of the Witness Seminars.

- *WS1 on Development Cooperation* includes four papers starting with Robert England's 'Reflections and Experiences from the Country Level' reconciling the challenges of promoting international norms and national priorities at country level, followed by John Burley's similar experience at agency headquarters level in 'The Specialized Agencies of the UN: New Challenges and Roles for the Twenty-first Century'. Michael Askwith then draws lessons from his practical experience in the use of UN coordination mechanisms and the tools required for enhanced coherence and impact in 'UN Coordination: Strengthening Coherence, Impact and Tools'. Stephen Browne finally provides some further forward thinking on 'The Future of UN Development Assistance – Norms, Standards and the SDGs', based on the substantial research of the FUNDS project.
- In *WS2 on Humanitarian Action*, Martin Barber provides an overview of the themes discussed in 'People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Challenges for the United Nations and Donor Governments'. This is followed by Angela Raven-Roberts focusing on 'Globalising the Local: Enhancing Support to Local Institutions for Humanitarian Response', Nicola Dahrendorf on 'Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Empowering Women and Girls', Jeffrey Crisp on 'An End to Exile? Refugee Initiative and the Search for Durable Solutions' and ends with Adam Robert's piece on 'The UN and Humanitarian Action: What Have We Learned?'.
- In *WS3 on Peace and Security*, Adam Roberts reflects on 'The UK and the UN Security Council: 70 Years and Counting' while Margaret Anstee provides a personal reflection on 'Experiences in Development and Peacekeeping, and UK Support'. Jeremy Greenstock's concluding remarks focus on 'Lessons and Recommendations from Seven Decades: International Peace and Security'.

In **Part C Recommendations** of each of the three Seminars are brought together.

It is hoped that this IDS Evidence Report will contribute to reminding readers of the many roles UK citizens have played and still play in the UN – and perhaps encourage persons at earlier stages of their careers to consider ways their skills and commitments can contribute to the UN. In addition, it is hoped that the policy implications from these Witness Seminars will be of use both to the UK government as well as the UN System. Finally, it is hoped that the collection of reports, records and papers accumulated during the Witness Seminar programme will serve as a valuable historical and analytical contribution to the UN Career Records Project and repository libraries of UN materials.

PART A: Global Perspectives

A.1 Strengthening the UN and Global Governance¹

Richard Jolly and Richard Longhurst²

Abstract

This article reflects on the ‘unfinished business’ of the UN and other international organisations in addressing present and future challenges of the twenty-first century. It highlights the particular value and contributions of the UN to international development and to ‘ideas that changed the world’ and stresses the need for the UN to play a greater role in strengthening global governance, particularly in relation to developing countries, and in strengthening its normative functions. It commends its efforts to strengthen inter-agency linkages through enhanced coordination and collaboration at country and sectoral/thematic levels. It concludes with some reflections on the need for a shift in the UN’s focus on development, and some recommendations on how the UK can consolidate and strengthen its many positive roles in international development and in the UN.

Keywords: UN, global governance, norms, UN reform.

1 Overview

The centre of gravity of the world in the twenty-first century has been shifting – economically and politically – towards the East and the South.

At the same time, global governance is not really shifting and remains weak or even weakening, in relation to major global problems: climate change, economic imbalances and disruptions, inequalities, transmission of global diseases like Ebola, cyber-problems, trade gaps, investment deficiencies and religious/cultural conflicts, terrorism and humanitarian emergencies.

Despite increasing global connectedness, global institutions are not keeping up with the demands of global governance. Goldin (2012) has identified five key areas with substantial risks all requiring international action: climate change, cybersecurity, pandemics, migration and finance. To these, Weiss and Thakur (2010) have added peace, arms control and disarmament, collective security, technical coordination, terrorism, trade and aid, human rights and the responsibility to protect. For the UN and other international organisations, there is therefore much ‘unfinished business’ and an urgent need to strengthen institutions to face up to the present and future challenges of the twenty-first century.

Most of the efforts to strengthen global governance in the last few decades have been led by the G7 and the Bretton Woods Institutions, pursuing narrow economic objectives of free trade, sometimes free movement of capital, largely justified by neoliberal economic theory focused on increasing economic efficiency and economic growth. Progress in addressing global governance of peace and security issues, after a short period of post-USSR optimism, has been hampered by the increasing clash of interests between the permanent members of the Security Council.

The UN has been increasingly marginalised in these economic matters and also left short of funding, especially since the first half of the 1990s (ODI 1997). Notwithstanding, the UN retains global legitimacy and still commands strong support in the South, even more from

poorer and least developed countries. This is too often forgotten as the views of the governments of such countries are rarely given much publicity. For these countries, the UN is still seen as their champion.

2 Ideas, ideology, finance and political influence

Though the neoliberal orthodoxy of the Bretton Woods Institutions has been internationally dominant since the 1980s, it has never fitted well with the UN. In terms of objectives and approaches, the UN funds, specialized agencies and other institutions have always been multi-disciplinary, usually more focused on country-level problems and action, and increasingly concerned with human rights. As a source of ideas in development and alternative perspectives, the UN may have had more influence than often realised (Jolly *et al.* 2004). The UN Intellectual History Project concluded that ideas might indeed have been among the UN's most important contributions (Jolly *et al.* 2009). In its concluding volume, *UN Ideas that Changed the World*, the project identified nine ideas where the UN had given global leadership, often pioneering and almost always ahead of the Bretton Woods Institutions. These nine were human rights for all, gender equality and empowerment, development goals, fairer international economic relationships, broader development strategies, social development, environmental sustainability, peace and human security and human development, as an integrated approach. The UN has also done a great deal to promote gender equality (Jain 2002, 2005).

Since 1990, UNDP's Human Development Report (HDR) has specifically developed and promoted the human development paradigm as an alternative to neoliberal economic orthodoxy. Unfortunately, the HDR has mainly been used as an international advocacy document and too rarely as a frame for policy and programming. It has attracted much attention, especially because of its Human Development Index which provides a ranking of most countries in the world alternative to gross national product (GNP) per capita.

In recent decades, flows of private investment have increasingly marginalised aid and development assistance (and UN assistance in particular) though the UN has still provided leadership and vital financial support in key areas of humanitarian action areas such as health, education, human rights and areas of human concern such as children, and disabilities. Moreover, in the last decade or two, UN assistance in these areas has often been overshadowed by the growth of private funds, notably those of the Gates Foundation, Global Alliance for Vaccinations and Immunization (GAVI) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) but also the 100 or so much smaller non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private funds. Though donors continue to press for closer coordination of the UN funds and specialized agencies, coordination with these many other funds is largely unchallenged, as is their lack of international legitimacy. The governance arrangements of the voluntary funds and the specialized agencies are distinctly different; the former are more narrowly single issues-focused and it is sometime claimed that the specialized agencies are better integrated into the government structures of member states.

The historian Mark Mazower, in his magisterial study, *Governing the World: The History of An Idea*, has argued that the UN has provided political cover for US interests at very little cost, with American funds being used to spread US ideas on development through the UN (Mazower 2013). However, to us it seems more likely that the Bretton Woods Institutions have been the main conduit for US influence, while the UN has been the global governance mechanism more responsive to the ideas and priorities of poorer nations. It was the structural adjustment policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions that had such a devastating impact on the welfare and growth of many poorer nations.³

3 Global governance

A focus on aid is far too narrow for assessing the issues of global governance, politically and economically, let alone in terms of history and culture and the challenges of the changing context of today's world and the challenges of the future. The focus on state governance itself, whether national, regional or international, is narrow in a world increasingly influenced if not dominated by transnational corporations.

The Report of the Commission of Global Governance in 1995 and the 2009 Report of the Stiglitz Commission (Stiglitz *et al.* 2010), both neglected at the time, still set out important proposals for strengthening global governance in general and reform of the financial and monetary system in particular. The Stiglitz report included the need for stronger coordinated economic action which was central to the original purposes of the Bretton Woods Institutions. The brief recovery in 2010 showed the positive benefits of such coordinated action just as the failures to continue this afterwards showed the costs in terms of lost growth and rising debts. Coordination alone is of course not sufficient – and other changes recommended by the Stiglitz Commission are also needed if coordinated action is to be sustainable, supportive of the poorer and least developed countries and focused in support of human concerns as well as economic development.

Such further actions will require additional funding for poorer countries, more policy space for developing countries, more opening of advanced country markets to least developed country exports and notably more effective regulation of finance and the financial sector, especially in advanced countries. All these were recommended by the Stiglitz Commission which, in addition, made more fundamental recommendations for reform of the international economic and financial system such as setting up of a Global Economic Coordination Council, the Creation of a New Credit Facility, a New Global Reserve System, better and more balanced surveillance and a new approach to financial regulation to ensure that finance returns to being servant and no longer master of economic development.

Global governance needs to recognise regional trends and realities. A critical issue for the UN is how to adjust to Asia's growing place in the world, based not only on economic growth but also on its growing middle class and increasing dominance in higher education (Mahbubani 2013). China, its neighbours, and other members of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) need to be accommodated in an enhanced system of global governance. The UN's major powers need to find ways to bring the emerging powers into the leadership of the UN. This is a vital issue of strengthened global governance to which the UK government can perhaps contribute, especially if working with other countries in Europe. It was largely the West that created the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions at the end of the Second World War. But if global institutions are to be strengthened, it will require new thinking and bolder initiatives focused on meeting long-run challenges among the emerging powers as well as those of waning influence.

4 The normative function of the UN and other 'unique selling points'

The normative work of the UN, largely situated in the specialized agencies, often goes unnoticed because much of it is not designed to catch the limelight and not subject to the headlines generated by prolonged and exhausting negotiations.⁴ But crucially it is one of the functions which only the UN with its global convening power can do.⁵ The normative work of the UN through universal and egalitarian human rights also defines the ethical foundations of the world system. Broadly, there are three categories of normative work.

The first set is the *human rights system*, there now being some 500 human rights conventions. Their ethical nature differentiates them from the norms in the other categories such as labour standards and natural resources conventions. The UN is founded on the

principles of peace, justice, freedom and human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised human rights as a prerequisite for achieving peace, justice and democracy. When Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched UN reform in 1997, he explicitly stated that all major UN activities should be guided by human rights principles.

A second category of normative work is also *obligatory*, in so far as when countries ratify conventions they agree to adopt various standards or laws and to take certain courses of action. The third and last category is *voluntary*. In this case the function can relate to scientific frameworks or global forums and may consist of general directions or guidelines where applications are voluntary. Within these second and third categories, seven types of normative work can be identified, being: (i) conventions, protocols and declarations, (ii) norms and standards and international codes of conduct, (iii) monitoring and reporting on implementation of conventions, (iv) advocacy such as promotion of norms, (v) global reports and surveys, (vi) statistical information, collection, updating and reporting, and (vii) knowledge production through global public goods.

The normative work extends into every corner of the lives of citizens in the rich world, and with resources properly applied will have equally strong relevance for people in poorer countries. The normative work exists because of the staying power of the UN and the support it receives from all governments.

The unique selling points ('USPs') of the UN include its normative work plus related elements of direct action (ODI 1999). These USPs are (i) research in cross-cutting issues, (ii) consensus-building, advocacy and target setting, (iii) a forum for the preparation and negotiation of international treaties or conventions, (iv) technical coordination and standard setting, (v) information collection and dissemination, (vi) coordination of action among agencies both national and international, and (vii) direct action in development and peacekeeping. These suggestions rather underplay the roles that the UN could take on, but with adequate funding the UN's normative functions could make it a powerful player in a vital area of strengthened global governance.

5 The UN's own coordination

The effectiveness of the UN in global governance is to a large extent based on its internal ability to coordinate and use its resources effectively. Over the last 15–20 years the UN has given serious attention to strengthening inter-agency linkages and avoid duplication. The 'Delivering as One' initiative and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) were central to these efforts (Longhurst 2006). Inter-agency coordinating committees such as the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition has since 1973⁶ tried to ensure that agencies work together on the multi-factored issues that promote nutrition (Longhurst 2010). Other coordinating mechanisms such as the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), played a major role in formulating targets for water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as UN-Water and the World Water Council. This work fed into the Millennium Development Goals (Baumgartner and Pahl-Wostl 2013).

Among the efforts for aid harmonisation and coordination, incentive systems internal to aid agencies have been identified in the development literature (de Renzio *et al.* 2005). Aligning these incentives to working together has been a slow process: some agencies have accelerated decentralisation to countries but this has often been accompanied by a disconnection between HQ and the country offices with insufficient support and guidance as to how harmonisation is to be achieved. At the individual level there has been little concrete action on proper incentives with recruitment policies, performance assessment and promotion taking little account of efforts by the individual to promote harmonisation between organisations.

The UK has already played a significant role in supporting the UN to become more effective through better coordination in several ways, including supporting the Country Coordination Fund and spear-heading donors to also improve their coordination in working with the UN. Britain has also encouraged other donor colleagues (also not well known for their achievements in coordination) to work together more effectively. Some of this can be achieved with programme approaches such as sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) and budget support which have built-in harmonisation characteristics.

6 Future challenges for the UN

Although many of the ideas and proposals of the Stiglitz Commission are well beyond what is feasible and acceptable to the major powers today, they raise precisely the sort of changes in global governance which are needed and will be needed for a more balanced, more stable and more sustainable world in the future. In such a world, what will be the role for the UN?⁷ The final part of this note raises issues and questions even more than it sets out specific proposals. For instance:

6.1 The need to ensure better balance in UN governance between traditional and emerging powers: a fundamental question is how to ensure better balance in the vision, leadership and management of the UN in order to reflect the growing political and economic influence of the emerging powers (currently the BRICS) and of the South more generally. Efficient and equitable global governance will increasingly require institutions with fairer democratic representation.

6.2 The need for increased core funding for the UN: more core financial support is certainly needed for the UN and for UN funds and specialized agencies. The lack of core funding was in part a cause of the slow response of the World Health Organization (WHO) to the Ebola crisis in 2014/5.

6.3 The need for review of systems of appointment, promotion and retention of UN staff: within the UN, systems of appointment, promotion and retention of staff need to be reviewed and reformed. The influence of national governments has long ago prevented the Dag Hammarskjöld vision of a truly international civil service. Is it possible to return to this vision? And if not, in the ever more complex world of cultural and national diversities, what can be done to ensure efficiency and UN loyalties among UN staff at all levels? The UN can be proud of what it does to promote diversity and national and gender representation but when the system becomes over-politicised it works against effective delivery and support to the poorer nations. More attention to regional balance of staff rather than national quotas and greater flexibility would help. There is also a need to reconsider the systems and structures for elections. Another cause of WHO's slow response to Ebola was apparently the decentralised system of appointing and promoting staff at country and regional level, which had become exceptionally politicised and often inhibits the organisation's global management from acting independently and proactively.

6.4 The need for a better balance between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions: a better balance is needed between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions. The UN retains global legitimacy which remains fundamental to its authority in a way which the Bretton Woods Institutions do not. By votes and actions the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are seen, and in many respects act as, instruments of the richer and more powerful countries. In contrast, the UN's universal membership and wide-ranging functions are closely related to its more universal and human focus and multi-disciplinarity which are embodied in most of its operations. So far, the BRICS have followed Bretton Woods orthodoxy in the operations of their own institutions, for instance in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. When, how and if this can be expected to change is a crucial yet open question.

6.5 The need for strengthened UN roles in support of both national and global governance: as more and more countries increase in competence in all areas of professional and administrative skills, the traditional UN roles of providing support for national action in economic and social development will give way to providing international staff with expertise in issues of global governance and their conversion to national-level problems; for instance, in monitoring health, strengthening prevention and response, reporting on long-run trends, and assisting with evaluations which are objective if not fully independent. And what is true for health will also be true in different ways for other areas of global governance; for instance, climate change, cybersecurity, migration, finance and investment. More effective global governance will also be needed in other areas, for example – arms control and disarmament, collective security, technical coordination, terrorism, trade and aid, human rights, peace and the responsibility to protect.⁸ The need for appointing and promoting professionals with the skills and abilities for managing effective international governance in these priority areas will increase.

6.6 The need for reform of the Security Council: UN reform also raises questions about the reform of the Security Council. Though often met with groans and reminders that proposals for such reform fill a large graveyard in the UN System, Kishore Mahbubani sets out fresh ideas which seem better judged politically than most proposed in recent years (Mahbubani 2013). He believes the UN Security Council should expand its membership to 21, with seven permanent members comprising the US, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Nigeria and the European Union. He also envisages a new category of semi-permanent members, elected from the 28 next largest or richest countries and holding office for four years. A third category covers the other smaller and poorer countries where seven representatives would be elected from the remaining countries for two years, (as at present for all elected members).

One interesting feature of these proposals is that Mahbubani gives careful attention to the reasons which different groups of countries might have in supporting or *opposing* the arrangements he outlines. For Britain and France, in particular – but also for other countries like Germany and Japan – Mahbubani argues that being eligible for election to the semi-permanent seats, in addition to having permanent representation through the European Union, might make the new arrangements more politically acceptable.

7 A shift in the UN's focus on development

As regards development, what should be the objectives of the UN over the next few decades, as other countries increase their production, incomes and wealth, moving towards the middle and upper-middle groups of GNP and, hopefully, also towards human development?

The fundamental goals for the UN should be an improvement and strengthening of the international political and economic and cultural system towards a world of more security and less tension, greater openness and economic stability, improved democracy and predictability in international relations. In turn, this will require:

7.1 Sustainable economic growth: moves in all regions of the world towards patterns of growth which are sustainable, involving less carbon emissions, less environmental damage to land and sea, more recycling and less waste.

7.2 More equitable growth: through a reduction in the economic inequalities between countries and thus increased growth and development among today's poorer and least developed countries.

7.3 More sustainable human development: shifts towards patterns of human development in which higher standards of wellbeing are achieved with less use of economic resources.

Regionally and globally, this will require stronger systems of governance, especially to ensure financial and economic stability, avoiding crises and lowering the risks of disruptions. Achieving this will depend on stronger international support from the UN's specialized agencies and stronger UN support for country-level action in areas such as health, migration, cybersecurity, trade and finance. The UN funds will have a major role in supporting such actions in poorer countries but also some role in medium-income countries and, arguably even in more developed countries, where delivering public goods is costly and where incentives for delivering them is weak. With the greater global interconnectedness, ideas and examples of policies and projects that work have more universal applicability in both richer and poorer countries.

8 Recommendations for UK support for a strengthened UN in the future

The UK has always been a strong supporter of the UN. It was one of the three nations which took the main initiatives, intellectually and politically in the UN's creation, building on its pioneering and leading experience with the League of Nations. Throughout the years of the UN's life and further developments, the UK has been a consistent supporter, often more consistent than the US and of Russia/USSR. The following positive attributes of the UK's support to the UN should be maintained and enhanced:

8.1 As critical friend of the UN and advocate for reform and collaboration: the UK should remain a 'critical friend' of the UN and use its influence to encourage agencies to reform, collaborate and coordinate, and to press for important issues. Over the last few years the UK has pressed for more attention in several key areas, but notably for adolescent girls, for nutrition and for ending gender violence. It also has been at the forefront of trying to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions. The UK's current positive approach to funding of international development has brought it respect and professional trust among a wide range of other international donors. It should use its leverage to promote the USPs of the UN among its fellow donors.

8.2 As provider of evaluation capacity on the effectiveness of the UN and other multilateral organisations: The Department for International Development's (DFID's) professional evaluations of UN operations have made an important contribution to the UN and to countries more generally as well as to Britain itself (Scott 2005, 2013). Despite some issues that have been hotly debated at the time of assessment, most UN agencies and the staff directly affected believe that they have been useful and important in generating reform. In recent times there has been the Multilateral Effectiveness Framework (MEFF) in 2003-04 which examined 23 multilateral organisations (of which 15 were UN agencies) and in 2011 the Multilateral Assessment Review (MAR) which reviewed 43 multilateral organisations, of which 20 were UN agencies.

8.3 As a leading and influential donor partner in international development: the UK should continue with its leading and supportive international role in the future. The ring-fenced 0.7 per cent legislative commitment to international aid gives it relatively significant resources, if deployed with care. Though when acting alone, the UK is a diminishing global power, its long history of acting internationally within the UN (and in the Commonwealth) means that it can continue to bring commitment, vast experience and influence for strengthening the UN as part of more effective global governance.

8.4 As an effective regional and global player and user of 'soft power' in the UN: Britain's diminishing power on the global stage, strengthens the argument for the country to work regionally and internationally within these other groups; indeed diminishing global power can lead to a greater level of comfort with certain countries in some locations. Interaction with the UN is an important element in the UK's 'soft power' strategy to promote the influence of the

UK in the world, building on its long-standing traditions in many countries which are still valued in those countries themselves. This should set a frame for the UK's policy towards the UN – working closely with Europe, the Commonwealth and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

However, these international roles for Britain will also require a population which has understanding and is supportive of such external policies and initiatives, which the current balance of the UK press does not support. For several centuries, British children grew up and were educated into an understanding that Britain was an island and a maritime power with a global empire. Whatever the deceits of such colonial perspectives, many in the country had such a global perspective and were supportive of British international actions. In the twenty-first century, such perspectives seem often to have shrunk to the possibility of Britain going it alone.

9 Improving the perception of the UN and facilitating UK recruitments

To those of us who have spent careers in the UN, a positive international perspective is vital. Key actions to ensure this in Britain include:

9.1 Strengthened use of social media to enhance coverage in the education system of international and global issues: all parts and levels of the education system and the media in Britain need to present and promote an understanding of the global world and international interdependence, using the new forms of social media. This should include a broad and balanced understanding of Britain's own roles and interdependence in economic and social development, its part in world trade and investment in the evolution of the global world as well as its leading part in the creation of global institutions, especially the UN. Sections of the press promote a vision of a 'vast bloated' UN bureaucracy which is just not borne out by the facts. The British government and the wider NGO community can do much to undermine this false view.

9.2 Support to volunteer organisations involved in international development: opportunities for first-hand experience in other countries should be part of education and support for volunteers programmes such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) (which has been functioning since 1958) and similar activities on gap years and so forth can be most positive. The US Peace Corps (modelled on the UK's VSO) is one of the most effective and supported by both main parties in the US. Linking domestic with international volunteering is important, given the many diaspora communities in the UK, and the level of global interconnectedness raised earlier in this article.

9.3 Increased access to internships within the UN and strengthening of junior professional officers' (JPOs') programmes: internships with the UN and other such schemes to attract the best graduates and post-graduates into JPOs' programmes of the UN should be recognised as having made a most positive contribution to the international organisations as well as to the UK itself. This and the other suggestions (such as supporting internships in the NGO community) well merit support from UK aid. Governments such as Japan, South Korea and Italy support internships within the UN and the positive impact on their young citizens is considerable.

Notes

¹ Prepared for and presented at WS1.

² The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

³ See the evidence provided in Vreeland (2007).

⁴ However, the UN and its member nations can react with speed as shown with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the ILO Labour Standard Convention 182, Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

⁵ The recent UNEG handbook on evaluating the normative function provided a succinct list of all of the aspects of the normative work (UNEG 2013).

⁶ In fact work on nutrition was in progress during the tenure of the League of Nations with the 'Mixed Committee on the relation of nutrition to health, agriculture and economic policy' (1937).

⁷ The UN was set up with four major functions – the maintenance of peace and the prevention of war and conflict; sovereign independence for all countries (an underlying principle of the charter); development and human rights. This article is focused on the last two.

⁸ See Weiss and Thakur (2010).

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A.2 A UN Career, the UN's Four Lives and the Challenges Ahead

Mark Malloch-Brown^{1,2}

Abstract

Mark Malloch-Brown reflects in his keynote speech at WS1, on his early UN career with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in South East Asia and Central America and later with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN, in the context of the 'four lives' of the UN: the founding years; the Cold War period with its constraints and opportunities; the post-Cold War and the Millennium Declaration; and the follow-up to 9/11 and the responses of the West. He then explores certain features of the UN and international development in the twenty-first century before suggesting some solutions. These include recognition of the importance of private capital in development, particularly for infrastructure; promoting the use of new technology, social media and communications; exploiting opportunities for the UN through capitalising partnerships; adjusting to the rise of regional security arrangements; mobilising the aspirations of young people both in the UK and throughout the world; and finally connecting the UN to the world.

Keywords: UN career, UN history, UN reform.

1 Introduction – some career highlights

My UN career began a few feet from where it finished, because as a young intern I sat on the thirty-eighth floor outside the office I was decades later occupying as Deputy Secretary-General. In the meantime that office had moved from where the Under-Secretary-General kept a wary eye on the Secretary-General at the other end of the corridor, to being an office for a Deputy Secretary-General who, at least in my incarnation, spent his whole waking life trying to make the Secretary-General of the day, Kofi Annan, look good. So this was an office reinvented for an entirely new purpose.

I was extremely lucky because I have seen it all in the sense of having worked as a young man at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), having been a vice president of the World Bank, having led the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and then having come across to the UN. So I feel that I was privileged enough to have an extraordinary, bird's eye view of the whole range of our endeavours.

Going back to the beginning at UNHCR and the huge upheaval in Indo-China, I was lucky enough to have extraordinary patrons and mentors in Sir Robert Jackson (universally known as Jacko) and Brian Urquhart. Jacko fondly took me under his wings, as Margaret Anstee will recall.

2 The UN's four lives

I will now distil my career into the context of a theory of the UN's *four lives*, as a rather sort of simplistic organising framework for this talk, and for my work with the UN.

2.1 A first life – the founding years of the UN, 1945–48

The *first life* is the founding period of the UN and the founding vision of the allies coming out of the Second World War, wanting a new collaborative system for collective security but also managing what they saw as huge inequalities in the world, particularly confronting the prospect as the Americans saw it, of rapid decolonisation. This process included a plan on

behalf of President Roosevelt and perhaps more importantly Eleanor Roosevelt,³ to incorporate a rights-based approach to development.

The three pillars of the later UN – *peace*, *security* and the *freedom from want* were all there in that initial huge founding ambition captured in the UN Charter, a charter that at the time was considered so historic that when it was flown back from San Francisco, it had its own parachute attached to it so that it would not risk being lost, and so there was a sense of people really writing history in their own minds.

2.2 A second life – the Cold War period, constraints and opportunities, 1948–89

But of course that UN and the vision behind it quickly fell victim during a *second life* to the Cold War, and by the late 1940s it was a very different, already attenuated UN, which had to face attacks on its staff, and investigations of them for being secret communists. Every aspect of the Cold War conflict got imported into the UN Headquarters in New York in some way or not. But this was the period when many of us, certainly in its latter years, nevertheless had great UN careers, so how was it that despite the Cold War and the gridlock reflected in the Security Council, there was still a space for a dynamic UN?

I would just say that there were two areas where the UN was faced with particular *constraints*. It was constrained on primary conflicts between the two super powers and their allies, and it was constrained on promoting a human rights agenda. But three areas where the UN was allowed space was first, the *challenges around decolonisation*. Secondly, *development* itself, where there was a recognition that this was in some ways a politically neutral activity. And thirdly, of course, *humanitarian action* where the cleaning up of the Cold War conflicts of that time was an acknowledged space that the UN was allowed to operate in.

When I think of my own early UNHCR career in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I was blessed by many *opportunities*. We were allowed to be active in Indo-China and allowed to assist both the Vietnamese boat people fleeing and cross-border refugees from Cambodia and Laos. I was then sent to Central America to deal with the victims of similar proxy wars between East and West, and then to the war with Africa, and a little bit to, but not stationed in, Afghanistan and Pakistan where again, many of my colleagues served. So, these spaces were carved out away from the political gridlock and it is no surprise that so many of the people here made their careers in those spaces, not in the gridlocked political secretariat functions of New York.

I recall Kurt Waldheim, then the Secretary-General, coming to the refugee camps that I was running on the Thai–Cambodian border where there was a coordination mechanism of the agency led by Robert Jackson, (later Sir Robert Jackson) but where there was, in a sense, also tremendous devolvement to the UN agencies, notably UNHCR where I was. Waldheim recognised me from my earlier time on the thirty-eighth floor as an intern, and he asked me in great puzzlement why nobody had told him that there was this huge operation under a UN flag on the Thai–Cambodian border. I remember struggling for an answer because I didn't think the honest answer would go down terribly well.

The honest answer was that these operations and operations like them were formed and managed under principles of international law with no reference to the UN Security Council. This was a completely different basis for humanitarian action. It drew on UNHCR's own standards, it drew on the Geneva Conventions, it drew on some very general principles of the right of victims to support in their time of need. I cannot imagine that the High Commissioner of the day or any others would have ever dreamt of taking this to that gridlocked Security Council. They would have known that the very same countries that were blocking the Security Council, notably the Soviet Union, were also willing to let these programmes happen, but with a sort of wink and a nod, and a look the other way.

2.3 A third life – the post-Cold War era and the Millennium Declaration, 1989–2000

So then we get to the extraordinary birth of opportunity – the UN's *third age* if you like, the post-1989 moment, when it seemed for a decade or more that there was an exciting consensus in the Security Council that anything was possible, and the high water mark of that era of collaboration was Kofi Annan's Millennium Report to the General Assembly of the Millennium Year 2000 and Edward Mortimer, one of its chief authors.

I just had a kind of walk-on role in the drafting of that document, one that proved quite significant subsequently. I remember being called by Kofi Annan and he said that 'There's not really much about development in this report, any ideas?' At the time the OECD-DAC⁴ had been working on what then became the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in a sense giving them a universality that would never have been possible if they had just remained donor goals.

But the Millennium Report which is now principally remembered for the MDGs was extraordinarily, universally adopted by the General Assembly, and was much more than the MDGs. It talked eloquently of democracy, it talked of human rights, and in many ways you can draw a straight line from the language and rhetoric of President Roosevelt to the language of Kofi Annan, and indeed we borrowed that language, that talk of the four freedoms.⁵ And so it was as though the UN was picking up from that lost beginning of its first life. It was a period of extraordinary excitement and opportunity for all of us who were there. It was again a UN based on those three legs of the stool: on *peace and security*, *freedom from want and broader development*, and *human rights*.

2.4 The fourth life – the follow-up to 9/11 and the responses of the West, 2000–today

Then we moved from there to a *fourth life*. You can choose your own starting moment for it: was it 9/11? Was it the imprudence and 'unwisdom' of George Bush declaring a War on Terror? Was it the invasion of Iraq in 2003? Was it something earlier? Was it the lack of generosity in the way the West handled the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the sense that the lessons of 1919 and the mishandling of that peace had been replicated in the way we addressed the collapse of the Soviet Union?

In those years I was running a political consulting business, and spent a huge amount of time with President Yeltsin and those immediately around him. They were clients, and their sense of the lack of generosity from the West and the lack of imagination in how it responded to some of the most difficult economic and political adjustments that any country had been asked to go through was very striking. Of course, wherever it came from, the renewed confrontation with Russia that has become so visible in the last year or so, has been compounded by the much happier, but nevertheless more complicating event of the rise of China, and the emergence of a new equilibrium in the world with the broader rise of Asia.

This has led to the environment which we now face, of a Security Council again deadlocked, where it is impossible to use it for significant political progress on issues, where some of my pre-1989 UN concerns are starting to reappear. For example, I spent an awful lot of time in 2014 working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to try and push the idea that the basis for humanitarian action in Syria should again bypass the Security Council, and should again rest on principles of international law.

The disastrous situation of the internally displaced as well as those who were in refugee conditions in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon meant that we could not wait for a deadlocked Security Council to give us permission to act. I would say that we have a UN whose civil society supporters, and many middle managers on the humanitarian side fully understand

that. But regrettably this is not shared by those at the top of the house, which is a generation which grew up on seeking permission from the Security Council and who find it hard to think otherwise.

3 The UN and development in the twenty-first century

When we turn to *development* after all our particular focus on political issues, I think that the Security Council gridlock has again put back a real emphasis on the key development attributes of the UN Development System, and of its universality, its convening power and its legitimacy. If you look by contrast at the World Bank, where I overstate the case, which is an institution that I am very fond of and hold very dear, I think that it has been reduced by recent events to little more than a large American NGO. The circumstances of the selection of the last president of the Bank, the overriding of a large global groundswell for the Nigerian finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and the shoving in by the Americans with the support of British and others of an American candidate, while being an able man and gloriously more focused on public health rather than finance like his predecessors, is nevertheless not a person who has enjoyed the kind of legitimacy that is needed to lead an institution like the World Bank, and who as a result has had a very difficult management run ever since.

So, despite all the difficulties of the UN System, I think it nevertheless retains its legitimacy. But if you look at what has happened to our poor, simple MDGs where, when we agreed on the drafting of them my biggest anxiety was that we were ignoring the complexity of UNDP's own doctrine of human development that Richard Jolly, Mahbul UI Haq and others had done so much to develop, it seemed that as simple outcome measures of development success, we had to put aside our own vision of development to agree to a set of outputs that people of very different persuasions, with much more liberal economic agendas of development, could subscribe to, as much as we could try to retain our roles as champions of human development.

But my concerns about simplicity versus complexity fall into insignificance compared to what has been done to our baby since, because these new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a progeny of such promiscuous confusion. Everybody's favourite cause has been crammed into this impossible list, and it obviously represents a fragmentation of priorities and is a loss of the MDG's extraordinarily unifying narrative about development and its objectives and goals and its metrics and measurement that has been so significant in the last 15 years.

Yet in a way, while one can justly fault the international community, I think there is something a bit more profound happening as well, due to the *sheer diversity of stages of development* in the developing world. This is that in truth, the issue of development has now been stretched out across a group of countries in such different stages of development, with such different *per capita* incomes, with such different balances between urban and rural populations, with such an array of infrastructure gaps, and such a different array of environmental challenges, that what it also reflects is that development is inevitably beginning to be recognised in its full array of complexities. In a sense it is perhaps unrealistic to believe that you can go on containing it within a simple set of development goals.

In terms of development thinking, we have a number of the academics who love to write about the formula 30–100–30, made up of *30 donors* at one end, *100 countries* in the middle (ranging from having very successful middle classes, huge amount of domestic capital formation, but are struggling to build out the infrastructure and sustain their new city lives and lifestyles), and a further *30 countries* which are still locked into a cycle of failing states, poverty, proneness to environmental disasters, where the core of the remaining poverty challenge remains.

There has been interesting academic work, disputed but I think broadly correct, that whereas in this first 15 years of the MDGs, or 25 years to use its real starting point, poverty was situated inside large countries and has been tackled by their economic success through a knock-on effect which has gradually reached the poorer parts of those countries. On the other hand, future poverty is going to be concentrated in an arc of weak and failing states, starting from West Africa, going all the way over to South Asia. In these countries, the combination of state building, the strengthening of governance, and economic development in situations of conflict is very much a UN task, and one that nobody else can do. Nobody else can move safely in those situations, nobody else has the field staff to do it, nobody else has the courage to do it institutionally – it's not a business for the World Bank, for example.

Let me just add a couple of key points about the new development scenery. The first is *the rise of inequality*. It's not only Ed Miliband who, in resigning his leadership of the UK Labour Party in 2015, rued the fact that inequality has not got the attention it needs. It obviously is the key issue during the coming years for development, in a strange way even more probably than the important challenge of finishing the fight against absolute poverty. The second is *the rising environmental crisis*, which I think is improperly reduced to climate change. I think one has got to look at this as a much broader set of interrelated environment challenges, which are threatening development successes achieved so far, including the continuing process of arid desertification issues in Africa and water scarcity and stress in South Asia, for example.

4 Some priorities for actions

And what are the *priorities* which the UN System might facilitate and promote?

4.1 Recognise the importance of private capital. Firstly, the extraordinary *rise of private capital* is part of the solution for development, not for ideological reasons but in terms covering the big bill for building infrastructure for an urbanising and global population. It is clearly going to be long-term private capital, not public capital, which is going to take the lead in that.

4.2 Promote the rise of technology, social media and communications. Secondly, the extraordinary role now of *technology*, not just the social media and communications technologies, but the breakthroughs in medicine and much else that is transforming development.

4.3 Exploit opportunities for the UN through capitalising partnerships. In a strange way all of these play to the UN's strengths because they're not about us commanding huge amounts of capital, they're about us capitalising partnerships, using our convening power, using our ability to be in these places to make extraordinary things happen.

4.4 Adjust to the rise of regional security arrangements. The other issue is that we will see somehow, if the Security Council remains gridlocked, the rise of regional security arrangements, which in a sense the UN has to adjust to.

4.5 Mobilise the aspirations of young people. If we are going to be successful in retaining the aspirations of a new generation the signals are mixed. I was with Natalie Samarasinghe at the 2015 University Model UN held in London. Seventeen hundred people from all over Europe attended this quite extraordinary event. I began my launch opening by saying, (as it came just before the general election), 'Eat your heart out Mr Cameron and Mr Miliband, you won't address an audience this big throughout the campaign', and I suspect that was probably true.

In that sense, the UN demands something that political parties here in the UK have and in many other places don't. But I think it's easy to be complacent around that fact because as people grow older their scepticism apparently grows rapidly; we have a reverse demography.

There may still be a UN version of the old adage that you have to be a socialist first and you're a fool if you're not a conservative by the time you're 40.

We've got to retain people's aspirational loyalty as they move into being taxpayers. I always think of Ireland, where everybody's got somebody in their family who's been a missionary, who's worked for the NGO Concern or such like, and therefore the talking radio is always full of what's going on in Ethiopia or elsewhere. I wish we could stimulate that same kind of excitement about the world in our media in the UK for young and old alike.

But the key point about youth is that however well we do here, the real question is about young people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Here also the record is a bit mixed. In Africa the entrepreneurs I increasingly see as I'm trying to help various African businesses grow to scale and succeed, is the patient young Nigerian and South African businessmen with fantastic degrees from great universities who have absolutely no time at all for the UN, just as they have no time for their own governments and just have a ruthless private sector-oriented kind of view of development. Most of them are philanthropically generous, but their view is from their own experience of bad government in Africa, and they are from the sort of generation who really believe in the power of the private sector and the sort of Thatcherite model⁶ that we don't have here.

In Asia and Latin America it's a bit different. And I felt that when I was with Kofi Annan at the UN and many others, we were in danger of becoming an African-centred organisation. We had lots to do in Africa and it was fantastic work and we wouldn't have done an hour less of it. But somehow, Asia and Latin America were starting to get on very well without us. This need to reinvent our relevance in those two regions seemed to me very important too.

4.6 Connect the UN to the world. Finally, a point about technology. I attended another wonderful session in London, one of these Hackathons where young programmers were trying to design tools for people to engage with the UN. It did bring home to me as I was on the panel of judges for this, that as you learn with technology and everything, technology doesn't solve the problem, you solve the problem and then you use technology to implement that solution. We all remember when our UN accounting systems, the first attempts to apply technology solutions, were in most cases expensive failures. You first had to simplify your financial reporting systems and then apply an IT solution to it.

It's the same in terms of connecting the UN to the world. Everybody thinks we're one app away from doing it, from engaging civil society in what goes on in the UN. The truth is, until the UN changes its whole language and method of operating and opens up its debates to a way that the global layman and woman can engage with, we're never going to revitalise that public and popular support that is the lifeblood of the organisation and which will lead it to ultimately the change it most needs, which is an organisation not just of states, but one where civil society's voice is included as well. A difficult thing to do, it may be a reach too far as our whole charter is state based.

A significant number of our members, not just the Russias or Chinas but Egypt and many other countries – Israel, most recently, in the last week (May 2015) – are introducing legislation to try and ban foreign NGOs or to at least limit foreign NGOs' operation in their country. So the idea of a global civil society as part of the UN is not just a hard one to win at the UN itself, it's under challenge across the world. So, plenty of exciting things for our children and grandchildren and their friends who go into the UN to champion, but I think a real time for reflection and reinvention as we think forward.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² This article is an edited version of Mark Malloch-Brown's keynote speech at WS1, 13–14 May 2015, IDS.

³ Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the UN Commission on Human Rights which drafted the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee.

⁵ President Roosevelt's famous speech to the UN Congress in January 1941 played a major role in ending US isolationism by arguing that the US needed to be concerned with four freedoms everywhere in the world: freedom of speech and free expression, of religion, from want and from fear. These fundamental concerns were brought into the US contributions to the founding of the UN.

⁶ The conservative policies, political philosophy and leadership style of Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime minister, characterised especially by monetarism, privatisation and labour union reform (www.dictionary.com/browse/thatcherite).

A.3 The Lessons of Leadership in the UN

Margaret Anstee^{1,2}

Abstract

In this contribution to WS1, Margaret Anstee draws on her long UN experience to reflect on the importance of the two concepts of 'leadership' and 'management', both at the country and headquarters level, and particularly from a woman's perspective. She describes her personal experiences and rise from Resident Representative in country offices, to that of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Programme Planning and Evaluation (BPPE), Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) and the first female Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office in Vienna (UNOV), which was also responsible for a number of UN technical organisations. She concluded her UN career as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II), the first woman to lead a UN military peacekeeping operation.

Keywords: UN, leadership, UNDP, DTCD, UNOV, peacekeeping, UNAVEM.

1 Introduction

Success in large organisations requires both leadership and management. They are not the same thing and demand different qualities. They are also seldom found together in the same person.

Of the two, leadership is the harder to define. It presupposes some innate characteristics of personality with which a person is born rather than something that can be taught. Some aspects of leadership can be acquired through specialised training and, above all, experience, but the impact will be limited without the mysterious quality that enables an individual to inspire others to follow him or her. The obvious example is of a military commander leading troops into battle and convincing them that they are fighting in a just cause and will be victorious. In civil institutions, and even small units, the leader must likewise persuade people that they are working for something worthwhile and to that end paint a vision of the wider framework. Leaders usually have to be charismatic and they must also deeply believe in the cause itself if they are to convince others of its validity.

Good management means the optimum use of scarce resources. It is a logical and clear-cut process that can be taught, as well as reinforced by experience. Management and leadership are interdependent: leadership without the support of good management in the implementation phase means failure in attaining the goal, or the vision, and so can dampen the morale of the foot soldiers and undermine the authority of the leader.

In the vast programmes of the UN both qualities are vitally important. Curiously the international nature of the organisation and its work create hurdles not present in national situations. I will try to illustrate this through some personal experiences and posit some measures that might help to redress the negative impact on the UN.

2 Leadership at the field level

Leadership is complicated in any large bureaucracy with many layers and is certainly true of the UN, especially at Headquarters. Work at the field level provides greater scope for providing leadership, first, because of distance from the centre of control (though that is being rapidly reduced by technology and instant communications) and, second, because it is concerned with operations producing concrete results rather than resolutions and policy papers that are more ephemeral in their impact.

The position of Resident Representative or Resident Coordinator is the key field post in countries receiving assistance from the UN System and the incumbent must demonstrate leadership as well as management skills. This quality was especially vital in the early days of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) and UNDP, when there was no rapid method of communication between the Headquarters in New York and the Resident Representative in a distant developing country. In the event of a revolution or major natural or human disaster the latter had to rely on their own devices. Today communication is instant but the leader on the ground still has a significant responsibility for guiding and executing the operation.

This is also true for normal, everyday working. Nowadays the complex UN System has such a plethora of offices on the ground that the task of getting them to work together and 'speak with one voice' presents almost insuperable obstacles. The key is to try and make everyone understand that their work, even if in a minor role, is important to the achievement of the overall goal. I have found that a simple but effective technique is to hold periodic meetings of all concerned, at which the inter-dependency of their various activities can be made apparent. Individual person-person relationships are also very important and are more complicated in an international setting because of differences in culture and language. When my mother's illness obliged me to work in the UK prime minister's office for a year I had the option of returning to my home country for good but rejected it: the main reason was that I found that working exclusively with my compatriots for the rest of my life was too boring.

In my generation the challenges facing a woman occupying the key post of Resident Representative were formidable. I was the first one, as I was also to be the first female to occupy other leadership posts higher up in the UN hierarchy. A pioneer bears an onerous responsibility because success or failure will not only affect the individual's own career but also (in my case) the prospects for other women wishing to conquer domains considered to be exclusively male. Not only during my early years, but also throughout my long career, I was confronted with pockets of resistance, often of a very disagreeable, highly personalised and sometimes violent nature. No one talked about sexual harassment then and there was no mechanism to deal with such situations.

For a woman starting out you had to work harder than a man to make your name and also take risks, both of a professional and physical kind, in order to show that you possessed leadership qualities equivalent to, and, if possible, greater than those of your male colleagues. This is still the same today, although to a lesser degree than in those far-off times, more than 60 years ago.

3 Leadership at Headquarters

In 1974, after 22 years in the field, I was posted to New York, first to UNDP, as Deputy Director for Latin America and then Assistant Administrator heading the Bureau for Programme Planning and Evaluation (BPPE). In December 1978 I was transferred to the UN Secretariat as Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD), the second largest executing agency for UNDP, after the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In New York there were less opportunities for individual leadership. The upper echelons above me were mostly occupied by political appointees, not always endowed with the right qualifications and often unacquainted with the realities of development work in the field. I was lucky in the Regional Bureau for Latin America because the Assistant Administrator was the charismatic former foreign minister of Chile, Gabriel Valdes, a brilliant man full of ideas and a leader with great visions for the future, not always consistent with the possibilities. We complemented one another very well and it was a happy working relationship.

When I became an Assistant Administrator myself I reported directly to the Administrator, Bradford Morse, and was the only one of the five Bureau heads who was not a political appointee. I directed my efforts to giving a new direction to the Bureau for BPPE, emphasising the operational focus of UNDP's work, as well as its primordial role in the theory and practice of technical assistance. My main problem was Morse's desire for UNDP to be the 'world authority' in whatever development field that was the flavour of the moment. A more insidious difficulty was the hostility of the regional Bureau heads (Valdes the notable exception) who saw some of my initiatives as encroaching on their fiefdoms; I was actually threatened by one of them. Secretary-General Waldheim's insistence that I should go to the newly-created UNDTCD, although opposed by Morse and myself, meant that I never accomplished all that I set out to do in BPPE.

DTCD was a new department, created after the Department for International Economic and Social Affairs was split into two between research and operations. DTCD took over the operational functions as an Executing Agency of UNDP and became the largest department in the UN Secretariat, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. As part of the UN proper it was subjected to stricter rules of geographical distribution of posts than was the case with UNDP. Secretary-General Waldheim transferred to this post an African prince who had previously headed another department in the Secretariat and had no experience of development operations. This was the reason for his insistence that I should become the Deputy, another awkward UN compromise. It was also why Bradford Morse insisted that there should be a written agreement that all the day-to-day management should be in my hands. This was done. It was a challenge: my new boss was known to be charming and irascible but I set to work to structure the new department and after a few months was pleased to find that we were getting on well and that our delivery of technical assistance worldwide was increasing. It was a strange kind of leadership from below, ensuring that credit went to my superior.

Then UN politics intervened disastrously after only a few months. In April 1979 Waldheim asked me to represent him at a UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) meeting in Bolivia. He meanwhile went to China. When I returned to New York I was the last person to know that he had given the Under-Secretary-General post to China. The motive was obvious: China had almost thwarted his election to a second term, lifting their veto only at the last moment, and he wanted a third term. The Chinese were hard bargainers and there was no hope of their signing an agreement like the one I had with the previous incumbent. Ironically two years later, in 1981, the Chinese vetoed his bid for a third term as Secretary-General and this time did not relent.

Meanwhile I was to spend the most miserable eight years of my UN life. My new chief at first had no notion of the operational nature of the department, spoke little English (he certainly did not understand mine), surrounded himself with compatriots and lived in the Chinese Mission.³ The only possible form of communication was in writing; decisions that were in any way complicated were referred to Beijing through the Chinese Mission, taking three weeks for a reply; if really difficult there was no reply at all. For the latter case I had a 'bring-up' system which ensured that he was constantly reminded. On one occasion my apology for 'badgering' him caused consternation in the front office. What did 'badger' mean? The Chinese Mission⁴ consulted a dictionary and found the definition 'A voracious carnivore that goes straight for the jugular'. Small wonder that they regarded me with suspicion!

My boss also objected to my restructuring plans for the department. I had to devise a new and discreet form of leadership for all the technical and administrative units below me. Frequent meetings on specific sectors, as well as a monthly one with all the key players to review performance, proved very successful and the introduction of a competitive process inspired friendly rivalry and produced excellent results. DTCD became not only the second largest executing agency for UNDP but also the one with the best delivery rate. But it was a

difficult row to hoe and an even more bizarre form of leadership against all the odds. I felt rather like the Red Queen who told Alice in Wonderland, 'Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.'

4 Leadership at the UN Office at Vienna (UNOV)

In March 1987 I became the first female Under-Secretary-General as Director-General of the UN Office in Vienna, which had been set up by Waldheim who wanted there to be a UN presence in Austria as well as Geneva – a kind of third UN headquarters covering Eastern Europe at the time when the Cold War was in full blast. Initially its function had been purely representational. Now, as part of yet another internal reform, it was given the control of several substantive programmes. I became Head of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA), which was transferred from New York, and Coordinator of all UN drug-related programmes: the Narcotics Control Board, the Department of Narcotic Drugs (DND) and the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC).

I was in control of important UN programmes and reporting only to the Secretary-General. Even so, problems persisted. Powerful empire-builders in New York opposed the transfer to Vienna of a key section of social research staff; neither the Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar nor the Head of Personnel (Kofi Annan) took any action to resolve this anomalous situation. In Vienna serious clashes erupted from the start with the fiery Director of UNFDAC who resented my appointment as the Coordinator. He was a political appointee of the Italian government, a close friend of the foreign minister, Giulio Andreotti, and had engineered a resolution in the UN Commission opposing my appointment as soon as it was announced in November 1986. Simultaneously Andreotti protested to the Secretary-General and Geoffrey Howe, the UK Foreign Secretary, had to intervene with his Italian counterpart before Andreotti's grudging acquiescence was obtained – to a decision wholly within the Secretary-General's prerogative as Chief Executive. Notwithstanding, the UNFDAC Director engineered another attack on my authority in June 1987 at the UN International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT). He had the unwavering support of his government whereas for me, who had risen through the ranks, the intervention of Geoffrey Howe (unsolicited by me) was a unique event.

Although the UNFDAC Director had acted in flagrant violation of his oath as an international civil servant no action or sanctions were ever taken against him. To offend a powerful member state could have serious repercussions on a bid for election to a further period as Secretary-General. The matter was never settled and I had to live with the difficult situation. In the event we had some significant achievements despite the drawbacks. The end of the Cold War led to the Soviet Union presenting unprecedented appeals for assistance from the UN and UNOV, conveniently near Moscow, played an important leadership role in helping the Gorbachev government to tackle hitherto undeclared problems of crime and drugs and in opening up channels of dialogue with western countries. Advice was also given on more gradualist economic and social policies designed to cushion the social impact of switching to a market economy and capitalism. Unfortunately all this was brought to an abrupt end by the attempted coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of that year.

5 Leadership in peacekeeping

Early in 1992 Secretary-General Boutros Ghali appointed me as his Special Representative (SRSG) in Angola and Head of the Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II). This was the first time for a woman to lead a military peacekeeping operation. It was a typical example of UN compromise: the organisation was to verify the implementation of a peace agreement negotiated by the US, the Soviet Union and Portugal, without UN involvement, and even then given an inadequate mandate and inadequate resources. Given 24 hours to decide whether to accept the appointment, I hesitated, realising that it was probably an impossible mission.

On the one hand failure would be attributed to the fact that it had been headed by a woman. On the other, refusal to accept the challenge would be interpreted by the sceptics as proof that women were not ready to lead such operations. The clinching argument that led to my acceptance was that, by coincidence, I had recently written a chapter for a book published by an American University, and entitled *Women Leaders Speak*,⁵ in which I had pointed out that peacekeeping was the one male-dominated bastion in the UN that women had still to conquer. I had also regretted the fact that women were all too often reluctant to take risks, whether professional or physical, and so had to apply these precepts to my own life.

The situation I found in Luanda was not propitious. For eight months before my arrival UNAVEM II had been a purely military observer mission, headed by a Chief Military Observer (CMO). It was only in December 1991 that the Security Council had decided that civilian and electoral components should be added, as well as a political head. Two more months passed before I was parachuted in as SRSG in March 1992, barely seven months before the date fixed for the elections. It is hard for anyone to accept the appointment of a new chief over their head but must have been especially so for an in-country general, when the newcomer was not only white and British but female to boot!

As if that were not enough I had been warned by Headquarters that he was a difficult and sometimes violent man, who had beaten his Angolan driver. He should have been fired, I was told, but that was impossible because he was from an important African member state and I would just have to make this potentially untenable situation work. For the first few months I managed to establish a relatively cordial relationship. We had frequent meetings, he came to dinner with me and we went together to visit the far-flung outposts of the mission all over Angola. Things became more difficult as the elections approached and when conflict erupted again afterwards. The CMO refused to attend the weekly meetings I had with all the heads of the different components to coordinate our efforts, claiming that his superior status entitled him to meet with me alone; women were being brought regularly into the camp; and after war resumed he refused to accompany me to critical mediation meetings, including the one immediately preceding the sanguinary battle for Luanda at the end of October 1992. I could do nothing about these challenges to my authority in view of my instructions that no action could be taken against him.

During the battle of Luanda, when I was caught in the centre of the town, my chief military adviser disappeared off the radio network and neither I nor Headquarters was able to contact him. Then at last New York took action and he was fired. There was one advantage in this regrettable situation: because of his arrogant behaviour the general was thoroughly disliked by the military contingents under his command, including that from his own country. As a result, although they initially did not welcome the idea of a female SRSG, they found me more congenial than their CMO and came to accept me.

In order for that to happen I once again had to show that I was ready and able to take on the same tasks and the same risks as a man would do. I travelled to our most remote field posts in the bush and to the cantonment areas where the combatants were held, in my Beechcraft aircraft and in rickety helicopters rented from bankrupt former communist countries in Eastern Europe and I conducted negotiations to stop the battle of Luanda from the centre of the fighting. An important early decision was to live in the rather primitive camp with the rest of the mission, rather than in a residence in the city; this meant that everyone could see me daily and I kept abreast of what was going on. In addition I used my usual techniques of regular meetings with staff. My Monday morning meeting with all the heads of both civilian and military components was especially important: I was able to inform everyone of the overall situation and of my political negotiations while both they and I learned what everyone else was doing and decided on the urgent actions needing to be taken. The aim was to ensure that each member of the mission, however low they were in the pecking order, could

appreciate the relevance of their work to the achievement of the overall goal of bringing peace to war-torn Angola.

Sadly we did not achieve that goal. In May 1993 I had very nearly reached agreement on the part of the two sides to a new ceasefire and peace agreement but needed to field a token contingent of 1,000 Blue Helmets⁶ in order to meet the conditions laid down by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). My request was turned down in New York. Thus the main cause of failure was the lack of political will of the international community to dedicate resources to resolving conflict in a distant African country, preferring instead to give priority to former Yugoslavia. The leadership problems of command and control in the mission and the insubordination of the military commander played no part in the negative outcome but they certainly did not make it any easier to deal with a 'mission impossible'.

A general lesson to be taken from this experience, and applicable to others like it, is that leadership at the field level cannot be successful without effective political and material support from Headquarters, the Security Council and member states.

6 General conclusions and recommendations

The leadership problems posed in any large national organisation are multiplied in the case of the UN by many factors, of which the following are shown to be the most significant from the examples given above:

- a. The concept of UN officials answering only to the Secretary-General and the UN Charter, as defined by Dag Hammarskjöld in his Oxford lecture in 1948⁷ has become seriously eroded;
- b. There is too much interference by member states with the inner workings of the UN and in the appointment and promotion of their nationals;
- c. While geographical distribution is essential in a multilateral institution, too many staff regard themselves as servants of their own nations and turn to their embassies and capitals for support;
- d. Political appointees to Assistant and Under-Secretary-General posts often lack the qualifications and experience required in the field of responsibility to which they have been assigned;
- e. No punishment is meted out or sanctions applied when basic UN principles are transgressed;
- f. Offending a prominent member state may prejudice a Secretary-General's prospects for a further term of office;
- g. While leadership must be exercised at appropriate levels throughout the system, it will only be fully effective if the example is set at the very top by the Secretary-General. At present many limitations are imposed on his authority. Member states do not want a strong Secretary-General and the tortuous 'horse trading' process of electing the Secretary-General can lead to the 'least common denominator' being chosen.

These are not new findings but have been evident truths for decades. Some improvements have been introduced – for example, candidates for senior political and military posts are now more closely reviewed and governments must produce more than one candidate – but the most basic reforms still have to be done. The reason that they have never been acted upon stems from the paradox that, in an age of rapid globalisation and diminishing national power, the pursuit of narrow national interests, often mistaken, and the tendency to 'go it alone' are on the increase. Ironical as this is, these counterproductive factors represent the political reality of today's world. We must realise that 'realpolitik' will not allow some of the most obvious changes to take place, but it is imperative that we find some way of strengthening the UN, which is more needed than ever in our conflict-ridden world.

Some ideas have been circulating that, if implemented, would have a multiplier effect:

- h. Changing the procedure for electing the Secretary-General by introducing a pre-selection process. The final decision will of course be political but this approach would at least ensure that the choice would be made from a list of well-qualified and experienced candidates.
- i. Limiting the Secretary-General's term of office to a single period slightly longer than the present five years. This would increase the incumbent's authority and protect him or her from undue pressure from member states.

The United Nations Association (UNA)-UK is conducting a campaign to introduce changes of this kind in the run-up to the appointment of the next new Secretary-General in 2016. It is very much to be hoped that the UK will support and promote this initiative.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Dame Margaret Anstee's paper was presented at WS1.

³ The Chinese Mission is a separate building in New York for Chinese staff working in the UN.

⁴ The diplomatic representatives of the Chinese government (who were housed in the Chinese Mission building).

⁵ Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, 1991.

⁶ UN troops, the so-called Blue Helmets.

⁷ Dag Hammarskjöld famous lecture, 'The International Civil Servant in Law and Fact', given in Oxford University in May 1961.

A.4 A Personal Reflection on Managing Crises

Alan Doss^{1,2}

Abstract

This article focuses on aspects of Alan Doss's later UN career, with particular reference to his experience in crisis situations, and their humanitarian, political and security implications. These complement his earlier career experience, starting as a UNA volunteer, which was focused more on development-related matters in Africa and Asia. He draws out a number of lessons, mainly from experience gained in his later assignments as Deputy or Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Keywords: UN, UNDP, development cooperation, humanitarian support, crisis management, peace and security.

1 In the beginning

Growing up in South Wales, my early life was marked by the weekday routine of a local grammar school, with weekends spent on the rugby pitch. Even my student days at the London School of Economics were quite pacific – the war in Vietnam was only just beginning to seep into public consciousness, and mass protest had not yet erupted on the streets. Violent conflict was a world away in distant places, viewed largely through television reports and newspaper accounts.

A relatively quiet life did not mean that I and my contemporaries were politically deaf. Like many others of my student generation, I demonstrated against white supremacy in Rhodesia and joined marches calling for the end of apartheid in South Africa and the release of Nelson Mandela. But those were generally well-mannered and non-violent events, followed by a visit to the nearest pub to restore throats raw from yelling denunciations of Hendrik Verwoerd and Ian Smith.

2 A world of troubles

2.1 Contention and crisis

So not much had prepared me for a professional life spent in the United Nations, dealing with a world full of troubles. For many years, I worked on economic development and humanitarian programmes in developing countries,³ but natural disasters and other emergencies often intruded, demanding urgent attention and action. My own catalogue included famine and drought in *Niger*, floods in *Benin*, earthquakes in *China*, mudslides in *Thailand* and cyclones in the Indian Ocean. To that list, I could add health crises caused by virulent outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever, Ebola and Lassa fever, not to mention tragic accidents that took the lives of many UN colleagues.

In fact, nature threatened a destructive crisis just before I retired from the UN. A large and boisterous volcano in the North Kivu province of the *Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, where I headed the UN peacekeeping mission, began to act up. Several years earlier, an eruption of a sister volcano close by had destroyed much of the provincial capital, Goma. So we were on alert for a potential humanitarian disaster, which would also have caused a major disruption of UN peacekeeping operations in the troubled eastern Congo.

As it turned out, the volcano – Nyamuragira – proved to be quite well behaved. For a while, however, I had a front-row seat at a very spectacular, if ultimately harmless, fireworks display. I was offered an unforgettable trip on board a UN observation helicopter flown by

Indian peacekeepers, which hovered a few hundred metres over the volcano and afforded me an extraordinary, but rather nervous, glimpse directly into Nyamuragira's inferno.

Looking back, however, it was the political and humanitarian crises – and the two are almost invariably linked – that proved to be the most intractable, complex and wrenching. Sometimes these were extended, unseen crises that had simmered for long periods before erupting into bursts of intense violence, destruction and death. But violence is usually symptomatic of a deeper malaise, often signalling the failure of the state itself.

One politico-security crisis that I remember vividly, probably because it was relatively early on in my career, occurred in Niger 35 years ago when I was caught up in the middle of a nasty coup attempt. It followed an earlier, successful coup that had brought the military to power during the great drought that devastated the Sahelian region in the early 1970s.

I was woken at about 4.30 in the morning to the sound of gunfire very close by. A group of dissident army officers were trying to overthrow the military regime that had seized power a few months before. My next-door neighbour was already on his terrace and sardonically remarked that there must have been a change of government. In fact that had not happened. The government held on.

At the time the crisis appeared to have been resolved. Niger did not collapse and the world's attention moved on from the Sahel. It moved on to the crises in Central America, Cambodia, the Balkans, Somalia, Angola, the Congo and Rwanda and then, at the end of the 1990s, West Africa, which began to implode. But three decades after the failed coup attempt, in 2009 Niger found itself again in the throes of a severe drought, and the mishandling of this disaster led to the country once more experiencing political instability and a military coup.

I cite the Niger story because it leads me to a larger truth about crisis: do not judge a crisis by the outcome of the day. What happened in Niger was the result not just of personal feuds and ambitions in the military (although these played a part). The crisis arose from the civilian government's earlier failure to manage the catastrophic consequences of the drought, due to the ineptitude and corruption that characterised the regime.

2.2 From peacekeeping to peace-building

So too the crises in *Sierra Leone*, *Côte d'Ivoire*, *Liberia* and the *DRC*,⁴ where I worked in peacekeeping missions for the first ten years of this century; they did not suddenly erupt without warning. Each was a mix of proximate and profound causes. The roots of these crises reach back in time; each one was different in its own way, and yet in some ways alike. None of them was amenable to a quick fix; each one has produced (and is still producing in the case of the DRC) a long-running humanitarian crisis.

Making the distinction between the proximate and the profound is a critical challenge for all would-be peace-makers and crisis responders.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, had acute but very different consequences for crisis-prone countries. For *Cambodia*, a country that had suffered massacres of genocidal proportions and then an invasion from neighbouring Vietnam, it opened the way to successful peace negotiations. The shift in the geo-political parameters at the end of the Cold War, and the reforms that had begun to reshape Chinese policy, greatly contributed to halting the war in Cambodia, thereby ending a cycle of conflict which had scarred South East Asia for over half a century.

At the time, I was directing the *UN's border relief operations in Thailand*,⁵ which were caring for hundreds of thousands of Cambodians who had been displaced by the fighting in Cambodia. That job brought me into frequent contact with Khmer Rouge commanders and soldiers who had been involved in the genocide. They were still in command and

held sway over many of the people we were aiding in a string of refugee camps along the Thai–Cambodian border. I remember them as thin, chain-smoking hollow-eyed men, most of them quite young, who did not say very much but watched everything.

During those days on the Thai–Cambodian border, as subsequently in Africa, I found myself shaking hands with people who had blood on their hands. There was not much else that could be done until the political pieces began to fall into place; within a matter of months, the crisis in Cambodia, which had lasted for more than a decade, was essentially resolved. A peace agreement was signed in Paris, followed by the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission, allowing the Khmer refugees to return home.

Sadly, for other countries the profound change in the geo-political landscape was a prelude to conflict, not to peace. This was the case of the Congo, Somalia, Liberia and several other African countries. They fell into the abyss as their value as Cold War partners depreciated and their political leadership failed to adapt to the new global dispensation.

Poor governance, economic stagnation, demographic pressures and misguided aid policies have all played their part in creating the ‘perfect storm’ that has spread violence and crisis across much of Africa. We have not always fully recognised these deeper, structural dimensions, which are partly the reason why conflict and crisis persist.

2.3 The learning curve

1. Choices, compromises, leadership: I have learned that a crisis is not solved, and peace does not come about, because the UN Security Council passes a resolution, establishes a peacekeeping operation and sets a calendar for elections. UN peacekeepers can provide the time and space for countries to begin addressing their problems but their presence cannot substitute for the hard *choices*, difficult *compromises*, and the enlightened and determined *leadership* that make enduring peace possible.

In many ways the *Congo* was the epitome of crisis, with the country lurching from one disaster to another. For me, the worst case was the hostilities that ignited in August 2008 between government forces and rebel militias in the eastern region of the Congo, which threatened to again engulf the Great Lakes region in violent conflict. The government’s army collapsed and UN peacekeepers were forced to intervene to protect civilians and prevent the rebels from overrunning the whole province, which would have had devastating consequences for the Congo and neighbouring Rwanda.

Graphic television reports showed hundreds of thousands of people uprooted by the conflict, which was characterised by horrific violence against civilians, including the rape and abuse of women and girls. UN peacekeepers were widely criticised for not doing enough to stop the violence and then for supporting the ill-disciplined government forces in their efforts to end the rebellion and dismantle the militias and the insurgent groups that had fled from Rwanda after committing genocide a decade earlier. Massacres did occur and our seeming inability to stop them was roundly condemned, even though our resources were stretched to breaking point as we sought to contain multiple security threats.

Unfortunately, the international community can sometimes complicate the search for durable solutions to crisis. A crisis with a graphic humanitarian impact such as that in the Congo quickly draws the attention of the global media. Public demands for action – especially in the Western world – are likely to follow. Would-be mediators multiply, aid efforts proliferate and local actors exploit their momentary access to a global audience to gain support for their causes, justified or not. Undoubtedly, these pressures, and the outpouring of humanitarian concern and goodwill, can make a difference. But they can also spur institutional rivalries and competing agendas. Keeping all the actors on board, including neighbouring countries, is one of the central challenges of complex crises.

2. *Know your protagonists:* Another lesson I draw from experience of dealing with crises, especially the prolonged ones, is the importance of knowing the protagonists, their ambitions, fears, vanities and motivations. They have political and personal capital vested in the conflict. Sometimes they actually thrive on conflict because it bolsters their value as protectors and providers. Outsiders – UN officials, diplomats, non-governmental organisations, academics – come and go, rush in and out, but local actors must live with the consequences of any political deal they make. They have to justify it to their supporters and communities, knowing that if they make the wrong move the outcome could be fatal.

Some but not all leaders are able to make the changes needed to build peace. I worked closely with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman in Africa to be elected as a head of state, when I led the UN peacekeeping operation in *Liberia*. With her election, Liberia began to emerge from two decades of dreadful, mindless brutality that had killed tens of thousands of people, displaced many more and made the country a byword for child soldiers and sexual violence. Her personal commitment to human rights and to good governance has been pivotal to the progress the country has made since she took office.

Liberia has not escaped crises but President Johnson Sirleaf has generally found the right response to them. Most recently she has had to cope with the Ebola epidemic, which has again tested her leadership, as well as that of key international actors such as the World Health Organization. During my days in the country, we faced other challenges as we worked to restore peace and security: demobilised and disgruntled ex-servicemen; communal tensions arising from ritual killings; the resurgence of militias trying to gain control of natural resources; and even piracy.

Other crises erupted, closer to home. On the day that Mrs Johnson Sirleaf's electoral victory was officially pronounced, the presidential mansion went up in flames (investigations later revealed that an electrical fault was the cause, not sabotage as originally feared). This happened just as the dignitaries, including heads of state of neighbouring countries, were about to sit down to a celebratory luncheon. They were hastily evacuated but in the absence of any functioning fire engines in Monrovia (or, for that matter, anywhere else in Liberia), UN peacekeepers hastily mobilised their fire-fighting equipment to help put out the blaze. Present at the mansion luncheon, I found myself acting as the UN's Chief Fire Marshal, until our professional fire fighters could arrive. I had previous experience in dousing political fires but this was a whole new experience in crisis management.

3. *The need for flexibility, adaptability and risk-taking:* I cite this incident because it underlines another verity about crisis management: crises come in many shapes and sizes, often unanticipated. Crisis managers need to be flexible and able to adapt quickly when things go wrong. This involves risk, something that large bureaucracies (in the public or private sector) like to avoid. But the man or woman on the front line of a crisis cannot function effectively in a risk-aversion mode. I think that Jawaharlal Nehru got it right when he said that 'a leader or a man of action in a crisis almost always acts subconsciously and then thinks of the reasons for his action'.

4. *The need for perseverance – balancing the immediate and the important:* Crisis is a draining experience. Fatigue is the inevitable corollary of crisis, clouding judgement and diminishing energy. If you are running a large peace operation, you find yourself confronting a crisis just about every day, sometimes with neither the means nor the authority to deal with it, which can be immensely frustrating.

In crisis situations, there is a great danger of trying to do everything at once because everything needs to be done. Priorities have to be established. Identifying and focusing on the big problems – those that form the main barrier to a durable solution – is a must. This can be a delicate balancing act when the media is on your back, demanding to know why you haven't yet solved all the problems of the day. The crisis responders in Haiti faced those

pressures until the country was no longer in the headlines. I had similar experiences in the Congo. In a crisis, both the immediate and the important have to be kept in focus – this is probably the greatest challenge for crisis managers.

5. Grasping opportunities out of dangers: I have written about violent crises around the world. But a few months after I left UN service, I was reminded that crisis is sometimes not so far from home. When riots erupted in London and other major cities in the UK in 2011, I watched with sympathy as exhausted police and emergency workers struggled to cope and respond. Irrate questions were asked in parliament; the media went into overdrive. Memories came back of Kinshasa, Freetown, Monrovia and Abidjan, where people had also taken to the streets in an angry orgy of violence and vandalism, attacking UN peacekeepers as they did so.

The UK riots showed that a crisis makes for ready headlines, often to the detriment of dispassionate analysis and sound policy choices. The attentions of the media, advocacy groups and celebrities can amplify the sense of crisis and in doing so inadvertently deflect focus from cause to consequence. So, we should try to heed what John F. Kennedy advised when he recalled that the Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis'. One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger – but recognise the opportunity. That is the real challenge in troubled times – grasping an opportunity out of danger.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² This article is based on Alan Doss's presentation at the Witness Seminar on 'The UN and Crisis Situations – Some Personal Perspectives', Rothschild Archive Trust, London on 22 October 2010. It was subsequently published in 2012 in the *Historical Journal of The British Scholar Society* (Doss 2012). He participated in WS1 at the IDS.

³ After initial assignments as a United Nations Association (UNA) volunteer Junior Professional Officer (JPO) in Kenya, followed by Niger, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Headquarters, he was reassigned in 1977 to the new UNDP office in Vietnam to develop the first UNDP cooperation programme for Vietnam. In 1979, he was appointed Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP in China, opening the first international development cooperation programme and office in that country. He then returned to Africa as Resident Representative in Benin and Zaire (later the Democratic Republic of the Congo) responsible for UN operational activities in those countries.

⁴ Alan Doss's assignments in these countries were as follows:

Sierra Leone: Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) responsible for the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UN Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative;

Côte d'Ivoire: Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (PDSRSG), responsible for the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission (ONUCI);

Liberia: Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Head of the UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIL), with the rank of Under-Secretary-General (USG);

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC).

⁵ Alan Doss was UN Resident Coordinator and Regional Representative of the UNDP in Bangkok, Thailand, as well as Director of the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), in charge of UN assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced Cambodians on the Thai–Cambodian border. He was also the UN Representative to the Mekong River Committee.

Reference

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A.5 The Role of Human Rights – The UN’s Elusive Third Pillar

*David Whaley*¹

Abstract

In this article, David Whaley focuses on the lessons of his experience in relation to human rights. Starting with a reminder of the place of human rights in the UN – the third pillar of the UN’s basic purposes (with development, and peace and security) – he examines why it has tended to receive less attention than the UN’s other core mandates. He discusses the obstacles to implementation of human rights conventions and instruments in the past, but notes the more recent progress made since 2006 through the establishment of the Human Rights Council, and agreement on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Human Rights up Front (HRuF) initiatives. He concludes with suggestions on possible remedial measures to strengthen the UN’s human rights pillar.

Keywords: UN, human rights, Human Rights Council, R2P, HRuF.

1 Introduction: Human rights at the UN – 70 years after the adoption of the UN Charter

In our connected world, the links between the three pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, development and human rights – have never been clearer or more relevant. Long-term peace and security cannot exist without human rights for all. Sustainable development is impossible without peace and security. Human rights are the very foundation of our common humanity.²

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, 29 February 2016

1.1 Human rights in the UN – some important features, perceptions and results

In his opening remarks to the annual high-level panel discussion of the Human Rights Council on human rights mainstreaming, the UN Secretary-General addressed a timely reminder to his audience of government delegations; UN officials; representatives of national, regional and international civil societies; the media and, by webcast, peoples across the globe, that *human rights have always been a cornerstone of the United Nations*. They constitute one of its three core mandated responsibilities *and represent the most important characteristic that sets the organisation apart from other international organisations*, including both the League of Nations³ and the Bretton Woods Institutions.⁴

Human rights are also perceived as one of the areas in which the United Nations can claim credit for some significant results, for instance through the development of international norms for the behaviour of states, that have improved the lives and aspirations of peoples. The 2012 survey of the Future UN Development System (FUNDS) found that the UN was considered by respondents to have its greatest impact in functions other than development. They ranked the world organisation highest in its humanitarian and peacekeeping roles, followed by its efforts to formulate global development conventions, human rights and crisis recovery, all ahead of most of the functions associated with the development system. Within the development domain, the two areas of UN operational work judged most effective were: health (28 per cent) and human rights (26 per cent). When asked about the shape of the

UN's future agenda, respondents gave the **highest priority to promoting human rights** (62 per cent strongly in favour) (FUNDS 2012).

Human rights have been a major source of institutional innovation within the UN System, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, the formulation and adoption of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1966, their entry into force in 1976, the establishment of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 1993, the introduction of rights-based approaches – including the right to development – in the 1990s, the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006, and the adoption of pioneering inter-governmental processes and procedures for the work of the Council over the past decade.⁵

1.2 Human rights in practice – less than priority

Yet the place of human rights within the UN System and the attention that their promotion and protection receive within inter-governmental bodies and secretariats alike has never adequately matched the lofty principles of the founding members, the extraordinary development of international standards and instruments and the priorities and expectations of the global public.

The human rights function of the organisation has been marginalised. Even after relatively rapid expansion in recent years, mainly thanks to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, less than 3 per cent of the regular budget of the UN and some 1,200 of the 85,000 staff of the organisation are assigned to OHCHR. As recently as 2006 it received only 1.8 per cent of total resources; in 1997 it disposed of only 190 staff. As part of the UN Secretariat, OHCHR has been unable to follow the example of the major funds and programmes of the system (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], UN Children's Fund [UNICEF], World Food Programme [WFP]) in adapting administrative procedures to operational imperatives. This has inevitably resulted in the over-reliance of the UN for its operational human rights activities on entities designed for other purposes that are not directly accountable to inter-governmental human rights mechanisms and processes.

As a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, reporting through its Third Committee,⁶ the Human Rights Council is relegated to a secondary position in the UN's own organogram, not even meriting the bolding accorded to Funds and Programmes, Regional Commissions, specialized agencies and related organizations. Unlike other key functions, including peace and security, economic and social development, environment, sustainable development and peacekeeping, human rights is not even mentioned in the UN website description of the functions of the main organs of the organisation.

Similarly, in the FUNDS 2012 survey, having recognised human rights as an area of significant achievement and even greater expectation, OHCHR was not included in the list of the operational entities of the UN Development System. Its technical, advisory, and capacity strengthening roles thus received no attention in the review of relative performance. In the series of Witness Seminars of senior UN officials from the UK, organised in the context of the UN at 70, the three original pillars of the UN morphed into development cooperation, humanitarian action, and peace and security. Human rights was added to a list of a dozen global, regional and thematic issues covered by a single two-hour session at the development cooperation seminar. Despite some remedial action, it remained relatively marginal in the two other seminars.

1.3 Purpose of this article

This article examines why the human rights pillar has so often received less attention than the UN's other core mandates. It suggests that this is in part a reflection of an unfavourable

international environment, at least over the first 50 years of the UN's existence; in part continued reluctance of member states to accept that full respect for all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community, not exclusively an internal matter of individual states, and that each government can be held to account internationally for the fulfilment of its responsibility to promote and protect human rights; in part the relative neglect of human rights by the operational actors of the UN System (developmentalists, humanitarians and peace-keepers alike); and, in part, failure to recognise the fact that the international community comprises not only states and secretariats but also individuals and civil society organisations.

2 The UN and human rights: obstacles to implementation

2.1 International environment for the promotion and protection of human rights

Having adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its vision, standards, and commitments of states to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all their people, states proved remarkably disinclined to translate these into operational processes; for the entire period of decolonisation and the Cold War, governments seem to have considered that respect for the rights of individuals, communities and peoples could only be addressed once enabling political, security and economic conditions had been created; all sides tacitly accepted that criticism of mass human rights violations by authoritarian regimes would depend on political expediency rather than on an objective assessment of behaviours against agreed obligations.

Even after the adoption of the two Covenants and despite the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there was little agreement on the relative priority to be accorded to the two main categories of rights. Many developing countries, through the G77⁷/Non-Aligned Movement⁸ emphasised economic, social and cultural rights (and, from 1986, the international dimensions of the Right to Development). Members of the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG)⁹ and the European Union members of the Eastern Europe Group¹⁰ focused mainly on political and civil rights. Recognition of the inevitably progressive nature of the realisation of economic and social rights was increasingly mirrored in demands for 'cultural sensitivity' and acceptance of progressive implementation of civil and political rights.

2.2 Approach adopted by states and the UN Secretariats to human rights implementation

In his reflection on the failure of the UN to protect the Tutsi population of Rwanda and Muslim youth at Srebrenica in the two tragedies of the 1990s, in *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan underlined the limits to state sovereignty when faced with the challenge of protecting human rights. 'A UN for the 21st century', he concluded, 'would have to create new partnerships, respond to the needs of individuals, and stand for the principle that national sovereignty could never be used as a shield for genocide or gross violation of human rights' (Annan 2012).

Tensions and disagreements over the role of the UN in monitoring performance and compliance with obligations entered into by states, through the signature and ratification of internationally binding agreements, have been a constant feature of the international debate on human rights, with arguments being advanced by many governments that recognising such a role for the UN would infringe upon state sovereignty.

Even when states have agreed on core principles that limit absolute sovereignty (e.g. the right to development and the responsibility to protect) it has proven extremely difficult to translate broad commitments into meaningful action.

The UN bureaucracy has generally relied on indirect methods such as mainstreaming and capacity development to promote human rights without recognising that neither can be expected to achieve significant results in the absence of political will, strong independent institutions and democratic accountability; indeed, some suggest that the application of these blunt instruments may even be counter-productive – and do great harm – if they legitimise institutions of governance that fail to meet basic standards in terms of their mandates, independence, impartiality and access to resources.

2.3 Ambivalence of the UN System on human rights

The *Compendium of Working Papers* produced by former senior managers of the UN Development System for the UN at 70 Witness Seminar on Development Cooperation (WS1)¹¹ contains many references to the serious difficulties they encountered when they tried to address the human rights aspects of their mandated responsibilities.¹²

This general observation is reflected in Robert England's article on 50 years of UN development cooperation (B.1.2). With reference to 'normative values, i.e. those relating to human rights as well as development priorities', Robert notes that:

In the early days, promoting and supporting national implementation of such values was not a major preoccupation of country offices, but this has progressively changed over the years as the breadth of this normative agenda has evolved. Unsurprisingly, it is in this area that the 'fault line' is most apparent, as individual member states are held to account for their compliance with international norms. As with in-country situation analyses, however, the normal approach of the UN has been to offer assistance to the host government in improving its compliance, rather than to amplify external criticism – [an approach which] fails to satisfy some observers but nonetheless represents a realistic positioning for the UN country teams.

Some parts of the UN System – e.g. UNICEF for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and UN Women for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),¹³ UNHCR for the Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and OHCHR itself with respect to all rights covered by the UDHR, the Covenants and subsequent international instruments – have made advocacy for adherence to human rights obligations a central element in their country-level work. Others, notably UNDP, have been constrained by their commitment to government ownership/execution and their privileged relationship with state partners, often to the exclusion of other national stakeholders.

UNDP, through its pioneering series of global, national and regional Human Development Reports (HDR) has contributed significantly to the development debate since 1990; in HDR 2000 on Human Rights and Human Development, UNDP Administrator, Mark Malloch-Brown, and the report's Chief Architect, Richard Jolly, underlined that 'human rights are not a reward for development; rather they are critical to achieving it'. 'A broad vision of human rights must be entrenched to achieve sustainable human development. When adhered to in practice as well as in principle, the two concepts make up a self-reinforcing virtuous circle' (UNDP 2000: iii). Yet there are still reports from local civil society representatives that some managers of UN's development cooperation still do not perceive advocacy for the promotion and protection of human rights as a priority.

2.4 Under-reported role of the Third UN in the promotion and protection of human rights

In their review of 'UN Ideas that Changed the World' under the UN Intellectual History Project (UNIHP), Richard Jolly, Louis Emmerij and Thomas Weiss made a distinction between the First UN (governments), the Second UN (staff members) and the Third UN, defined as 'comprising NGOs, academics, consultants, experts, independent commissions and other groups of individuals' who routinely engage with governments and staff members and

'thereby influence UN thinking, policies, priorities and actions. The key characteristic of this third sphere is its independence from governments and UN secretariats' (Jolly, Emmerij and Weiss 2009).

Recognising Human Rights for All as the first and most pervasive of UN ideas that truly changed the course of humankind, Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi comment 'The speed with which human rights has penetrated every corner of the globe is astounding. Compared to human rights, no other system of universal values has spread so far so fast' (Normand and Zaidi 2007). The authors underline that from the very outset, the driving force behind the human rights work of the UN has been pressure from thousands of activists across the globe representing the Third UN. As former Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan, points out in his review of the UN Human Rights Council for the Routledge Global Institutions Series 'to put it simply and summarily, without human rights NGOs, the UN would not be able to discharge its mission for the protection and promotion of human rights'.

The lack of recognition of the remarkable and often courageous role of these actors on behalf of communities and individuals both within states and in the international arena has unfortunately been reflected in many UN at 70 events. Had UK members of the Third UN been included, for example, in the search for participants for the UK Witness Seminars, the human rights pillar of the UN would certainly have been more adequately addressed.

Some of the leading organisations and figures from the Third UN in the UK who have made significant contribution to the development of the human rights mandate and work of the UN, highlight some of the Third UN sources that could usefully enrich the UN Career Records Project. Based on an *ad hoc* preliminary survey, and brought together in a separate document *The Role of UK Nationals and Institutions in UN Human Rights Work*, by David Whaley,¹⁴ these cover the following main categories:

- (i) **UK founded and/or based international non-governmental institutions:** Amnesty International, Oxfam, Save the Children International, Minority Rights Group International, and Article 19;
- (ii) **Eminent individuals:** Four UK Presidents of the International Court of Justice; founders and co-founders of leading international NGOs: Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, Article 19; and the Universal Rights Group;
- (iii) **Contributors to the UN's human rights work from civil society:** the first Special Rapporteur (SR) on Torture and Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee that monitors the ICCPR; the former Associate Representative of the Quaker UN Office in Geneva; and the current SRs on human rights and counter terrorism and on Cambodia;
- (iv) **Contributors both as leaders in political/diplomatic/academic/civil society spheres and as senior UN officials:** a former British government Minister and UNDP Administrator/Deputy Secretary-General, a former Director of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; a former Secretary-General of Amnesty International and Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). The external team leader for the Internal Review of the UN role in Sri Lanka (SL-IRP); the independent leader of the task force entrusted with advising the Secretary-General on SL-IRP follow-up;
- (v) **UN Volunteers:** UN System leaders have long recognised the role of qualified and motivated volunteers in complementing and supplementing the efforts of UN officials in the promotion of human rights and democracy, working with local civil society organisations.

3 A decade of progress: 2006–2016

3.1 Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

UN member states, at the World Summit of 2005, recognised their individual and collective responsibility to protect civilian populations against war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Together with the establishment of the Human Rights Council, it was a key element in the efforts of the UN under Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to ensure that never again would the UN stand aside when faced with challenges such as the Rwandan genocide and Srebrenica massacres.

Less than five years later, the appalling events that characterised the closing phase of over 25 years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka (1983–2009), following the removal of international witnesses including the media, with some 40,000 civilian casualties according to UN estimates, were the first major new challenge of the twenty-first century to the role of the international community in the protection of civilian populations caught up in war. Despite the adoption of the declaration on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the UN allowed itself to be ordered out of the conflict zone. It then withheld critical information on civilian casualties and alleged war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan armed forces and accepted gross under-counting of the number of civilians in government-declared ‘no-fire zones’ with devastating humanitarian consequences. As Sir John Holmes, then UN Emergency Relief Coordinator stated in a Channel 4 interview ‘it was decided that in the case of Sri Lanka R2P would simply not apply’.¹⁵

3.2 Human Rights up Front (HRuF)

An internal review of the role of the UN in Sri Lanka in 2008/2009 concluded that the failure of the UN was systemic – the responsibility of the whole range of inter-governmental bodies and UN actors involved, at Headquarters and in-country, none of whom (with the notable exception of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay) had placed the protection of the most basic of rights of civilians – to life – at the centre of their efforts. Such systemic failure necessitated urgent attention and radical responses to avoid recurrence in a deteriorating global context.¹⁶

The HRuF Action Plan, launched by the Secretary-General in late 2013, was the central element in the response. It aims at a system-wide UN commitment to engage in timely and effective preventive action in order to ensure both the protection of civilians and the protection of human rights. *It recognises that preventing serious human rights violations is central to the purposes of the UN and must always be a priority.*

It introduces mechanisms for collecting and analysing information on serious violations, a process to translate information into action and a reminder to all staff of the UN System, particularly those with policy and strategy responsibilities at Headquarters and country level, of their human rights responsibilities. It strengthens human rights training for all staff, the incorporation of human rights objectives into the appraisal compacts of senior managers and aims to ensure accountability at all stages of UN action and decision-making through a human rights evaluation framework.¹⁷

Meanwhile, from March 2012, the Human Rights Council, in an unprecedented reversal of its initial stand, with strong leadership from the governments of the US and UK, and support from all regions, passed a series of increasingly critical resolutions on reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, culminating in the establishment of an OHCHR Investigation (OISL) in March 2014. The OISL report, presented to the HRC in September 2015, led to the adoption of a consensus resolution, co-sponsored by the new coalition government of Sri Lanka and laying the basis for international support for a far-reaching process of transitional justice.¹⁸

Whether the transitional justice process and other commitments to its peers through the HRC, willingly entered into by the Government of Sri Lanka, will be fully implemented will depend on a combination of political will, enabling conditions within Sri Lanka and sustained international support and encouragement - and principled pressure. Above all, there will be a need for continued independent monitoring and reporting – reflecting the accountability of the Sri Lankan authorities and institutions and their external partners, including the UN System to all Sri Lankan communities and to the global community through the HRC. Renewed cooperation between Sri Lanka and the UN has opened a window of opportunity that offers reasonable prospects for the island to address the ills that have plagued it for over half a century.

3.3 A common purpose

R2P, HRuF and the Human Rights Council resolution on Sri Lanka all recognise the collective responsibility, beyond discretionary rights, for all states to act in the face of serious human rights violations and the imperative to protect through prevention, helping states to fulfil their human rights obligations.

All three initiatives aim to reduce the risks of mass atrocity crimes through ensuring respect for basic human rights principles including access to economic and social opportunities, freedom to participate directly in political activities, to practise religious and other beliefs, to associate with others and to express agreement – or dissent.

3.4 Sustainable Development Goals – the need for clearer articulation of human rights

The official view on the place of human rights in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is summarised by OHCHR as follows: ‘It is increasingly recognized that human rights are essential to achieve sustainable development... human rights principles and standards are now strongly reflected in an ambitious new global development framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. ‘Grounded in international human rights law, the agenda offers critical opportunities to further advance the realization of human rights for all people everywhere, without discrimination’.¹⁹

Yet there remains great scepticism. As former UN Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan pointed out in a briefing note for FUNDS in July 2015, entitled *Human Rights and the SDGs: A Side-lined Priority?* ‘The hard reality is that sustainable development cannot be achieved without universal realization and protection of human rights... The high-sounding rhetoric about human rights is not mirrored in the content of the SDGs, nor in the methods indicated for their implementation and monitoring’.²⁰

There is even greater scepticism among the guardians of the UN’s human rights principles – local, regional and international civil society. On the eve of the adoption of the SDGs, Neil Hicks, International Policy Adviser for Human Rights First, noted:

One obvious objection is that the term ‘human rights’ is not mentioned anywhere at all in the 17 proposed goals. Many of the goals have intrinsic or implicit human-rights content, but the omission of the actual term is notable and is indicative of a global climate where more and more states are assertively pushing back against universal human-rights standards and labelling international pressure to encourage compliance as unacceptable interference in their sovereignty.²¹

With the disappearance of the term ‘human rights’, we are left with vague promises of mainstreaming, widely recognised as the bluntest of instruments in the toolkit of the Human Rights Council. Based on decades of observation of the limited impact of mainstreaming, and recent experience at the Human Rights Council, the author is inclined to join the sceptics.

Mainstreaming without rigorous accountability has more often than not resulted in agreed principles being lost in delivery, distorted through inappropriate action or simply forgotten.

4 Strengthening the UN's human rights pillar: some possible remedial measures

4.1 Strengthened UN mindset in favour of human rights, combined with structural changes:

In commenting on prospects for full implementation of the HRuF Plan of Action, Andrew Gilmour, Director in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for Political, Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Human Rights affairs, underlines the magnitude of the challenge: 'only through an evolution of the UN mindset, combined with various structural changes can the spirit of this initiative hope to survive'... It is an 'ambitious goal – to commit an entire bureaucracy to an ideal – even if it is an ideal that is contained in the organisation's founding documents' (Gilmour 2014).

4.2 Increased accountability for human rights: As voices from the Third UN – from all regions – have insistently reminded us, whether with respect to the protection of civilians under HRuF and R2P, the application of human rights principles in the implementation of the SDGs or indeed in the promotion and protection of human rights in general, the key to success is **accountability**. It is precisely here that structural reforms are needed. In line with its mandated responsibilities for the coordination of the human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the UN System, OHCHR should be invited to monitor and report on the manner in which development and humanitarian bodies contribute to the implementation of relevant decisions of the Human Rights Council.

4.3 Fuller use of human rights mechanisms: The bulk of UN human rights activities are undertaken outside the purview of the UN's dedicated inter-governmental human rights structures. The human rights mechanisms of the UN offer several possibilities for the introduction of much-needed accountability. Reports on the human rights promotion and capacity-building work of the UN System could be incorporated into the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Treaty Bodies committees and Special Procedures mandate-holders could be invited to comment on the role of the UN System in the implementation of their recommendations. Where country-specific situations have been brought to the attention of the Human Rights Council, consideration could be given to direct interaction between members of the UN Country Team and the Human Rights Council.

4.4 Increased recognition of the role of the Third UN and civil society actors in human rights monitoring: One of the indirect advantages of such reporting and monitoring, and eventually of human rights audits of all activities of the UN System in a particular country, would be to ensure greater recognition of the essential role of the Third UN, local, regional and international civil society actors, than has been customary in the past, helping to redress serious imbalances that have generally characterised the UN's operational activities.

4.5 Strengthened role of Human Rights Council and OHCHR: Ideally, a far greater proportion of the UN System's human rights promotion and protection work should be brought under the direct responsibility of the Human Rights Council and OHCHR. This would require a significant increase in the allocation of core resources, greater access to extra-budgetary resources and the adoption of the kind of flexible processes and procedures that have long characterised the operational funds and programmes of the UN System and provided them with inappropriate advantage in the competition for mandates, programmes and responsibilities.

4.6 Increased accountability of UN Country Teams and RCs in promotion of human rights mandates: At the same time, recognition of the human rights mandates of the members of UN Country Teams and of the UN Resident Coordinators would be reflected in more

appropriate supervisory arrangements – possibly restoring the arrangements that applied between 1979 and 1994 under which the management of the UN RC system was the responsibility of the UN Secretariat, more adequately reflecting the *de facto* responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator system for all aspects of the UN mandate, capacities and operational activities.

4.7 Establishing the Human Rights Council as a primary organ of the UN instead of a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly: Ideally these measures would be accompanied by more radical action to enhance the overall place of human rights within the UN through the next institutional review of the UN in 2021, mandated by the General Assembly. The President of the Human Rights Council for 2015, Ambassador Joachim Ruecker, proposed in his end of term statement that member states should make the Council a primary organ of the UN. ‘Politically,’ he underlined, ‘it has somewhat “outgrown” its current role of a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly.’ ‘This way,’ he added, ‘all three pillars of the UN, namely Peace and Security, Development and Human Rights would be on an equal footing.’²²

4.8 Assumption of full responsibilities for UN’s third pillar: Such moves would have far-reaching implications. However, they are surely justified if the UN is to prepare itself for the new challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond – and finally to meet the provisions of its Charter – and the expectations of its peoples – by fully assuming its mandated responsibilities under its long-neglected third pillar.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Statement by Ban Ki-moon to the UN Human Rights Council, 29 February 2016 (see OHCHR website: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session31/Pages/31RegularSession.aspx).

³ Founded in 1920, the League of Nations, with some 58 members in 1934/5, was the first international organisation with a principal mission to maintain world peace, aiming to prevent wars through collective security, disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. Although its mandate covered some social issues such as labour conditions, just treatment of native inhabitants, human and drug trafficking, arms trade, global health, prisoners of war and protection of minorities in Europe, it was not entrusted with a comprehensive human rights mandate.

⁴ The Bretton Woods Institutions – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) (or World Bank) current part of the World Bank Group – were established in the context of the agreement on a system of rules, institutions, and procedures designed to regulate the international monetary system, adopted by 44 nations at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference in July 1944.

⁵ For further analysis of the UN’s human rights achievements see the acceptance speech by former Secretary-General of Amnesty International and UN SRSG, Ian Martin on receipt of the Sir Brian Urquhart Award for Distinguished Service to the UN: UNA-UK, 24 October 2013.

⁶ The ‘Third Committee’ ‘Social, Humanitarian and Cultural’ of the General Assembly (GA) figures under the general heading ‘Main and other Sessional Committees’ in the UN organisational chart. NB Although the term ‘human rights’ does not figure in the title of the Committee, over 50 per cent of its work deals with human rights. The Committee interacts directly with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President and members of the Human Rights Council (also in ‘Subsidiary Organs’ box), as well as with the Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures mandate holders appointed by the HRC. The Council’s report is examined by the Third Committee before its submission for formal adoption by the General Assembly.

⁷ The Group of 77 (G77) is a loose coalition of developing nations, designed to promote its members’ collective economic interests and to provide them with an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the UN. The group was founded by 77 states in June 1964; by November 2013 the organisation had expanded to 134 member countries.

⁸ The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an informal grouping of some 120 countries (and 15 observers) who participate in the conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries and act together at the UN on issues of common concern. Founded in 1961 as a gathering of states not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc, NAM’s core principles include mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.

⁹ The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) is one of five unofficial Regional Groups in the UN that act as voting blocs and negotiation forums. Initially formed in 1961, WEOG currently has 28 members. In addition to the states of Western Europe, the group includes Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel; the USA participates in an observer capacity.

¹⁰ The Eastern Europe Group (EEG) consists of countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, which together form the area of the former Eastern Bloc. The group currently has 23 members.

¹¹ **The Compendium of Working Papers and Career Summaries was produced as a complementary document to the Report of the first Witness Seminar (WS1) on Development Cooperation, held at IDS on 13–14 May 2015. It contains a rich collection of articles, memoirs and other contributions by 42 WS1 participants or invitees. This includes an article by the author on *The Human Rights Dimension of Development Cooperation and the UN’s Core Mandate* (section 40.5).**

¹² *Human Rights* in WS1 Compendium: see among others the papers submitted by former UN Resident Coordinators Terence Jones, Matthew Kahane, Frederick Lyons, Paul Matthews, Peter Witham and David Whaley.

¹³ Steve Woodhouse (2015) *Reflections on a Career with UNICEF*: See WS1 Compendium of Working Papers and Career Summaries 'The normative underpinning of the UN and the CRC together with UNICEF's strong advocacy capabilities have, I believe, been enormously important assets facilitating progress at national level to promote national political will to adhere to human rights requirements'.

¹⁴ See *The Role of UK Nationals and Institutions in UN Human Rights Work*, by David Whaley. Originally included in early drafts of the present article but excluded from the final version due to space constraints, this has been added for the record to the WS1 Compendium of Working Papers, among the contributions submitted by the author.

¹⁵ Interview with Sir John Holmes, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs/Emergency Relief Coordinator, in Channel 4 award-winning documentary *No Fire Zone: In the Killing Fields of Sri Lanka*. Produced by Outsider Films, with Channel 4 and ITV, and directed by Callum Macrae, the film was originally released in 2013 (with a showing at a side-event of the UN Human Rights Council), the updated version (2015) can be viewed on Vimeo on demand and Distrify; the access details are available at: nofirezone.org; see also chapter on Sri Lanka in *The Politics of Humanity, The Reality of Relief Aid*. John Holmes (Head of Zeus 2013).

¹⁶ Secretary-General's Internal Review on United Nations Actions in Sri Lanka, November 2012.

¹⁷ Human Rights up Front: see www.un.org/sg/humanrightsupfront/doc/RuFAP-summary-General-Assembly.shtml.

¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council resolution 30/1 of 1 October 2015 on *Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka*.

¹⁹ OHCHR Statement on 'Human Rights and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. OHCHR website, March 2016, www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/MDG/Pages/The2030Agenda.aspx.

²⁰ Bertrand Ramcharan: FUNDS Briefing Note of July 2015: *Human Rights and the SDGs: A Side-lined Priority?*

²¹ Neil Hicks, International Policy Adviser of Human Rights First in Huffington Post, 23 September 2015: *The SDGs' Missed Opportunity on Human Rights*, www.huffingtonpost.com/neil-hicks/the-sdgs-missed-opportunity-on-human-rights_b_8164384.html.

²² Statement by Ambassador Joachim Ruecker of Germany, President of the UN Human Rights Council for its 9th Cycle (2015), 21 December 2015 – available on the UN Human Rights Council website).

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A.6 UK Representation Within the United Nations System

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Abstract

This article discusses the important role played by UK nationals in the UN since its inception in 1945. It argues for the need for a strategy to maintain and strengthen this representation, both for the good of the UN as well as to maintain the UK's 'soft power' in a context where the UK's global influence cannot be taken for granted. The article provides valuable statistics on UK representation (to December 2012) *vis-à-vis* that of other countries and summaries of initiatives taken by other UN member states to increase their representation. It concludes with some recommendations for future UK action relating to developing strategic approaches to increase representation, build a strong and diverse pool of candidates and support future applicants, as well as those already working in the UN System.

Keywords: UN, UK representation, UN staffing.

1 Introduction

The United Kingdom has a long and rich tradition of engagement with international organisations and was a key architect of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations. The structures in place today owe much to British design, including the very concept of an independent international secretariat to administer them.³

While the UK's economic and military clout is considerably less in today's multipolar world, it remains an important actor at the UN. In part, this is because its Security Council status is unlikely to change, even if agreement on an expanded membership is reached. The state's financial contributions to the UN, voluntary and assessed, are also factors. But the UK's influence within the System – including in terms of representation both as a member state on various bodies and in terms of personnel – remains significant.

The UK is perceived as a power whose advice, cooperation and skills – notably in the areas of drafting and problem-solving – are highly valued.⁴ Moreover, British individuals within the System, from Margaret Anstee to Ian Martin, have contributed much to the UN's effectiveness, and to the reputation of British international civil servants. Since the UN's inception, the UK has – more or less – been well represented in terms of personnel within the UN System, comparing favourably with states that have larger populations and greater resources. Currently, the UK is the fifth-ranked member state by total number of staff at all grades, and third-ranked for professionals. At the senior level (defined in this report as D1 and above), the UK scores even higher, coming second behind the United States.

2 Suggested strategy for maintaining UK representation within the UN System

Nonetheless, it is important for the UK to have in place an effective strategy for maintaining its representation within the UN System, and to seek to enhance it at particular levels within particular bodies. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. *First, the need to strengthen the rules-based international order and its institutions:* a systematic approach to representation has the potential to support British national security and prosperity. The UK's 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS/SDSR) identified the need to 'strengthen the

rules-based international order and its institutions' as a key priority, stating that the erosion of this order is one of four 'particular challenges' likely to drive UK security priorities over the next decade.⁵

The NSS/SDSR goes on to recognise the UK's place 'at the heart of the rules-based international order', listing the UK's membership of the UN as a means to 'shape a secure, prosperous future for the UK and to build wider security, stability and prosperity'. It further describes the UN and other multilateral organisations as instruments that 'amplify our nation's power' and through which 'we play a central role in strengthening international norms and promoting our values'. Ensuring the effectiveness of the UN, which is recognised as being 'the world's leading multilateral institution', is listed as a UK objective.⁶

Effective individuals within the UN System contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation as a whole – a long-standing objective of the UK. Capable leaders in strategic senior-level posts could serve to move forward agendas in the short to medium term. A solid cadre of junior personnel, meanwhile, can have a positive long-term impact, whether retained and developed within the UN System to form part of the future pool of senior leaders, or absorbed into other institutions, including the UK diplomatic service.⁷

2. *Second, the value of UK 'soft power':* representation is a form of soft power, linked to influence, visibility and reputation. A strong cohort of British individuals with experience in international organisations will strengthen the UK's current and future role on the world stage, particularly if links are maintained with them and if efforts are made to integrate them into domestic postings on their return.
3. *Third, the UK's representation is not assured:* the UK's current levels of representation within the UN System should not be taken for granted. It is vulnerable in this regard precisely because its privileged Security Council status is secure for the foreseeable future. Larger UN contributors and emerging powers seeking greater influence continue to push for diversification of UN staff. G77 states are especially keen for more posts to be subject to geographic representation. The tacit 'ownership' of certain senior-level posts, in particular by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK and the US), is resented, as is the link between contribution and representation, by which the majority of UN member states lose out unless other criteria are applied. Meanwhile the UN System is increasingly under pressure to cut jobs, especially at the senior level, shrinking the pool and increasing competition.
4. *Fourth, there is room for improvement in UK UN representation:* while the UK's overall representation is good, there is considerable room for improvement within certain entities. There are funds, programmes and agencies, as well as certain Secretariat departments, that have never had a UK national at Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) or Under-Secretary-General (USG) level. The UK's level of representation is also relatively low (under 4 per cent) in bodies such as the UN Refugee Agency and UN Population Fund.⁸

Both categories include entities to which the UK is a significant contributor of funds, and which the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has identified as partners in the achievement of UK priorities.

Within the Secretariat, the UK has seen a decline in its senior representation in recent years.

5. *Fifth, vacancy opportunities should be explored:* although the age profile of UN System staff has shifted slightly in recent years, it remains the case that around 20 per cent of staff will reach the mandatory retirement age in the next five to seven years.⁹ This means that more than 6,600 positions could become vacant, barring changes to the posts themselves. Of these, more than 1,000 are at the level of D1 or above – representing more than half the total number of personnel in these positions (1,829).

6. *Sixth, the UK could benefit from the example of other UN member states:* the UK should take account of the emphasis placed by other UN member states on increasing representation within international organisations. Several states have had dedicated programmes and strategies in place for a number of years. The US, for instance, has accorded increasing priority and resources towards maintaining and expanding its representation, particularly in key UN posts and entities. Other states, notably Germany and France, which arguably have the most comprehensive programmes in place, already outrank the UK in some categories, and are in a position to overtake it at the senior end of the scale. Meanwhile states like Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland have a higher proportion of personnel, including at the professional and senior levels, than might be expected given their population sizes.

Any strategy to increase UK representation within the UN System must be framed in the context of improving recruitment and retention of quality staff more generally. As such, the UK should look in parallel to support the appointment of qualified senior individuals regardless of nationality, and find ways to strengthen junior professional recruitment from all regions. This could include, for example, the sponsoring of Junior Professional Officers from Commonwealth countries, as well as from the UK.

3 UK representation to 31 December 2012

In terms of overall representation within the UN System, the UK is the fifth-ranked member state by total numbers of personnel (at all grades) and the third-ranked for professional grade staff.¹⁰

Table 1 shows the top 10 member states by overall personnel, number of professional (P) grade staff and the proportion of total staff who are professionals.¹¹ General service (G) grade staff numbers are influenced by the location of major UN offices, in terms of local and diaspora populations.

Table 1 Top 10 UN member states by overall and professional (P) grade staff

Top 10 for overall personnel		Top 10 for number of P staff		Top ten for % of staff who are P staff	
USA	5,127	USA	3,012	Norway	88.98
France	4,174	France	1,878	Japan	87.22
Italy	2,795	UK	1,650	Netherlands	86.46
Kenya	2,585	Italy	1,381	Sweden	84.39
UK	2,456	Canada	1,248	Belgium	82.66
India	1,890	Germany	1,182	Germany	82.03
Canada	1,854	India	838	Australia	80.73
Ethiopia	1,779	Spain	833	Spain	73.26
Philippines	1,616	Japan	805	Canada	67.31
Germany	1,441	Kenya	586	UK	67.18

The UK contributes 5.2 per cent of the UN's regular budget. Regular budget contributions are often cited by UN member states when considering what they deem to be an appropriate level of representation, although the formula used to determine 'desirable ranges' for member states is more complex and only applies to a certain number of posts.¹²

Table 2 presents the data for UK professionals in the same set of UN entities used for Table 1.¹³ The percentage of professionals who are UK nationals is included.

Table 2 UK professional grade staff in the UN System

UN entity	UK P staff	Total P staff	UK as % of total
UN Secretariat and related posts	529	10,421	5.08
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	110	2,637	4.17
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	16	589	2.72
UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	42	501	8.38
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	57	1,634	3.49
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	187	2,918	6.41
UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	15	324	4.63
UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)	2	50	4.00
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	18	184	9.78
International Trade Centre (ITC – UNCTAD/WTO)	7	160	4.38
International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)	1	21	4.76
International Court of Justice (ICJ)	5	57	8.77
UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (JSPF)	1	86	1.16
UN University (UNU)	7	69	10.14
International Labour Organization (ILO)	60	1,026	5.85
International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO)	1	68	1.47
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	90	1,621	5.55
World Food Programme (WFP)	70	1,415	4.95
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	29	974	2.98
World Health Organization (WHO)	120	2,039	5.89
Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)	6	484	1.24
Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	23	359	6.41
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	15	380	3.95
Universal Postal Union (UPU)	6	98	6.12
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	29	361	8.03
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	4	147	2.72
International Maritime Organization (IMO)	22	162	13.58
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)	47	511	9.20
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	20	309	6.47
UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	10	285	3.51
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	82	1,245	6.59
UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	1	43	2.33
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	14	281	4.98
UN International Computing Centre (UNICC)	3	104	2.88
UN System Staff College (UNSSC)	1	20	5.00

Table 3 arranges the data in Table 2 to show the top 10 UN entities by number of UK nationals working at the professional grade level, as well as the top 10 entities by the percentage of professional grade staff who are from the UK.

Table 3 Top 10 UN entities by UK profession (P) grade staff

Top 10 by number of UK Ps		Top 10 by % of UK Ps	
UN Secretariat	529	IMO	13.58
UNICEF	187	UNU	10.14
WHO	120	UNRWA	9.78
UNDP	110	WIPO	9.20
FAO	90	ICJ	8.77
IAEA	82	UNOPS	8.38
WFP	70	ITU	8.03
ILO	60	IAEA	6.59
UNHCR	57	IFAD	6.47
WIPO	47	UNICEF	6.41

At senior levels (D1 and above), the UK is ranked second, with its nationals occupying 4.41 per cent of the highest positions (ASG and above). The US, in first place, accounts for 13.24 per cent. It should be noted that a significant number of UN member states do not have, and have never had, representation at this level. Within the Secretariat, which has by far the most posts at this level, the UK was ranked either second or third from 2008 to 2012, which corresponds to historical trends.¹⁴

Table 4 presents the total personnel numbers by grade for selected UN member states across the UN System, using the same list of entities as the Chief Executives Board (CEB) report.¹⁵

Table 4 2009 country comparisons for senior UN System personnel

	USG	ASG	D2	D1	Total
Australia	1	5	10	41	57
Brazil	1	2	3	26	32
Canada (4)	0	4	26	67	97
China	2	1	7	26	36
Denmark	0	2	8	25	35
France (3)	3	3	23	88	117
Germany (5)	1	5	23	59	88
India	1	3	14	50	68
Italy	1	4	25	66	96
Japan	3	5	15	35	58
Kenya	0	0	5	8	13
Netherlands	0	1	12	44	57
Russia	2	2	8	23	35
Sweden	1	3	13	22	39
Switzerland	1	0	5	8	14
UK (2)	2	5	37	103	147
US (1)	5	12	65	183	265

Note: Top five countries marked with rank in brackets.

Table 5 Total personnel at USG level and UK personnel at USG level

	Total USG	UK	Female
Secretariat and affiliated	31	1	23
Special Envoys	39	2	11
Funds and programmes	12	0	3
Specialized agencies	16	1	3

Table 6 Top 32 UN member states for G, P and overall personnel

UN member state	G	P	Total	% prof
Argentina	180	269	449	59.91
Australia	137	574	711	80.73
Austria	909	271	1,180	22.97
Belgium	107	510	617	82.66
Brazil	273	314	587	53.49
Canada	606	1,248	1,854	67.31
China	348	540	888	60.81
Denmark	243	329	572	57.52
Ethiopia	1,471	308	1,779	17.31
France	2,296	1,878	4,174	44.99
Germany	259	1,182	1,441	82.03
Ghana	452	276	728	37.91
India	1,052	838	1,890	44.34
Ireland	174	282	456	61.84
Italy	1,414	1,381	2,795	49.41
Japan	118	805	923	87.22
Kenya	1,999	586	2,585	22.67
Netherlands	86	549	635	86.46
Nigeria	601	318	919	34.60
Norway	27	218	245	88.98
Pakistan	632	312	944	33.05
Philippines	1,245	371	1,616	22.96
ROK	254	295	549	53.73
Russia	354	508	862	58.93
Senegal	342	313	655	47.79
South Africa	258	216	474	45.57
Spain	304	833	1,137	73.26
Sweden	64	346	410	84.39
Switzerland	470	319	789	40.43
Uganda	669	330	999	33.03
UK	806	1,650	2,456	67.18
USA	2,115	3,012	5,127	58.75

Table 5 shows the total number of personnel, female personnel and UK nationals at USG and equivalent rank within the UN Secretariat and affiliated bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

It should be noted that Special Envoys (used here to mean Special Advisers, Special Representatives and similar) are included in the figures.

However, there are a number of UN Secretariat departments and funds, programmes and agencies where the UK was not, as of 2012, represented ASG and above levels.

Table 6 presents figures for general service (G) staff, professional (P) grade staff and overall personnel by state, including the percentage of professional grade staff for 32 member states.¹⁶ These states have been selected for inclusion as they represent the highest-ranking states for each of these sets of figures.

4 Comparison with other member states

The US performs the best across the System. At certain levels and within certain entities, Germany and France outrank the UK, but not overall. Other significant contributors to the UN, such as Japan, generally fare less well than the UK.

Of the permanent members of the Security Council, the UK, US and France perform much better than China and Russia. Other states performing well in terms of senior-level representation are emerging and middle-ranking powers, such as Australia, Canada and India. This could be a result of the lobbying processes that they have in place for contesting, for example, non-permanent Security Council seats. The predominance of the English language is likely to be relevant.

A handful of smaller states – notably Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland – have higher numbers of staff, overall and at the senior level. This could be due to a number of factors, including levels of voluntary contributions, locations of UN entities (particularly in Geneva) and language competencies. The fact that all four countries have a range of programmes in place to support representation could also be significant.

5 Initiatives taken by other UN member states to increase representation

Four states that do well in terms of representation are presented here as case studies.

5.1 France

Support to French nationals interested in working for the UN is provided by the Délégation des Fonctionnaires Internationaux (DFI). Under the auspices of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DFI promotes French representation in international organisations. Its work includes:

- analysis of French representation and multilateral influence, including through an annual survey of French nationals working in international organisations
- information on opportunities, primarily through a web portal featuring vacancy notices and advice on applications
- matching candidates to positions: DFI maintains a database of hundreds of candidates who have at least three years of professional experience and relevant skills
- information on the various job families and grades within the UN System, as well as entry points such as the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme and Associate Expert Programme (AEP) – France sponsors its nationals in both programmes

- partnerships with other organisations, for example, France Expertise Internationale – a public agency under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Pôle Emploi International – an international recruitment agency. These organisations offer extensive information on international vacancies (including CV and job postings), as well as training, advice and events.

5.2 Germany

Since the late 1990s, the German government has held regular meetings to discuss increasing senior-level representation in international organisations. In 2008, the Bundestag called for regular reports on this issue. These reports provide analysis of German nationals within various parts of the UN System, taking into account their grade, age and gender, identifying gaps by type of post/body and using financial contributions (among other factors) as a basic measure for desirable representation. The data is used to compile a target list of posts, reviewed twice a year.

The Foreign Ministry provides significant support to candidates, including through:

- a database of vacancies that allows users to create a personal profile
- extensive information on UN applications, recruitment processes and available support
- links to partner organisations that provide advice and training to candidates, such as the Zentrum für International Friedenseinsätze and the Büro Führungskräfte zu Internationalen Organisationen
- outreach to schools and universities through events and careers fairs
- a partnership with the Diplomatic College, which provides a range of courses covering policy issues as well as diplomatic training, language tuition and study trips.

Like France, Germany sponsors its nationals for JPO and AEP places. It also offers financial support for internships, a mentoring programme to connect young, mid-level, senior and former professionals, and opportunities for Germans working in international organisations to network, for example, through the web platform www.commio.de

5.3 Switzerland

Since joining the UN in 2002, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has supported Swiss representation, particularly in the UN agencies that receive significant funding from the government: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UN Women and WFP. To this end, the SDC has partnered with the Centre for Information, Counselling and Training for Professionals – a specialist service provider – on a comprehensive support package for Swiss nationals interested in working for the UN. The Centre maintains and releases detailed information on the skill set required by the priority agencies and offers the following:

- information on vacancies in these organisations
- information on the work of the organisations, including access to representatives
- one-to-one (1:1) consultations on job prospects and skills assessments
- tailored advice on CVs, the UN application process, personal profile writing and interviews – this includes individual support throughout the process
- career change workshops aimed at professionals from other sectors
- networking opportunities, such as a specialised careers fair and an annual one-day information and networking ‘mission’ where pre-selected candidates are invited to meet UN human resources officers from the six agencies to present their competencies and interests
- advice on UN-run initiatives, such as UNDP’s Leadership Development Programme.

Switzerland also sponsors its nationals under the JPO and AEP programmes.

5.4 United States

Since 1991, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) has released reports on representation, following a request from Congress. These reports have enabled the State Department to adopt a strategic approach, for example, by targeting departments and agencies within which it is underrepresented, and by seeking to understand the barriers facing its citizens. These included a lack of languages, difficulties in obtaining spousal employment, lengthy recruitment processes, and limited opportunities for professional growth. The State Department also found that many US nationals seeking employment at the UN reported that they had not sought assistance from the Department or a US mission.

The 2010 report of the GAO outlined steps taken by the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs to address some of the above. They include:

- releasing a list of UN vacancies on a bi-weekly basis
- maintaining a database of interested applicants – this gives prospective candidates the opportunity to upload relevant information about themselves and receive automated emails on relevant UN vacancies
- attending outreach events on UN employment such as career fairs
- answering queries from prospective applicants and those shortlisted for positions
- providing extensive information on UN jobs on relevant government websites, including on compensation, benefits, job categories and spousal employment
- liaising with UN agencies, including through an annual inter-agency meeting
- working on tailored initiatives with US missions in the locations of the UN bodies identified as priorities for increasing US representation.

The 2010 report also recommended the US increase its junior-level support. It argued that the US did not collect information on which bodies had few or no US JPOs (or equivalent), nor did it provide adequate support to these schemes. Since then, the US has sponsored nationals under the AEP and JPO programmes.

6 Recommendations for UK action

6.1 Strategic approaches to increasing representation

1. The UK, and indeed all countries, should consider producing or commissioning regular reports with analysis and recommendations on its representation in the UN System. States like Germany and the US present such reports to the Bundestag and Congress, respectively, which debate the findings. In France, an annual survey of French international civil servants is conducted by a dedicated section of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to provide quantitative and qualitative data. These initiatives have helped these countries to adopt a systematic approach to increasing representation, with objectives and activities reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing priorities and figures.
2. The UK, and other countries, should also consider setting general and specific targets for representation on the basis of annual reports. There are several approaches that could be taken. The UK could produce a target list of priority UN entities and positions to reflect government policy and spending priorities. It could also set a system-wide goal of, for example, increasing the proportion of UK nationals within a certain grade of post. This would ideally include junior and mid-level representation, as well as representation at D1 and above levels. The reinstatement of support for the JPO programme on a pilot basis in 2014 is a promising development.

3. In addition, the UK should continue to work to improve the UN's human resources policies and procedures, particularly the lengthy recruitment period (now lasting more than 200 days for some posts). It could also look for ways to strengthen the UN's talent pool, not only by supporting UK nationals but, for example, JPOs from Commonwealth countries.

6.2 Building a strong, diverse pool of candidates

1. The UK, and all countries, should seek to improve and devise efficient methods for anticipating and identifying vacancies arising over the next years in target posts and bodies. This could include the following elements: a schedule of term limits, intelligence on likely movements (including retirement), and a forecast of positions that may be created as a result of agreed resolutions or funding. It could also plan ahead for changes to the Senior Management Group that could arise when the term of the current UN Secretary-General ends.
2. The UK should seek to encourage and facilitate applications from individuals from the broadest possible range of sectors, for example through:
 - i. Raising awareness of the UN and opportunities for UK citizens through outreach activities, including careers fairs and networking opportunities targeted at the private or third sectors for example.
 - ii. Increasing opportunities for exposure to the UN System, including through maintaining and increasing participation in the JPO programme and AEP.
 - iii. Supporting and promoting UN internships and volunteering. Some states, such as Japan, have created innovative programmes like the UNITAR Youth Ambassador programme to give young people some experience of the System, as well as training opportunities. Others have found institutions willing to give interns and volunteers financial, logistical and personal support.
 - iv. Supporting mid-level and senior career placements, consultancies, advisory roles or secondments.
 - v. Providing training to prospective candidates in line with required skills.
 - vi. Supporting female candidates. Women are under-represented at senior level across the UN System, with particular posts (such as country-specific Special Representatives) significantly under-performing in terms of gender balance.
3. The UK should seek to improve its systems for identifying candidates and matching them to vacancies. This could include creating a roster of candidates by skills / experience, as well as a roster of contacts to call on for suggestions of names. The UK could also consider processes in place in other states. In Germany, for instance, a selection group is convened jointly by the Chancellor's office and Foreign Ministry, which includes a 'Coordinator for International Representation', as well as relevant government department representatives and external advisors. This group conducts appointment forecasting and makes decisions on selections for particular vacancies.

6.3 Supporting applicants and those working in the UN System

1. The UK should consider providing individual support to prospective applicants. States such as France, Germany and Switzerland have dedicated partner organisations (such as recruitment and training bodies) that provide one-to-one support for applicants, from scoping UN career opportunities to writing applications, from interview preparation to identifying and addressing skills gaps.
2. The UK should also consider how it could give prospective candidates access to relevant current and former UN staff, including appropriate human resources contacts. This could include a simple list of contacts, a register of individuals interested in sharing their experiences, or informal online networks or web events.
3. To facilitate this, the UK could consider increasing initiatives with those already in the UN System, for example, through networking events or an online portal. The German

web platform www.commio.de enables their civil servants to exchange information, connect with others and access development opportunities and support (for example, for those working in hardship locations).

Box 2 Former UNA volunteers – a good training ground for UN careers¹⁷

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United Nations Association (UNA)-UK's 'International Service' programme (now a separate entity) was one of the four sending agencies of the British Volunteer Programme, specialising in sending volunteers to work with UN funds, programmes and agencies. A total of 52 volunteers were recruited between 1965 and 1975, all funded by the UK Overseas Development Administration, the forerunner of the Department for International Development (DFID).

Volunteers fell into two categories. Some served in a technical capacity, as educators or agriculturalists. Others, about six per year, became Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) in UN country offices or projects, mainly run by UNDP, UNICEF and FAO.

Career assignments in the UN were by no means guaranteed on completion of their two-year assignments. But half (25) of UNA's volunteers subsequently became UN staff members. Thereafter, each pursued his or her career, often moving from field to head office positions and back into the field at a senior level. Of the former volunteers who pursued UN careers, 17 assumed positions as Head of Mission (resident coordinator/resident representative/country director, the equivalent of ambassadorships). Those who carried out the most head of mission assignments were Alan Doss (7), Frederick Lyons (7), John Murray (6), Tim Painter (5), Matthew Kahane (5), Peter Metcalf (4), David Whaley (4), Peter Witham (4), Robert England (3), Terry Jones (3) and Michael Askwith (3), David Lockwood (2) and Paul Matthews (2). In addition, many of the above also carried out Headquarters assignments as directors or deputy directors of departments.

Former UNA volunteers carried out a total of 58 head of mission assignments in 45 countries, of which 23 in Africa, 22 in Asia and the Pacific, seven in Latin America and the Caribbean, four in Eastern Europe and the former Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and two in the Arab States. They include: two Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General, two Deputy Special Representatives of the SG, one Assistant Secretary-General and 20 who have served as head of mission (country/regional director, representative or coordinator) in one or more countries.

Together, they have served in the UN for more than 1,000 years and completed 178 assignments in 81 countries for 16 UN funds, programmes or agencies. In the course of their careers, they were involved in a large number of significant events and operations. Alan Doss headed missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Michael Askwith opened a first integrated office and supported the referendum in Eritrea. David Whaley worked on peace and reconciliation in South Africa and Sri Lanka, and Matthew Kahane opened up the UNDP country office in post-communist Belarus.

It can be assumed that through these former volunteers, UNA-UK has had considerable impact on the work of the UN and the countries in which they served. It is satisfactory to note that DFID decided in 2013 to resume its support of the recruitment of UN JPOs under a programme that has proved beneficial to the UN, to the countries in which they served, and to the individuals concerned.

Michael Askwith, British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS), Coordinator of the UN Career Records Project (UNCRP)

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² This article draws on discussions held during the Witness Seminar on 'The UK and the UN in Development Cooperation', organised by the United Nations Association-UK (UNA-UK), the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants and the Institute of Development Studies on 13–14 May 2015. It is based on research conducted by UNA-UK for a report on UK representation in the UN System produced for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in July 2013. The human resources statistics reflect the most recent data available at that time and sources have been dated accordingly.

³ 'The United Kingdom and the United Nations', A.J.R. Groom and P. Taylor in C.F. Alger, G.M. Lyons and J.E. Trent (eds), *The United Nations System: the Policies of Member States* (UNU Press, Tokyo: 1995), p.369.

⁴ See various witness statements in 'The Role of the FCO in UK Government', House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2010–12, Volume I (27 April 2011), www.parliament.uk/facom

⁵ HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, November 2015, p.10 and p.15

⁶ *ibid.*, pp.13–14, and p.60.

⁷ See recommendation in 'The Role of the FCO in UK Government' on overseas opportunities for junior staff, p.4.

⁸ See UN System Human Resources by Nationality – United Kingdom, on the Chief Executives Board for Coordination website: www.unsceb.org/content/hr-nationality

⁹ Chief Executives Board report (CEB/2015/HLCM/HR/19), released 30 December 2015 and showing statistics as at 31 December 2014.

¹⁰ Recruitment policies and practices vary across the UN System, including in relation to the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Secretariat, funds, programmes and agencies have separate application procedures. They collect and release employment data in different formats and to different time cycles. Practices vary within these bodies too, depending on the level of appointment and how the post is classified and funded.

The Chief Executives Board (CEB) releases annual statistical tables on the staff of the organisations within the UN common system with appointments for a period of one year or more. The tables include information on the spread of posts (by grade, classification, entity etc.), as well as data pertaining to gender, age and length of service. The statistics are compiled based on information provided to the CEB by the entities in question. It may be possible that differences in data collection and post classification between UN entities may not have been fully taken into account.

¹¹ Chief Executives Board report (CEB/2015/HLCM/HR/12), showing statistics as at 31 December 2012. This article reflects research conducted by UNA-UK in 2013, using CEB statistics pertaining to staffing as at 31 December 2012. UNA-UK also used other sources, where possible, to verify data in the CEB report. The figures in this article represent UNA-UK's best attempt, with advice from the UN Office of Human Resources Management, to provide analysis.

¹² Information provided by the UN Office of Human Resources Management. The UK was classified as 'under-represented' within the UN until the 2012 UN regular budget negotiations produced a new scale of assessments from January 2013. Under this new scale, the desirable range for UK candidates in geographic positions is now 87 to 188, with the UK on 106 (as at October 2012).

¹³ Chief Executives Board report (CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/12), released 29 May 2013 showing statistics as at 31 December 2012. The figures are provided to the CEB by the human resources departments of the entities. They exclude information on National Professional Officers, which may be found in CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/16/Add.1.

¹⁴ In 2009, the UK had two fewer staff than Germany, pushing the latter into second, mostly due to the number of German nationals at D2 level (seven, compared to the UK's two). In 2011, when the UK's D1-USG posts dropped from 25 to 17, mainly as a result of fewer D1s, Germany again pipped it. However, the UK regained its position as number two in 2012.

¹⁵ Special Adviser on Gender Issues, now part of UN Women (www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fpwomenbynation.htm).

¹⁶ Chief Executives Board report (CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/12), released 29 May 2013 showing statistics as at 31 December 2012.

¹⁷ First printed in the Special issue of UNA-UK's *New World on the UN at 70 (2015)* with a longer version available on www.una.org.uk/UN70. Expanded version to be submitted by King's College London for publication in *Britain and the World* (Edinburgh University Press) (May 2016).

PART B: Witness Seminars

B.1 Witness Seminar 1: Development Cooperation

B.1.1 Overview

*Michael Askwith*¹

The first Witness Seminar (WS1) on Development Cooperation took place at IDS from 13 to 14 May 2015, under the chairmanship of Richard Jolly. About 40 people attended, of whom 30 were former UN staff and the rest were observers and IDS students.

The seminar was divided into six main sessions to address: (1) *UN overview: issues and challenges*, with Mark Malloch-Brown as the Keynote Speaker, on 'The UN's four lives and future challenges' and Margaret Anstee who spoke on 'Leadership and the UN'; (2) *The regional and country perspectives*, chaired by Robert England, drawing out experiences of former UN staff in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and the former CIS, and Latin America and the Caribbean; (3) *Global, technical and sectoral experience*, chaired by John Burley; (4) *Strengthening the UN: Lessons of cooperation*, chaired by Alan Doss; (5) *The UK and the UN* chaired by Natalie Samarasinghe; and (6) *Conclusions and recommendations*, chaired by Richard Jolly.

The *Report of WS1* summarised the contributions of the participants in each of the sessions, of which full details are envisaged in the transcripts of the official recordings (Askwith *et al.* 2015).

The report was complemented by a 370-page *WS1 Compendium of Working Papers and Career Summaries* which brought together the written contributions of each of the participants in terms of summaries, articles, memoirs, CVs, and so on (Askwith 2015). Conclusions and recommendations of WS1 were brought together in a succinct aide-memoire entitled 'Suggested topics for follow-up with the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)' which was sent to the prime minister, David Cameron, and the Secretaries of State for International Development (DFID) and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (FCO) in June 2015 (see letter and aide-mémoire in Annex 3, and the reply from DFID in Annex 4 of the WS1 Report).

The present IDS Evidence Report has attempted to build on the above, and refine some of the key messages and experiences of WS1 contributors relating to: (i) the *country-level* development cooperation by Robert England; (ii) the *specialized agency perspective* (excluding UN funds and programmes), by John Burley; (iii) *strengthening UN coordination* by Michael Askwith; and (iv) the *future of UN development assistance* by Stephen Browne.

In the first article (B.1.2) on 'Reflections and Experiences from the Country Level', Robert England discusses how the UN's country operations have always been at the cutting edge of the organisation's country engagement and provided the framework on which other UN activities, whether political or humanitarian, have been built. These operations sit at the interface of national sovereignty and international accountability, the two potentially conflicting principles embodied in the UN's Charter. He describes seven distinctive but inter-related strands of work carried out at the country level which link the local to the global. He stresses that the UN's comparative advantage lies not in the quantity of its resources but in

its technical standards, normative agenda, convening power and access to national policymakers. He argues that the UK should value, support and sustain these functions, while not imposing unrealistic expectations in terms of short-term results.

In the second article (B.1.3) on 'The Specialized Agencies of the UN: New Challenges and Roles for the Twenty-first Century', John Burley discusses how the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present enormous challenges and opportunities for the specialized agencies and other UN organisations. He argues that the integrated nature of the goals and their universal nature call for: more effective ways of agencies working together; greater focus on the sharing of experiences of all countries in achieving the SDGs; more imaginative institutionalised instruments of governance involving business and civil society; and greater automaticity in funding. The UK – its government, academia, business, thinktanks, public opinion – has a major role to play in all this.

In the third article (B.1.4) 'UN Coordination: Strengthening Coherence, Impact and Tools', Michael Askwith discusses the history and development of collaborative arrangements and tools put in place to strengthen inter-agency coordination at country and headquarters level among specialized agencies, funds and programmes. It notes the substantial progress made in the development of the coordination architecture of the resident coordinator system and of the tools designed to assist in promoting enhanced UN System collaboration, in particular the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Delivering as One (DaO) process. It identifies some of the questions raised and dilemmas faced in the use of these tools, their strengths and weaknesses, and potential remedial actions. He urges a resumption of former UK support to strengthening UN coordination and the resident coordinator system.

In the fourth article (B.1.5) 'The Future of UN Development Assistance – Norms, Standards and the SDGs', Stephen Browne discusses the challenges of organisational marginalisation and dispersion in future efforts by the UN System to adapt its four main functions of setting norms, standards and goals; information and research; global cooperation agreements; and technical assistance, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. He argues that the UK government, as a highly influential UN member state, can exert valuable influence in these areas, including helping to ensure that a reform-minded Secretary-General is elected in 2016.

The articles below describe generic lessons of experiences, identify dilemmas faced, and suggest potential policy options. The conclusions are summarised in Part C.

Note

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

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Askwith, M. (ed.); Kuroda, S. and Ekeyi, B. (2015) *The United Nations at 70. Report of Witness Seminar 1. Volume 1 Summary of proceedings* (draft 21 March 2016)

B.1.2 Reflections and Experiences from the Country Level

Robert England¹

Abstract

The UN's country operations have always been at the cutting edge of the organisation's country engagement; they have provided the framework on which other UN activities, whether political or humanitarian, have been built. These operations sit at the interface between national sovereignty and international accountability, the two potentially conflicting principles embodied in the UN's Charter. They comprise seven distinctive but inter-related strands. The UN's comparative advantage lies not in the quantity of its resources but in its technical standards, normative agenda, convening power and access to national policymakers. The UK should value, support and sustain these functions, while not imposing unrealistic expectations in terms of short-term results.

Keywords: UN, specialized agencies, Voluntary Funds, development, humanitarian, MDGs, SDGs.

1 Introduction – scope and period covered, 1965–2015

This article² focuses on the UN's work at the country level, principally relating to development cooperation but, inevitably and appropriately, extending into the other aspects of the UN's country-level work, namely the political³ and humanitarian dimensions. By definition, this review is limited to the experience of British nationals working in the UN but, in spanning the 50 year period 1965–2015,⁴ it can lay claim to surprisingly rich pickings, since British nationals were widely present in country operations during this period. Their careers spanned the 'P2 to D2' career trajectory, and in a few cases even beyond, thereby witnessing the UN at a variety of management levels; most also served in their respective agency headquarters at some point in their careers. For various reasons,⁵ their UN service was predominantly in Africa and the Asia-Pacific regions, but there were smatterings of experience in the other regions, and a very interesting engagement in the UN's expansion into Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

What follows is inevitably highly selective, given the space available; each of the narrative strands and experiences mentioned requires much more thorough treatment than is possible here. Nonetheless, this article attempts to delineate the pattern of the UN's country-level operations over this period, noting the extent of involvement by British staff members, many of whom have contributed more detailed accounts of their careers as part of the UN Career Records Project (UNCRP). Some but by no means all of these are highlighted in the endnotes. Readers who are especially interested in a specific topic should refer to the more extensive treatment provided in individual witness contributions, lodged with the Bodleian Library.

2 A summary of the major changes in context and approach

This 50-year period witnessed major changes to the internal and external environment in which the UN was working. It began in the aftermath of the Marshall Plan for European post-war reconstruction when post-colonial support was the priority – and post-colonial euphoria and optimism the predominant state of mind. A situation progressively evolved in which there was a very wide range of different country challenges and priorities, necessitating a highly differentiated UN response. Internally, the UN's response to the new situation began with the creation of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 1965, combining the UN Special Fund and Technical Assistance Board; it then progressed rapidly to the Jackson Capacity

Study in 1969 (UNDP 1969) and the ensuing General Assembly Consensus resolution of 1970.⁶ This Consensus placed UNDP as the central programming and funding agency of the UN development system, but was rapidly succeeded by a proliferation of agreements on the creation of new funds, within and latterly outside the UN System. UNDP's central funding role was progressively replaced by the process-driven Resident Coordinator system.

Externally, the World Bank and the regional development banks⁷ moved beyond purely infrastructure investment⁸ to occupy much of the programmatic areas previously dominated by the UN System, especially social development, as did the European Development Fund. Beyond the governmental sector, there was an impressive proliferation and professionalisation of non-state actors, notably non-governmental organisations but also the private commercial sector. This was driven partly by the increasing importance of humanitarian responses at the country level, but was also reflective of donors' preference for channelling their money through such organisations.

During this period, as the programme country needs and donor funding priorities changed, so did the UN evolve from being principally about the transfer of technical skills and institutional development to the promotion of international values and technical standards, as 'best practice'. In keeping with this trend, there was a steady shift from a reliance on national development priorities in UN programming to a focus on the promotion of an international normative agenda and development goals, formulated in a series of UN conferences and in 2000 distilled in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and most recently in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

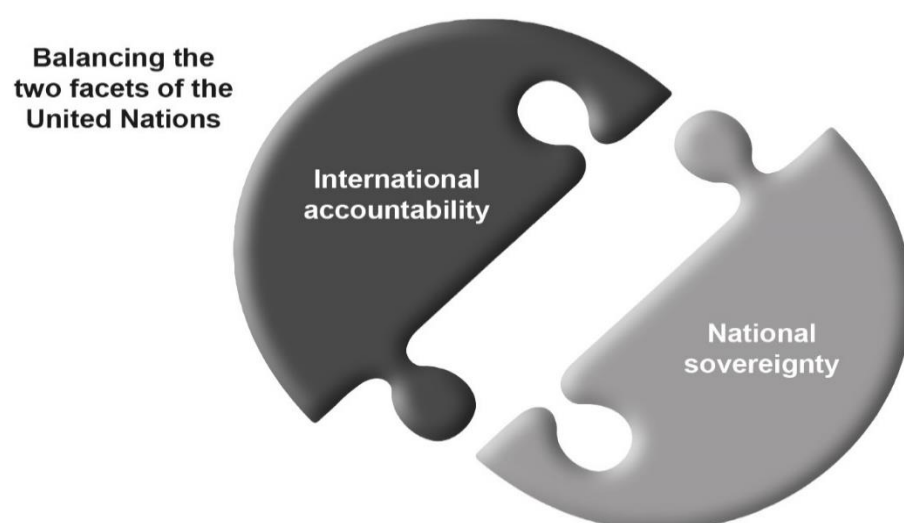
3 A holistic model of UN country-level operations

For the purpose of this article, it will be helpful to delineate a model of the UN's work at the country level. This model comprises two complementary elements.

The first of these is the architectural 'fault line' in the UN Charter between national sovereignty on the one hand, and the accountability of sovereign member states to the international community on the other. Although strikingly evident in the UN's day-to-day work, this fault line is too often brushed aside or simply ignored. In extremis these two principles are in conflict with each other, and engender a great deal of tension within the UN System.⁹ For the purpose of this article, it should be clearly understood that the UN's country-level development operations sit on the national sovereignty side of this fault line, with UN operational activities firmly anchored in host government policies and programmes. When the UN's global policies and decisions ran counter to such national priorities, UN in-country staff were left to try to balance the pressures from the other side – seldom an easy task.

Another aspect of this fault line is more practical in nature: the tension between unity and diversity. There has always been a tension between the UN's centrally determined policies and nationally determined needs and priorities. In common with most empires and large organisations, the UN System has struggled to reconcile the unity of its vision with the diversity of its member states. UN practitioners at the country level have therefore always had to adapt centrally enunciated policies to the real world of individual programme countries, often with scant sympathy from global managers, who confront a different 'reality' at the intergovernmental level. This inherent tension within the System is further exacerbated by supply-driven donor policies and the understandable tendency of member states in general and donors in particular to base their policies on a global aggregate version of what the UN actually does at country level.

Figure 1 Balancing the two facets of the United Nations



Source: Author's own.

The second component of the model is a seven-part decomposition of the work of the UN in-country. The seven strands of this model have remained broadly applicable throughout the 50-year period, although the relative weight of the strands has changed over time – and they have always varied in scale and scope depending on the circumstances of an individual member state.

Box 3 Connecting the local and the global: a model of UN country-level operations

1. Building relationships and national capacity
2. Advocacy, joint situation analyses and policy dialogue
3. Promoting international values and normative standards
4. Addressing national, regional and global public goods
5. Addressing national development priorities
6. Addressing immediate humanitarian needs
7. Ensuring coherence in the UN's operational activities

Although these seven strands are conceptually distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it should be understood that most activities that the UN undertakes embody several of them, and some programmes might embody most of these elements. It should also be noted that No. 7 is qualitatively different in that it refers principally to the UN's internal processes; since this strand has become a major preoccupation of the UN at the country level, it needs to be recognised as distinctive.

The significance of this two-part model of UN operations at the country level is that it is today applicable in principle to all member states, not just to developing countries. This in itself represents a significant progression from the way in which it was perceived in the early days of the UN's work, when decolonisation and post-colonial support was viewed as a one-way street.¹⁰ Compare this with the international conference held in Paris in December 2015, when all countries signed up to playing their part in the achievement of international climate goals, albeit retaining the prerogative to define and measure their own contribution – a classic example, if ever there was one, of balancing international accountability with national sovereignty. The same could be said of the recently adopted SDGs, or of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) processes of the Human Rights Council.

4 Illustrative examples of UN experience from the five decades

These days it is axiomatic to say that one of the strengths of the United Nations is its near universality of membership; indeed, the above-mentioned model of the UN's country-level work is based on state membership of the institution in the first place.¹¹ However, in 1965 such universality of membership was not the case. This was not only because the decolonisation process itself was incomplete at that stage;¹² geopolitics also played its part: until 1971, China was represented by the exiled Republic of China in Taiwan; the newly united Vietnam was admitted only in 1977; and the two Koreas in 1991.

4.1 Building relationships and national capacity

The UN's developmental role, along with the activities of its Department of Public Information (DPI), has normally been the leading edge of the organisation's systematic country-level engagement, being generally perceived as benign and unthreatening to sensitive governments.¹³ Thus, once membership was approved by the General Assembly, the UN agencies began to open offices – and British nationals were among those charged with doing so.¹⁴ A similar pattern was repeated when the Soviet Union collapsed and the UN began to open offices in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹⁵ And, during the same period, the readmission of South Africa into normalised, post-sanctions relationships resulted in the establishment of the UN's first office in that country also.¹⁶ There was of course a parallel process at the Headquarters level of inducting such newly admitted member states into the governance and normative processes of the UN System.¹⁷

For those involved, the induction process that UN admission entailed represented a proxy for a wider reality, which echoes throughout the witness contributions: the UN System enjoyed and continues to enjoy a very high level of public recognition and access at the individual country level,¹⁸ with agency representatives having weekly if not daily meetings with senior government policymakers. This is particularly true of the specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This singular comparative advantage of the UN is often under-appreciated, and can all too easily be compromised by grandstanding on sensitive issues, when discreet advocacy and advice can be more effective in the longer run. It can feed productively into joint situation analyses, policy dialogue, and capacity development (see immediately below).

4.2 Advocacy, joint situation analyses and policy dialogue

The UN has always been active in promoting evidence-based policy and programme development by assisting member states to gather and analyse data, and to formulate policies accordingly. It typically used support to national processes as a key tool for advocating policies and approaches, one of the UN's signature characteristics throughout its work at the country level.¹⁹

In the early days this often took the form of support to national planning and statistical offices, particularly in the immediate post-independence period. This support to international statistical standard-setting and national capacity building has continued,²⁰ but has been expanded into more specific types of cooperation: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) focused especially on national censuses²¹ and demographic analysis. More recently UN global reports – such as those on the state of the world's children (UNICEF)²² and on human development (UNDP), and those on the Millennium Development Goals (the outcome of collaborative UNS effort) – have generated national analyses and their own country versions. In all such country reports, the UN's approach has been to support national processes which yielded a nationally owned report with conclusions and recommendations rooted in local institutions, if not always in government policies themselves.²³ This contrasted with, for example, World Bank reports which were frequently stronger on the technical analysis – and certainly more lavishly resourced – but characteristically enjoyed less buy-in at the country level.²⁴

Operating firmly under the aegis of – indeed dependent on the goodwill of – the host government, UN country offices were always captives of the government's own development priorities, or lack thereof.²⁵ This led to many frustrations but seasoned practitioners learnt that institutionally sustainable development was only possible when it was led and owned by national actors and that this close association with governments, with all its limitations, also offered unique opportunities to influence national policymakers.

4.3 Promoting international values and normative standards

As regards the UN's normative agenda, the promotion of international technical standards has been, from the outset, the day-to-day business of the specialized agencies of the UN,²⁶ as well as its regional commissions.²⁷ This is characteristically taken for granted and undervalued, but the steady accumulation of such standards around the world is an achievement of which the UN can be proud. Establishment of these standards has naturally been a Headquarters-led process, whereas helping member states to apply these standards has been the function of UN agencies at country level, normally through their representative offices, where these exist.

Normative values, i.e. those relating to human rights as well as development priorities, tended to follow the same pattern. In the early days, promoting and supporting national implementation of such values was not a major preoccupation of country offices, but this has progressively changed over the years as the breadth of this normative agenda has evolved.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, it is in this area that the 'fault line' is most apparent, as individual member states are held to account for their compliance with international norms. As with in-country situation analyses, however, the normal approach of the UN has been to offer assistance to the host government in improving its compliance, rather than to amplify external criticism. This fails to satisfy some observers but nonetheless represents a realistic positioning for the UN country teams.²⁹

The UN System provided substantial support at the country level to the stream of UN international conferences that began in the 1970s, proliferated through the 1990s, and then achieved a synthesis in the Millennium Declaration of 2000, which yielded the MDGs, which have recently given way to the SDGs.³⁰ UN staff at the country level characteristically supported their host government's preparations for each of the global conferences, *inter alia* promoting national dialogues on the issues, and then coached them towards implementation of the commitments they had acceded to by their participation (see also Section 4.2).

4.4 Addressing the national, the regional and the global public good

I think most of us country-level development practitioners had an instinctive grasp of global public goods as a concept, even before it became the subject of more general public discussion. We joined the United Nations because we believed it could help make the world safer, better and fairer; we saw our role in countries to advance those values in our day-to-day work. In other words we believed that the UN System was itself a global public good, and we were proud to work for it. We also understood quite easily the value of inter-country collaboration at the regional, or more often at the sub-regional level – in other words, the value of regional public goods. However, converting this theoretical appreciation into a practical and sustainable reality proved very difficult. This was not because the UN did not try; UNDP in particular devoted considerable resources and effort to supporting regional and sub-regional collaborations of one sort or another,³¹ as did the regional commissions. The problem was always in obtaining sufficient government ownership and therefore sustainable funding; governments were normally supportive when it was a free good, but more wary when they were called upon to contribute financially.

Although there were many such initiatives that failed, there were also those that achieved a sustainable existence; one relatively successful example was the joint management of the Mekong River in South East Asia. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was formally

established as an intergovernmental body in 1995, but for more than 30 years had been a UN project, functioning under the joint aegis of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UNDP. Although it continues to suffer from the many challenges of river basin management – strong vs weak member states; upstream vs downstream interests; conflicting and competitive water use (navigation, fisheries, irrigation, power); etc. – the MRC represents a singular achievement in regional inter-country cooperation which would not exist without sustained UN support.³²

4.5 Addressing national development priorities

Throughout the period, development cooperation projects or programmes³³ were the basic vehicles for the UN's country-level work; the reflections of UNCRP witnesses provide a wide range of specific examples. Such projects encompassed all aspects of the UN's work in a country and were normally supported in the context of government programmes.³⁴

In the early years, international experts' long-term contracts consumed a substantial portion of the UN's limited funding, but as national capacities increased, such expertise became more limited in duration, and was even replaced with that of national experts whose services would have been too expensive for their own governments to afford.³⁵ The predominance of government programmes continued but increasingly the UN formed partnerships with other national institutions, including academia, and non-governmental and community-based institutions.³⁶ Attempts to reach out to the private commercial sector were generally not as successful. Underlying the UN's work throughout was the principled focus on national leadership and institutional capacity and the need to strengthen this wherever possible. This often extended to enhancing the government's capacity to manage the external assistance available to it.

Measuring the effectiveness of such development cooperation was always difficult and continues to be so. The core problem is generally agreed to be the relatively short time frame – 3 to 4 years – of many such programmes, designed to be within the expectations of the funding source and/or the assignment duration of the programme designer. Certainly such time frames bore little relationship to the real time necessary to bring about sustainable and sustained change, or to the national processes on which ultimate effectiveness would depend. This short-termism has been exacerbated by the recent emphasis on results-based management, which has many unintended consequences, including the frequent blurring of attribution and the undermining of national ownership processes.³⁷

4.6 Addressing immediate humanitarian needs

Throughout this 50-year period, the UN's country-level development work was deeply affected by often more pressing humanitarian requirements. Preparedness for and response to natural disasters was always an integral part of development thinking.³⁸ Most practitioners faced challenges in their day-to-day work, in terms of both persuading governments to make the necessary up-front investments in disaster preparedness and mitigation, and establishing institutional capacity to respond when natural disasters struck. More often than not, such preparedness was sacrificed for more immediate government priorities, at least until given fresh impetus by a new crisis. This dynamic has continued to the present day; in this respect as in many others, the UN was characteristically asking the right questions, even if programme country governments were often reluctant to provide sustainable answers.

Politically generated humanitarian challenges were also widespread throughout the period covered. Many of the UNCRP witnesses served in countries that were beset by major political ructions, or worse.³⁹ Sometimes the UN could play a mediation role; often it could not. The UN's more politically activist period of the 1990s and beyond had a big impact on its development operations in the affected countries, but throughout its country network the UN's development work was profoundly affected by the political processes that framed it.⁴⁰

4.7 Ensuring coherence in the UN's operational activities

This subject is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this IDS Evidence Report (see 'UN Coordination' by Michael Askwith). It is certainly a process and dynamic which absorbed the time and focus of many of the British witnesses cited in this article – increasingly so, as pressure for 'reform' grew in recent years.

In the opinion of this author, however, the subject is normally approached from the wrong starting point, namely criticism of the UN System on the grounds that it tends to dissipate its efforts in too many uncoordinated programmes; UN staff are therefore charged with addressing such alleged incoherence. However, this critical viewpoint takes little account of the way in which the UNS has evolved over the years – by explicit decisions of the member states in inter-governmental forums – and of the way its architectural design is based on deliberately different institutional mandates and an inherently competitive environment for resources. Indeed, the trend over the years has been to increase the number of different sources of multilateral funding, to supplement bilateral funding.

Moreover, the conventional critique underestimates the real advantage of the UN's diversity of viewpoints on many development issues, i.e. its lack of a monolithic approach which instead provides scope for experimentation and innovation – both important elements of the UN's work at the country level, appreciated by programme countries. Member states can benefit from such diversity while, in the absence of architectural reform of the UN System, the costs of eliminating it are measured in 'proceduralisation' of reform, with high transactional costs for scarce staff resources. If the focus is on national ownership of processes, this UN 'smorgasbord' of technical advice and inputs should be seen as a strength, not a weakness.⁴¹ Certainly few host governments evince much interest in UN coherence, but rather appreciate the diversity of advice and support on offer.⁴² This encapsulates the already-discussed tension between unity and diversity: the drive for UN coherence is undoubtedly a preoccupation of the centre rather than of the periphery.

The newly adopted SDGs offer a way forward in this area: the UN funds, programmes and agencies may differ in priorities and approaches (as they have been designed to do), but they all share the same fundamental values, rooted in the Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, codified in a wide range of declarations and conventions, and now synthesised into the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. These provide a rich source for the UN's shared advocacy, surely the function that can best provide the UN's unifying approach at the country level.

5 Lessons from the past to the future

Several generic lessons emerge from this wide range of experience at the country level. While they are not necessarily profound or original, they are often overlooked by modern-day practitioners.

5.1 The UN's value as a normative organisation: The UN's value lies not in dollars managed but in its shared normative values; its carefully formulated technical standards based on comparative international experience; its convening power and access to national decision-makers; and, finally, its cross-country experience. The SDGs provide a perfect platform from which to advance the UN's work around the world.

5.2 Costs and benefits of UN assets. These UN assets need to be funded and leveraged with the understanding that its modest financial resources are actually an advantage. However – and here's the rub – capitalising on these assets often involves relatively higher overhead costs (at least in comparison with the management of resource transfers, such as those by the development banks),⁴³ which should be accepted by donors as a necessary price of valuable UN engagement in national development processes.

5.3 The need for national ownership. Institutionally sustainable development can only be achieved by national actors; international supporters will always be marginal in this respect. True national ownership of development policies and programmes is too often disregarded, or at least downplayed, by donors impatient to achieve short-term results.

5.4 The need for time to achieve institutionally sustainable development. Institutionally sustainable development takes time to achieve and, by its nature, has many parents. Supply-driven funding, expectation of short-term 'results' and the wish of external actors to take credit all serve to undermine the national processes on which such sustainability depends.

5.5 The importance of political and bureaucratic dimensions for sustainable development. Development is at least as much a political process as a technocratic one. Whether a country is democratic or autocratic, national development policies and programmes are usually subordinate to political and bureaucratic machinations, which characteristically play out on a different timescale to that of the typical externally supported 3- to 4-year programmes.

5.6 The need for UK government support for the UN's strategic role at country level. The Government of the UK, as an informed, experienced, influential and constructive member state, should seek to reinforce this strategic and broad-based view of the UN's role – and comparative advantage – at the country level.

P.S. The importance of institutional memory

One of the most interesting of my recent consultancy assignments was when I was requested by UNDP to document ten examples of successful transformational change that had been supported by the agency in the recent past (UNDP 2011). These were surprisingly tricky to identify, and still more difficult to document. To begin with, one had to go back as much as 20 years to validate sustainable – and demonstrably sustained – transformational change; real development is a marathon, not a sprint. However, the difficulty I encountered also stemmed from the fact that the organisation's institutional memory was effectively defunct: the rusty old filing cabinets in the basement had long since ceased to exist, and most documentation resided on the hard drives of individual staff members, until these too were lost when they updated to the latest iPad, and/or moved to another duty station. With this experience in mind, therefore, I would add this final recommendation to our successors.

5.7 The importance of institutional memory. Re-establish these institutional memories in country offices, and take time and resources to document experience. If future UN practitioners are to build on the experience of their predecessors – and to avoid their (our) many mistakes – they need to value the past. This is one reason why the UN Career Records Project, the Witness Seminars and this IDS Evidence Report are so very valuable.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² The author of this article has been greatly assisted by comments and suggestions received from Richard Jolly, Terence Jones, Steve Woodhouse, Matthew Kahane, Stephen Browne, Sheila Macrae and Alan Doss. However, the final article is his sole responsibility.

³ 'Political' in this context is used as shorthand for a range of issues relating to peace and security, as well as to human rights.

⁴ As it happens this 50-year period coincides with that since the creation of UNDP in 1965, which was followed by a burgeoning of development cooperation that attracted many British nationals into the UN. It is admittedly 20 years shorter than the 70-year anniversary celebrated in 2015, largely because witness contributions from the first 20 years are more difficult to tap into – and UNDP's creation undoubtedly initiated a new phase of country operations.

⁵ In the early years of the period being discussed, British nationals had two specific advantages, namely their colonial links with many of the newly independent UN member states, and their easy fluency in the English language. It should be added that, during the period of the United Nations Association (UNA)-UK Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme, there was an ethos within several universities which encouraged a career in development work and which was perhaps connected with decolonisation-induced idealism and optimism. By the 1980s, such young idealists gravitated towards UN humanitarian operations and, more recently, into the non-governmental organisation community.

⁶ GA resolution 2688 (XXV), 11 December 1970.

⁷ It should be noted that these regional development banks were created outside the UN System and rapidly acquired and disbursed far more funds than the UN. They were thus the first examples of the more general trend, which gained pace in the 1990s and 2000s, of funding sources that were created outside the UNS and were perhaps more amenable to control by the major donors than the consensus-driven UN family of agencies. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) is just one example of this more recent pattern.

⁸ It should be noted in passing that one of UNDP's predecessor institutions, the Special Fund, was specifically designed to undertake pre-investment work for the World Bank, a role long since forgotten by modern-day practitioners.

⁹ As well as many decisions that might be politely termed 'ambidextrous', i.e. 'On the one hand... and on the other hand...' Such ambiguity seldom led to clarity of mandates, but did enable widely divergent interpretations.

¹⁰ Note the change in the 1980s from 'recipient' countries to 'programme' countries, signifying a greater degree of equality between the two parties.

¹¹ Palestine is a notable exception to this, having been since 1978 the recipient of a special programme of assistance, approved by the General Assembly.

¹² In 1965 there were only 117 UN member states, compared with 193 by the end of 2015.

¹³ This is still the case. The formal mandate of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) is for 'operational activities for development', although every UNRC could point to his/her far more extensive role in practice.

¹⁴ Thus, Paul Matthews was on the first UN mission to Bhutan in 1972 and was subsequently the first non-Indian representative in the country; he was succeeded by Terry Jones, who had negotiated the opening of the office in 1978/79. Terry Jones closed the Sydney office in 1973 and opened the new office that year in Port Moresby with Tom Unwin as representative, as Papua New Guinea transitioned to independence in 1975. Similarly, Alan Doss opened the UNDP office in Hanoi; while Matthew Kahane, Terry Jones and Nigel Ringrose served successively as deputies in Hanoi in this early phase of UN engagement, while Steve Woodhouse served as the UNICEF Representative. Alan Doss was the first deputy in the new Beijing office, while David Macfadyen tells of the World Health Organization's (WHO's) first programming mission to China. It might also be noted that, perhaps due to the preceding nationalist struggles that had characterised these newcomers to UN development cooperation, national ownership was especially strong in these countries, and development assistance notably effective.

¹⁵ Matthew Kahane, Stephen Browne and Nigel Ringrose opened the first UN offices in Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan respectively; Matthew himself went on to also head the offices in Poland and Tajikistan. Michael Askwith opened the first integrated office in Eritrea, when it became independent and a member of the UN in 1992. It worked the other way also, as Terry Jones' first assignment was to the UN's office in Athens, shortly to be closed as Greece joined the European Union.

¹⁶ To almost everyone's surprise – including his own, and that of UNDP's Africa Bureau – David Whaley was personally selected and appointed by the Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as the first UN Representative in the country; Whaley offers some fascinating reflections on the challenges of building new relationships in a newly idealistic and democratically dynamic South Africa.

¹⁷ In 1978 David Macfadyen was a junior member of WHO's first delegation to Beijing, led by the organisation's Director-General, Halfdan Mahler. Macfadyen himself points out, however, that this built on an earlier relationship forged under the League of Nations in the 1930s.

¹⁸ This high profile that UN had in developing countries contrasts with the UN's experience in many developed countries, for example the UK, where the profile is more limited in scope and marginal in the public's perception.

¹⁹ No institution was more adept at this than UNICEF and no individual grasped this potential as did Jim Grant, the legendary Executive Director of UNICEF, with whom many of our witnesses worked – for example, Steve Woodhouse and Richard Jolly.

²⁰ Andrew Flatt spent his career working on this, beginning at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and continuing for more than 30 years in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

²¹ UNFPA Representative Sheila Macrae recounts her experience of helping to guide the first Vietnam Census in 1989, a process enthusiastically driven by the national authorities who were nonetheless commendably open to the externally available expertise the country itself lacked.

²² Steve Woodhouse's reflections on his career in UNICEF describe the evolution of the fund to become what he terms 'a global political party' advocating the rights of children and for governments to address their priority needs.

²³ This could be compared favourably with, for example, the overbearing structural adjustment policies often imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions, which singularly lacked national buy-in in most countries.

²⁴ In the early 1970s, when I joined UNDP, the World Bank had not yet begun to prepare such wide-ranging sectoral surveys, being at that time still more preoccupied with basic economic infrastructure. In Zambia we therefore produced several sectoral profiles – on mining, manufacturing and construction; on transport and communications; and on education and vocational training – pioneering an important function which was not replicated or sustained, and therefore rapidly supplanted by the Bank's work.

²⁵ Peter Metcalf provides a fascinating disquisition on different 'models' of development, as between an often naïve albeit well-intended UN agency and a post-colonial government with a different set of priorities.

²⁶ Basil Hoare's contribution to the UNCRP provides a wonderful account of an FAO technical adviser's work in nine different countries in the early years of this 50-year period. David Jezeph similarly provides a fascinating insight into the work of a water resources adviser, working throughout Asia and the Pacific for the regional commission.

²⁷ Andrew Flatt spent his entire career working in the statistics divisions of first the ECA and then ESCAP.

²⁸ Elsewhere in this IDS Evidence Report (Article A.5) David Whaley argues strongly that human rights should be accorded far greater priority in the UN's country work.

²⁹ An interesting more recent development in a sensitive area of public policy which, however, typifies this approach to the UN's country-level work is the work that UN country teams are now doing to support national inputs into the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process of the Human Rights Council.

³⁰ As a resident coordinator in the 1990s, I was confronted with what I (only half) jokingly referred to as 'The Big Fat Book', a daunting compendium of all the high-minded declarations and commitments that streamed from this conference continuum. The Millennium Development Goals had the great virtue of simplifying this – although my preference was always for the less reductive Declaration itself – but I fear that the 17 SDGs with their umpteen targets appear, to me at least, to be a step backwards, with too many priorities, and therefore none.

³¹ Stephen Browne, who worked in ESCAP and was subsequently in charge of regional programmes in Asia/Pacific from UNDP New York, can attest to this.

³² I was personally associated with it in the late 1970s and then in the early 2000s, during two separate assignments in Bangkok, while Alan Doss was closely associated with the 1992 Chiang Mai Agreement.

³³ Although 'project' and 'programme' are interchangeable in most lexicons, that of the development community often imbued them with some theological distinction which sowed much confusion in terms of discussion and debate. Indeed, throughout the

50-year period, the development 'business' evinced a pronounced tendency for evolving terminology, formats and political correctness. A survey of this would no doubt provide interesting reading, but this is not the place.

³⁴ Although normally these days associated with humanitarian food aid, the World Food Programme (WFP) has a long history of supporting development work also, as is attested by Julian Lefevre and Bronek Szynalski in their respective reflections on 'food for development' in a variety of countries across most regions.

³⁵ This was accompanied by a similar trend to increase national professional staffing in UN offices, thereby decreasing international staff and, some felt, international accountability. In countries where national expertise was in short supply, the UN was also criticised for encouraging, and benefiting from, an internal brain drain. This had especially negative consequences in the early stages of Africa's post-colonial development, and in the context of post-crisis countries. Frederick Lyons' contribution has an interesting reflection on this in the context of Cuba.

³⁶ A telling transition in this regard was the evolution of the term 'government ownership' to become 'national ownership', intended to denote the UN's broader approach to the concept. Nonetheless, being itself intergovernmental, the UN's comparative advantage was normally in its ability to influence government policies and programmes.

³⁷ Of course, no one can be opposed to the achievement of results as such, but in the complex process of development cooperation, it has downside risks which are too often ignored. It is one of many issues in this article which can only be touched upon, due to shortage of space. However, Frederick Lyons' reflections are among those in the UNCRP (WS1 Compendium) that underline this dilemma, as are those of Paul Matthews, who dwells on the supply-driven nature of much donor funding.

³⁸ As early as 1971, the General Assembly authorised the establishment of a UN Disaster Relief Coordinator, to be based in Geneva, and to support both preparedness for, and response to, natural disasters. This translated into an active programme at country level to promote such programmes as an integral part of development work.

³⁹ My own UN career began in 1971 when I was assigned to work in the Uganda of General Idi Amin. In the two years I worked there as a JPO, I witnessed the expulsion of the Asian community, the expulsion of the British business community and the first (unsuccessful) invasion from Tanzania of ousted President Milton Obote. I therefore witnessed perhaps the steepest decline in Uganda's fortunes, as the economy collapsed and normal development work became impossible; this was to play out for a lot longer however, until the current President Museveni took power in 1986 and began to stabilise and rebuild the devastated country.

⁴⁰ Paul Matthews' work in Cambodia in the 1990s; Peter Simkins' in the Horn of Africa as well as in the former Yugoslavia; Alan Doss's work as Deputy Chief of Mission in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and later as Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Democratic Republic of Congo, are all illustrations of this more activist UN role – and of its profound impact on the nature of the UN's development work.

⁴¹ When I was Resident Coordinator in Pakistan in 1998, the year of the World Cup in France, the country was hit by allegations of child labour in the manufacture of the balls for FIFA. UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) worked together on the issue, with strikingly different but complementary approaches – and without any heavy-handed procedural controls. The misplaced priority of this issue and the unintended consequences of the intervention are stories for another day. Similarly, Sheila Macrae's pathbreaking work on Vietnam's first population census took place under the aegis of UNFPA alone, with no involvement of the UN Country Team (UNCT).

⁴² There is understandable resentment of the manifold, diverse and onerous procedural and reporting requirements that the international system imposes on programme countries. However, this too is largely attributable to the centrifugal idiosyncrasies of individual multilateral funds: when the GFATM was first established it developed a completely new manual for its project cycle management and, initially at least, deliberately tried to avoid working with the UN System.

⁴³ The UN has always been at an unfair disadvantage in this respect *vis-à-vis* the development banks, whose much larger loans can support an overhead cost that is greater in absolute terms, while being far less proportionately.

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B.1.3 The Specialized Agencies of the UN: New Challenges and Roles for the Twenty-first Century

*John Burley*¹

Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present enormous challenges and opportunities for the specialized agencies and other UN organisations. The integrated nature of the goals and their universal nature call for: more effective ways of agencies working together; greater focus on the sharing of experiences of *all* countries in achieving the SDGs; more imaginative institutionalised instruments of governance involving business and civil society; and significant reforms to funding arrangements. The UK – government, academia, business, thinktanks, public opinion – has a major role to play in all this.

Keywords: UN, specialized agencies, development, coherence, governance, funding, UK.

1 Introduction

At the Witness Seminars, UK nationals presented their experiences as technical experts in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. In light in part of those experiences, this article considers how the roles of the specialized agencies could change in relation to the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and suggests the requirements for an effective UK policy in this regard.

About 20 British staff from about ten specialized agencies and the like participated in one or more of the three seminars. Their experiences ranged widely from exclusively technical work throughout their international careers to a mix of advisory and programme management functions. Some joined the international system from a previous career with the British colonial service; others from academic or other work in the UK.

The heterogeneity of these experiences renders difficult the drawing of general conclusions. While statistics on the number of UK staff of agencies during the 70 years since 1945 are not available, it would be reasonable to assume that the Witness Seminars sample though limited is probably pretty typical of UK experiences. And the sample provides a useful backdrop to a consideration of how such global agencies might continue to evolve in the coming decades.

2 Staying ahead of the curve: the challenges facing the specialized agencies and what the UK should do

Although the UN and its system of agencies remain indispensable as the sole institution of global governance that has inherent legitimacy and although the COP21² outcome provides some new hope that international cooperation can produce results, doubts persist about the capacity of the multilateral system to confront the world's many development challenges. Is this paradox resolvable?

2.1 Coherence in multilateral decision-making

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying SDGs are hugely ambitious attempts to *'transform the world and build a better future for all people... The SDGs and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable.'*³

In encompassing economic, environmental, institutional and social issues, they encapsulate all of the world's development problems and needs. In intending to '*leave no one behind*', they provide the basis for the development work of the UN System over the next 15 years. The challenge to the System is enormous: the Agenda provides unprecedented opportunities for enhancing the work undertaken by the specialized agencies and the ways in which they function.

These opportunities arise because of the integrated nature of the goals and their universality. The goals are interdependent in both meanings of the expression, namely, that of mutual dependency among countries because of the ways in which their economic performance affects each other and that of the relationships among sectors or issues because progress or delays in one area causes the same in related areas. Trade-offs exist as a matter of course in the real world: for example, lifting millions of people out of poverty will inevitably affect demand for energy, water and food. The emphasis on food security conflicts with the drive for free international trade in agriculture. The international financial/monetary regimes and the international trade regime are not mutually coherent.⁴ Some of these contradictions could and should be ironed out at country level, in the process of each country reviewing the global SDGs and setting national priorities for their application and implementation in relation to each country's national context and capacity.

Some contradictions, however, may need reforms to the international regimes underpinning the particular sector. Thus the search for coherence in the multilateral regime, and likewise in the UN System proper, will become even more important in the post-2015 period. But constraints built in to the constitutional basis on which the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) functions will continue to inhibit its capacity to seek coherence on a system-wide basis. The specialized agencies were established as organisations independent of but related to the UN, each being responsible for a particular functional area of work. This is likely to be increasingly challenged as a result of pressures arising from the integrated nature of the SDGs. The rights-based approach to development that the UN human rights machinery has so eloquently promoted likewise needs effective integration into the new Agenda.

A repositioning of ECOSOC so that it can play a more significant role in development coordination and policy dialogue is thus essential: this fits well with the UK's undoubted strengths in research and policy analysis, but it runs counter to past UK practices. The UK has always tended to prefer multilateral discussions on development policy to take place in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization and OECD-DAC,⁵ all of which fall, *de facto*, outside the UN and ECOSOC. At the UN, the UK has tended to focus on relief and humanitarian issues, as well as concern for conflict and immediate post-conflict situations. But as the interconnected nature of the SDGs highlight, there is a clear need for more integrated policymaking and for strengthening ECOSOC for this purpose.

2.2 Universality of the SDGs: national provision of global public goods

The Agenda, and the goals, are explicitly universal in application. Universality is a '*shared responsibility for a shared future*' and the principle of '*common but differentiated responsibilities*' is particularly applicable in the context of a globalist agenda with an accent on progressive realisation of global commitments. The specialized agencies are, after all, universal by definition. They will remain as epistemological centres of knowledge communities organised on a functional basis. They also, by virtue of their universality and thus legitimacy, have the important roles of agenda-setting, norm-setting and standard-setting at the international level.

One challenge facing the agencies will be to manage the withdrawal of their function as a provider of technical assistance to developing countries. This is likely to happen gradually

over the next 15 years, in all but the most vulnerable countries. Most developing countries will have by then sufficient expertise to determine their policies and manage their programmes, it of course being understood that they, as for developed countries, will continue to seek technology and expertise from whatever source.

The *main* operational challenges facing the agencies will be to enhance significantly their capacity to promote awareness and technical advice on the national, regional and global implications of the SDGs and to find ways and means to facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge on 'how' to deliver the SDGs. These tasks are by no means confined to the so-called global South. There is much that agencies can do, using modern information technology including dedicated web pages, to promote such exchanges in which *all* countries, North and South can both contribute to and benefit from. Further, monitoring the national achievement of the SDGs is a task for all countries. Here, the many targets and indicators may well need some streamlining to be both manageable for the statisticians and understandable to the interested citizen.

Agencies should also assume responsibilities in the national provision of global public goods. The SDGs are in effect global public goods. One such good – the Paris climate agreement adopted at COP21 – could presage a new way of doing business for the specialized agencies in at least three respects. First,

by the standards of a traditional treaty, [Paris] falls woefully short. Yet its deficits in this regard are its greatest strengths as a model for effective global governance in the 21st century. The Paris agreement is a sprawling, rolling, overlapping set of national commitments brought about by a broad conglomeration of parties and stakeholders. It is not law. It is a bold move towards public problem-solving on a global scale. And it is the only approach that could work.⁶

Second, Paris was built on a bottom-up approach, whereby governments presented their national plans for international review and agreed, as part of the outcome, to repeat the process at regular intervals. And third, Paris was not simply governments negotiating with themselves: the active involvement of the business community – essential for any agreement on climate – and of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing civil society were equally indispensable for an agreed outcome.

Climate change affects every country, every business and every person. It is thus not surprising that the processes leading up to Paris generated such widespread involvement and debate. Other SDGs are also heavily endowed with similar extensive societal-wide implications; for example, Goal 8 on promoting '*full and productive employment*' (a very welcome revival of the old Keynesian objective), Goal 10 on '*reducing inequality... within countries*' or Goal 12 on '*ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns*' all lie at the heart of a properly functioning economy and society. In the latter case, it is certainly possible to imagine a process similar to COP21 whereby on the basis of participatory approaches involving governments, business and civil society, the agencies promote an agreed understanding of the *national* measures required to achieve *global* sustainable production.

The goals just mentioned represent new policies for the agencies. They are all significant additions to the international development agenda. Because they confirm the inherent inter-relationship among economic, environmental and social policies, such goals are fundamental to the 2030 Agenda as a whole. These goals are inherently universal and progress to their achievement will directly affect progress towards other goals. This in turn could generate even greater attention to proper forms of multilateral governance.

2.3 Institutionalised multi-stakeholder governance

Specialized agencies have had the involvement – in one form or another – of business and other groups in their deliberations for some time. The International Labour Organization (ILO) set the pattern a hundred years ago when in a fit of institutional imagination governments at Versailles agreed that employers and trade unions should also participate fully in all international deliberations on labour issues. Drawing on the experiences of ILO, of COP21 and of other similar approaches, the challenge for member states is to find acceptable ways and means of institutionalising a broader vision of the multilateral governance of agencies so that the ‘non-state actors’ are required to assume their responsibilities as well in a democratic and transparent manner.

However, the involvement of business in UN and agency affairs must be pursued with considerable care. A recent publication from the Global Policy Forum (Adams and Martens 2015) has demonstrated the heavy influence of corporate interests, as a result of ‘a new UN approach to engagement with the business sector, one that has shifted from that of impartial rule-setting and balanced engagement to that of privileging the sector’ (*op. cit.*: 110). Partnerships that depend on private sector initiatives and that carry the UN flag need to be managed so as to maintain the engagement of the corporate sector while preserving the democratic decision-making process of international governance.

2.4 Reforms to funding

The dilemma inherent in UN relationships with business arises in very large part because of the funding problem of the agencies and the UN. Insistence on zero-growth assessed budgets in the UN and agencies and reductions in core extra-budgetary funding have inevitably led the UN and agencies to seek ever larger non-core or tied contributions to finance development programmes and responses to global challenges. By common consent, this has had pretty disastrous consequences:

75 per cent of the UN’s operational activities for development are now financed through non-core resources... Multilateral mandates become increasingly difficult to carry out, as a profusion of earmarked projects fosters fragmentation and a loss of coordinated action.

(Adams and Martens 2015: 109)

Public goods at national level – for example public health or primary education – are financed through national taxation as befits a society that accepts common responsibilities. Global public goods that affect all of mankind are being financed voluntarily, often by those with vested interests. This cannot be allowed to continue. Mainstream economics shows that without public funding, global public goods will either be under-supplied or if funded by corporations, provided with bias towards the funding institutions.

There have been numerous suggestions on raising the huge funds required to finance the SDGs. Most represent an expansion of what has gone before, namely a mix of public and private funds. Is there any other solution? Greater sustainability in and independence of funding are the best guarantees for equitable, efficient and effective multilateral operations: equitable in the sense that whatever resources are available are distributed to needy countries according to transparent criteria of need; efficient in the sense of being able to leverage additional resources from the private sector; and effective in the sense of being able to produce the desired results. The one policy measure that would dramatically improve the capacities and functioning of the UN System would be a form of automatic financing derived from a variant of the Tobin tax.⁷ Such funding could replace the existing myriad of multilateral (and multi-bilateral) funding arrangements that add significantly to aid-related transaction costs and thereby greatly simplify the management of aid for all parties concerned.

Of course there are those who say such an approach is politically impossible.⁸ But UNITAID has led the way, in using funds raised through a levy on airplane tickets now applied by nine countries.⁹ The EU financial transaction tax is expected to be introduced in 2016 by some member states. Some countries tax CO₂ emissions for the same reason. Unfortunately, the benefits of such automaticity in revenue generation are still not yet widely appreciated: the UK is known for its opposition.

The *quid pro quo* for such automaticity in funding would be the installation of a *very* powerful and independent audit office in each UN agency that reports *directly*, and publically, to member states on the use of such funds, with career, financial and criminal penalties or sanctions in the case of staff malfeasance, incompetence or corruption. Prior approval by member states through review and control of the budget would of course continue but in a much more vigorous manner than at present. The same logic of using a variant of such taxes to finance multilateral development work would apply equally to humanitarian assistance as well as to UN peacekeeping operations.

Should such financing become available through one means or another, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the chance for, if not a new beginning, at least a fresh start.

3 Some thoughts on UK participation in the specialized agencies

Earlier paragraphs have suggested some ways in which the UK government could support such a fresh start. At the Witness Seminar on peace and security (January 2016), some of the UK government representatives stated, unambiguously, the importance the UK government attaches to the development work of the UN. Former Foreign Office officials who had held positions at senior level also stressed the accumulated skills of UK staff in diplomacy within the UN, which often enabled the UK to influence decisions and international actions in positive directions, beyond the narrow interests of the UK or the West. This form of soft power offers major opportunities for strengthening the UN and international action.

The UK played a prominent role in the establishment of some of the specialized agencies, drawing on its pre-war experiences in the League of Nations.¹⁰ As a permanent member of the Security Council, the UK has special responsibilities towards the UN and the System as a whole. Such membership as well as the continuing global commercial, economic and financial interests of the UK – clearly suggests a major role for the UK in support of action by the specialized agencies. Whether the UK has met past expectations in this regard is a subject worthy of debate but beyond the confines of this article.

An expanded and more effective British participation in the policies and actions of the agencies and as staff members of the agencies themselves could be improved and expanded in a number of ways.

3.1 Enhancing the quality of official government policies on multilateralism, in the sense of a genuine wish for a truly effective UN System. This will involve a number of things, not least significant and untied financial resources for the agencies and arrangements for governance that satisfy *all* member states. The integrated and universal nature of the SDGs calls for fresh attempts to address issues of global policy coherence – for example, between the trade and financial regimes, or between growth and sustainable production. As noted above, the UK in light of its past record could take the lead in reducing the coordination gap between the Bretton Woods Institutions and the UN and in enhancing ECOSOC as a real forum for coherent global development-related policymaking.

3.2 Supporting and encouraging relevant British academic and industry research on global issues. Originally stemming from the colonial experience, there has been a long and continuing tradition of British excellence in research on key development problems, for example medical problems common to the tropics or enhanced agricultural techniques or options in adjusting to climate change. Such traditions could be measurably enhanced if the criteria for distributing UK government grants for research prioritised the search for solutions to *global* problems.

3.3 Promoting SDG-related policy advice. The universalisation of the SDG agenda, the need to enhance evidence-based policymaking through reliable and comparable data and indicators and the benefits of shared experiences in achieving the goals are three new challenges facing the agencies. The UK, by virtue of its network of university departments, development-related thinktanks and NGOs, could provide significant advice and guidance on all these issues to the UK government and to UN organisations. UK economists and statisticians¹¹ were instrumental in designing the then new system of national accounts when working for the League of Nations and the UN. Perhaps today's generation could make a similar contribution again.

3.4 Expanding the quality and relevance of teaching at all levels (secondary and tertiary) about global issues and international organisations as regards the economics, history and politics of international relations, the management of international organisations and specialised technical subjects. Non-party public support for 'thinktanks' specialising in global issues will be necessary. Knowledge of languages and cultures of other countries will be essential.

3.5 Ensuring the effectiveness of advocacy NGOs (like Amnesty International, Oxfam and all the others concerned with global issues in one form or another) and groups like UNA-UK, BAFUNCS and others¹² in informing the public and in mobilising opinion to influence government policies.

3.6 Promoting a truly effective 'soft-power' foreign policy through equipping the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the BBC World Service with the necessary resources over a sustained period of time.¹³

3.7 Ensuring the fullest possible participation of UK nationals in the agencies. This brings us back to where this article began, namely the contribution of UK nationals to international development. The financing of special programmes to place young UK nationals in the multilateral system will both support the agencies and provide highly relevant experiences.¹⁴ On a different level, the number of UK nationals elected as heads of specialized agencies is simply dismal: just a handful over the last 70 years.¹⁵ No one can say there were no UK nationals with the necessary experience and stature.¹⁶ UK policy towards the specialized agencies will enter a new phase when the British government actively supports the candidatures of UK nationals as heads of agencies. Of course, it would be best if all member states agreed to ban lobbying altogether, but the multilateral system is regrettably not there yet.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21 was held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 12 December 2015. It was the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

³ All quotations in italics are from A/Res/70/1 Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted 25 September 2015.

⁴ For example, instability in exchange rates can undo benefits of tariff reductions or market access gains.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee.

⁶ Anne-Marie Slaughter, see www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/17/paris-climate-deal-flame-of-hope-diplomacy-christiana-figueres. The Paris outcome could perhaps set a new social contract for the twenty-first century, as some have suggested.

⁷ Named after the Nobel Laureate James Tobin, 'the Tobin tax' refers to a small levy, or tax, on foreign exchange transactions so designed to discourage financial speculation.

⁸ The recent report to the UN Secretary-General from the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, *Too Important to Fail – Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap*, (www.un.org/news/WEB-1521765-E-OCHA-Report-on-Humanitarian-Financing.pdf) alluded to this possibility without taking any position.

⁹ See www.unitaid.eu.

¹⁰ Founded in 1920, the League of Nations, with some 58 members in 1934/5, was the first international organisation with a principal mission to maintain world peace, aiming to prevent wars through collective security, disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration.

¹¹ For example, James Meade and Richard Stone, both Nobel Laureates in Economics.

¹² United Nations Association (UNA)-UK; British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants (BAFUNCS).

¹³ Namely, the remarks at WS3 of several now retired senior UK diplomats.

¹⁴ For example, the recently resumed UK support to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Junior Professional Officer (JPO) scheme.

¹⁵ Since 1945, the following British nationals have been elected as heads of agencies: John Boyd-Orr (FAO, 1945–48), Julian Huxley (UNESCO, 1946–48); C.W. Jenks (ILO, 1970–1973), David Davies (WMO, 1956–1972) and Guy Ryder (ILO, 2012–). Colin Goad was head of IMCO in the 1960s, before it was transformed into a specialized agency. In the 1980s, Bill Ryrie led World Bank Group's IFC. Mark Malloch-Brown was head of UNDP from 1999–2005.

¹⁶ For example, there have been five French Managing Directors of the IMF: Pierre-Paul Schweitzer (1963–73); Jacques de Larosière, 1978–87); Michel Camdessus (1987–2000); Dominique Strauss-Khan (2007–11) and Christine Lagarde (2011–). Can anyone seriously claim that during this 50-year period there was no qualified UK national?

Reference

Adams, B. and Martens, J. (2015) *Fit for Whose Purpose? Private Funding and Corporate Influence in the United Nations*, New York NY: Global Policy Forum, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2101Fit_for_whose_purpose_online.pdf (accessed 26 April 2016)

B.1.4 UN Coordination: Strengthening Coherence, Impact and Tools

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Abstract

This article assesses the effectiveness at country level of the two main institutions of UN development cooperation, namely UN System representation at the country level and specialized agencies, funds and programmes. It discusses the architecture developed over many years for enhanced UN System coordination and the instruments put in place to make it more effective in addressing national priorities. It notes the substantial progress made in the development of the Resident Coordinator system and in the tools designed to assist in promoting enhanced UN System collaboration, in particular the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Delivering as One (DaO) process. It also identifies some of the dilemmas faced in trying to promote coordination and collaboration among UN agencies, funds and programmes, each with their own mandate and legitimacy. It also suggests some policy implications for addressing these dilemmas, while taking note of some of the issues raised in the articles by Robert England on the country-level perspective, and John Burley on the agency-level.

Keywords: UN, coordination, UNDAF, Delivering as One.

1 Introduction

Achieving coherence in UN support to national priorities is a permanent challenge. To address this, the UN has succeeded in developing with member states over many years an architecture designed to facilitate coherence, as well as mechanisms to institutionalise it. However, the UN would be the first to recognise that the challenges faced in ensuring that the benefits of working together exceed those of working separately are still formidable. UK nationals have played a small but significant role in UN efforts to achieve greater coherence both at headquarters and country level. Working as international civil servants rather than as representatives of the UK, many have risen to senior levels of responsibility in a large number of countries and headquarters, serving with specialized agencies, funds, programmes and country offices. While it is not possible, or even desirable, to pinpoint individual as opposed to collective achievements, it is worth noting the value of the UK's human resources investment in the work of the UN at both headquarters and country levels. As the UN enters its eighth decade, it is time to think how the UK can play a fuller role in support of the UN's collective contribution to global and national public goods in the areas of development cooperation, humanitarian action and peace and security. Improving the UN's performance calls for a strengthening of its operational structures, mechanisms and procedures, as well as for more effective monitoring of its results.

This article focuses on three main aspects: *the development of institutional arrangements for improved coordination* at both the headquarters and country level (Section 2); *the practical mechanisms devised to promote coordinated responses* to development challenges at both headquarters and country levels (Section 3); and *dilemmas and policy implications* faced in trying to reconcile the collective interests of the UN System as a whole, the individual interests of agencies, funds and programmes, and lastly of programme countries (Section 4).

2 Development of institutional arrangements for improved coordination

Conventional wisdom suggests that results achieved in support of development goals will be more effective if more than one agency is involved, and if their contributions are complementary and do not duplicate each other. This may not always be the case due to differing cultures, mandates and management arrangements. Achieving this goal may therefore require different levels of coordination, collaboration and harmonisation, through both formal and informal mechanisms. While the word 'coordination' may cause alarm due to a perception of unwelcome authority, the concept of 'collaboration' through mutually agreed goals may be more acceptable, and that of 'harmonisation' would normally involve only minor refinements of working practices.

Given the diversity of mandates, cultures and operational modalities of UN agencies, funds and programmes, recipient countries are normally concerned to ensure that these do not impinge on the delivery of effective support to national goals. In response, the UN System has felt duty-bound to develop appropriate ways of assisting developing countries, while also deriving maximum benefit from the particular characteristics of each partner agency. These do not come without corresponding transaction costs, hence the need to design coordination or collaboration modalities in such a way that they enhance rather than hinder development efforts.

2.1 Coordination reform attempts

In 1965, the UN Special Fund (UNSF) and the UN Technical Assistance Board (UNTAB) merged into a new organisation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – the first UN agency designed to provide multi-sectoral and multi-agency support to developing countries.

In 1967, a report was commissioned by the UNDP Administrator, Paul Hoffman, to examine the ways whereby its burgeoning technical assistance and development cooperation activities, supported by a broad range of technical agencies, could be brought together to respond better to the needs of developing countries, many of which had recently become independent. The report, carried out under the auspices of Robert Jackson, with Margaret Anstee² as the principal author, was entitled *Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* ('The Jackson Report'), and was published in 1969. It proposed a wide-ranging series of reforms to bring together UN development support and funding under a single UNDP 'country programme' with hopefully increased levels of resources. While the principle of UNDP country programmes was endorsed,³ UN agencies were reluctant to cede their autonomy, or their resources, to provide technical assistance activities through a central coordinating and funding agency along the lines of UNDP.

At the country level, during the 1960s, a large number of UNDP country offices were established, together with corresponding five-year country programmes. Some of the larger funds, programmes and agencies also established country-level representations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO). Most projects funded by UNDP were 'executed' (i.e. implemented) with the support of UN agencies, until such arrangements were progressively superseded by 'national execution' arrangements. Over time, as the process of 'national execution' increased during the 1980s and 1990s, the role of UN agencies in the implementation of UNDP-financed support tended to diminish, with the result that they were obliged to seek their own funding rather than depend on UNDP. The UNDP Resident Representative carried out a *de facto* coordinating function since most UN agencies' activities were funded by UNDP, while the desire by the agencies to retain their autonomy and identity continued.

Nevertheless, the pressures for coordinated approaches increased, while UNDP's *de facto* coordination role tended to diminish.

2.2 The Resident Coordinator system

In the early 1980s, the General Assembly established the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation (DIEC) within the UN Secretariat, charged with seeking ways to strengthen coordination between UN entities, and funding sources, in the area of economic and social development. One of its tasks was to develop a more formal coordination system under a UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC), which had been called for under a 1977 General Assembly resolution.⁴ John Burley was charged with developing the mechanics of such a system and with facilitating a consensus-building process between UN agencies. This work was continued under his successor, David Whaley. This process succeeded in establishing UN system-wide agreement of the Resident Coordinator system, and from the mid-1980s, all UNDP Resident Representatives were also designated as UN Resident Coordinators.

The system provided increased responsibility for the UNRC, though not necessarily formal authority, with the understanding that this authority would be exercised through consensus-building rather than by dictat, thus ensuring that UN agency mandates and interests were scrupulously respected and safeguarded. UN Country Teams (UNCTs), made up of heads of agencies (both resident and non-resident) were designed to facilitate consensus-building and coordinated programming and information-sharing, thus requiring substantial diplomatic, negotiation and consensus-building skills by UNRC incumbents.

In the light of the challenges of ensuring that UNDP interests and UN System interests were maintained in a harmonious way – sometimes difficult if the UNRC was perceived to be too biased towards UNDP than to UN agencies – calls were later made in the early 2000s for the establishment of a more formal ‘firewall’ between UNDP and the UN System. This would be both through the appointment of UNRCs recruited either from UN agencies or from outside the UN System, and through the delegation of responsibilities for UNDP's own programmes to a UNDP Country Director, or to a Deputy Resident Representative in smaller countries. This led to a reduction in the proportion of UNRCs coming from UNDP from 100 per cent in the 1980s and 1990s to an estimated 30 to 40 per cent in 2015, although all RCs were administered by UNDP.⁵

To support this process, the functions of the DIEC were divided in 1997 between the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), responsible for the promotion of international economic cooperation and the triennial (later quadrennial) policy review of operational activities (TCPR/QCPR), and the UN Development Group (UNDG) which was responsible for supporting and guiding UNRC. UNDP meanwhile inherited responsibility for clearing (with agencies) the designation of UNRCs. The UNDG, whose first Director was Alan Doss, is made up of 32 agency members, with six observer organisations, including the World Bank Group. The Executive Committee of the UNDG was chaired from 2000 by the Administrator of UNDP, Mark Malloch-Brown, and is made up of the heads of UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP. At the same time, UN agency heads come together on a regular basis under the auspices of the Chief Executives Board (CEB).⁶

The UN Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) serves as the Secretariat of the UNDG and is a key component within the UNDG, promoting social and economic progress by providing support. It was a key element of UNDG's formation in 1997, uniting the UN System and improving the quality of its development assistance, providing more strategic UN support for national plans and priorities, and reducing transaction costs for governments. With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after 2000, the sharing of common goals and other internationally agreed development objectives helped the process.

At the country level, UN agency representatives are brought together in UN Country Teams (UNCTs),⁷ under the coordination of the UNRC. RCs and UNCTs can play a crucial role in addressing the issues raised in the articles by Robert England at the country level, and John Burley at the agency level.

3 Practical mechanisms to promote coordinated responses

As part of the changes promoted by the DIEC, the need for a coordinated programming process for development cooperation within the UN System was recognised. This was promoted through the testing during the 1980s of a 'Country Strategy Note' (CSN), which would reflect the broad thrusts of UN agency support in each country. This then evolved during the late 1990s into the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (of which the prior preparation of a Common Country Assessment (CCA) was an important element). This was one of the wide-ranging series of proposals for reform launched by the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 1997, through his report *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform* (A/51/950) (16 July 1997). Thereafter, the UNDAF was tested in a number of pilot countries,⁸ to the point that by the early 2000s the UNDAF had become an obligatory requirement in each country and applied in almost all countries in which the UN System provided support. As of 2012, more than 140 of the total 173 countries where the UN is represented have formulated UNDAFs or equivalents,⁹ which could be interpreted as a positive sign of its acceptability, although qualitative judgements on its impact are still required. Since 1997 revised versions of guidelines have been issued periodically in order to adapt UNDAFs to lessons of experience, new international agreements and conventions (such as the MDGs), as well as to resolutions of successive triennial (or quadrennial) comprehensive policy reviews (TCPR/QCPR).

In a parallel move, the concept of Delivering as One (DaO) was developed through a report and an initiative. The report, issued in 2006 by a UN panel established by Kofi Annan as Secretary-General, explored how the United Nations System could work more coherently and effectively across the world in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. It set out a programme of reform of the international humanitarian system, focusing on four main principles: One Leader, One Programme, One Budget and One Office. The DaO initiative was tested in eight pilot countries (Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Vietnam) as well as in a number of 'self-starter' countries¹⁰ that had agreed to work with the UN System to capitalise on the strengths and comparative advantages of members of the UN family. Periodic reviews of the DaO experience were carried out in 2007¹¹ and 2012.¹²

At a thematic level, the UN has often been instrumental in bringing together stakeholders involved in specific thematic areas such as the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)/Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UN fight against HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the UN Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity (UN Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], UN Industrial Development Organization [UNIDO], UNDP, International Trade Centre [ITC], FAO, WTO, UN Environment Programme [UNEP], International Labour Organization [ILO], UN Commission on International Trade Law [UNCITRAL], UN Office for Project Services [UNOPS] and the five UN Regional Commissions).

4 Dilemmas and policy implications for UN coordination

While substantial progress has been made in strengthening UN System coordination through UNDAF and DaO processes, bringing together the operational support of individual agencies in the context of a common and unified framework still faces particular challenges. These chiefly concern the following: *design*, while superficially attractive, is often not rigorous or detailed enough to provide a comprehensive basis for monitoring in each programme or

thematic area; *implementation* often focuses on agency-specific inputs rather than coordinated approaches to address broader programme goals; *monitoring* suffers from a combination of inadequate indicators – particularly at outcome level – as well as inadequate Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) and agency capacity for systematic and continuous UNDAF monitoring; and *management* likewise suffers from capacity constraints at programme and thematic levels.¹³

The author has been involved with UNDAF processes since 1997/98 as a member of the original group of 19 UNDAF facilitators to assist in preparing the first four UNDAFs.¹⁴ Subsequently, between 2000 and 2015, he carried out a total of 11 UNDAF formulation missions¹⁵ and 10 UNDAF/DaO mid-term review and/or evaluation missions.¹⁶ In addition he carried out a capacity building study with UNESCO to assist it in integrating UNESCO programming into national poverty reduction strategies and UNDAF processes (2005-06).¹⁷ In light of the above exercises, the author observed a number of dilemmas relating to different stages of UNDAF processes (formulation and design, implementation, monitoring and management) and made recommendations to address them in each context. They highlight a number of issues which may affect the UN's capacity to deliver effectively coordinated support and have policy implications for the relevant parties at both headquarters and country level which are summarised as follows.

4.1 Prioritisation – national, global, UNDAF or agency?

One of the UN's guiding principles is the need to support national priorities and programmes, as articulated in national and sectoral plans and programmes. At the same time, the UN System is responsible for developing norms and standards in a wide variety of areas, such as human rights, the environment, health and agriculture, and in supporting the attainment of MDGs up to 2015, and from 2016 the new SDGs, as well as the implementation of international conventions. As Stephen Browne has said,

the real strength of the field network is to keep the organization's ear to the ground, identifying the specific development priorities of each country. But while these highly differentiated needs are fed upwards, the organization has developed a set of centrally determined development priorities which it attempts to propagate downwards.¹⁸

Olav Stokke characterised this tension for UNDP as 'riding two horses simultaneously' (Stokke 2009). In reality, the UN System is uniquely placed to try to reconcile both national and international priorities, and to assist programme countries to combine the two, subject of course to the availability of funds. This has become more difficult as a result of supply-driven funding from donors and global funds. Thus, even if the UNCT wants to respond to national priorities, its ability to do so is limited by the available funding windows.

The primary frame of reference should be national or sectoral plans where they exist, or in their absence, national programming frameworks, broken down into corresponding sectoral or thematic strategies or programmes. These should include measures to achieve MDGs, SDGs and the goals of international conventions. UN support should be designed to use agency comparative advantages and resources, including of the World Bank Group, to support these national priorities and strategies, and particularly the relevant SDGs.

A *dilemma* resides in the fact that the UNDAFs are encouraged to focus on a limited number of areas which are often too narrow to absorb the wide range of national priorities and agency mandates, for which the UN System could provide support. Should an UNDAF therefore be a 'broad framework' for all national priorities where the UN System could assist – or should it only constitute a more limited framework focusing only on selected areas where more than one UN agency can work collectively, thus potentially excluding single-issue agencies or areas where only one agency might be involved? In practice, the latter option is

often chosen. Richard Jolly has highlighted the above dilemma and possible policy implications as follows:

All this raises issues of coherence and coordination. Here I feel that the model should not be a never-to-come return to Jackson and Anstee (who advocated a common UN development cooperation and funding framework for all agencies) but recognition that the world of the free market is here and will be. So the RC/RRs of the UN will need to work more closely with the Bretton Woods Institutions and with the other larger and main serious international players within each country, working as at present in theme/team areas. It cannot be the old hope of coordinating everyone or even all the UN agencies – just the main serious players and the government.¹⁹

In terms of *policy implications*, the author's experience suggests that the former 'broad framework' mentioned above provides a more realistic framework for governments and the UN System to make fuller use of UN capacities in supporting selected national programmes, goals and SDGs, preferably jointly, or if not, individually. In this respect, even single agencies can have as much impact as a group of agencies, if suitably focused on a national programme or SDG.

Notwithstanding the desirability of promoting joint programming and implementation arrangements, a key criterion should be strategic and catalytic support to national programmes and SDGs. Thus an UNDAF would constitute an overall and flexible framework for a multiplicity of sectoral, sub-sectoral or thematic sub-frameworks using a common methodological approach made up of a series of stages: problem identification, policy formulation (national and international), plan formulation (national, sectoral), national programme development (national rather than UN), project design and implementation for national programme support, partnership development and resource mobilisation, and most importantly, performance management and monitoring.

4.2 Tools of the trade: UNDAFs/DaO, Country Programme documents and programme support/project documents

To achieve the above, a series of 'tools of the trade' in the form of documents are needed. These include documents relating to the following:

At the *national level*, it is clear that governments and civil society need to possess policy and planning documents to provide appropriate frameworks for donor partner support. There is a crucial role for external partners, particularly the UN System and including the World Bank, to provide support to formulating such frameworks, if needed.

The *UN System support* should be articulated at four different levels:

- (i) the UN System as a whole, identifying support to national priority areas, through an UNDAF/DaO document, with results matrix;
- (ii) UN agencies, through multi-year agency country programme documents (CPDs), which articulate support to UNDAFs as well as corporate goals;
- (iii) sectoral or thematic support, through programme support documents (PSDs) linked to national programmes;
- (iv) agency-specific project documents for the approval of agency-specific funds, linked to programme support documents (PSDs).

The key *dilemmas* faced are the need for appropriate synchronisation between national planning documents, UNDAFs and CPDs, and tools for UN support to national programmes.

With respect to (i) and (ii) above, the author has observed the efforts of UNDAFs and agency CPDs to support selected national priorities. But he has also noted that some agencies, for

instance, the ILO (Decent Work Country Programmes), WHO (Country Strategies), UNIDO (Country Programme) and the FAO (Country Programme Frameworks) only make brief mention of UNDAFs, while in reality focusing mainly on agency priorities. World Bank Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) barely refer to UNDAFs, if at all. At the same time, he has noted that UNDAF documents often do not adequately reflect agency mandates, with the result that their CPDs often include priorities that may not be fully developed in UNDAF documents. Furthermore, smaller agencies and less prominent sectoral priorities (e.g. UNCTAD, ITC and trade) may be omitted from UNDAFs altogether.

With respect to (iii) and (iv), the author considers that a major need is for a document which articulates needs (demand) of national programmes in each national priority area, and planned resources (supply) from all development partners, including the UN System. Such programme support documents, to be complemented by budgets, work plans and agency-specific resource approval documents (project documents), would enable all partners to plan, implement and monitor support for each sector/sub-sector, theme or SDG, according to a common methodology. These would articulate a 'programme approach' whereby UN and partner support provide coordinated and complementary agencies (through joint programming arrangements) to common components of a national programme or strategy.

While current trends to reduce UNDAF documentation are laudable, effective UNDAF implementation may require more operational documentation and flexibility, particularly at the programme support level, in order to promote a much larger number of joint programming exercises in support of national programmes.

The *policy implications* of the above suggest that increased consideration should be given to ensuring that UNDAF documents address more effectively: (i) national priorities as articulated in national programmes and strategies; (ii) integration of SDGs, international conventions and treaties within national priorities; (iii) the design of coordinated UN support to strengthen national capacity to achieve (i) and (ii) through programme support documents; and (iv) the use of agency comparative advantages and mandates in support of (i) and (ii). All of this should be complemented by rigorous monitoring and the establishment of appropriate indicators and monitoring arrangements.

4.3 Monitoring

UNDAF monitoring has traditionally faced considerable challenges, to the point that several of the author's reviews concluded that UNDAFs are impossible to evaluate due to the broad scope of outcomes, outputs, indicators and the lack of data and appropriate monitoring arrangements. Furthermore UNDAF monitoring has been under-resourced, while agency heads have given priority to the monitoring of agency country programmes and projects. In many cases, the contribution of agency support to UNDAF outcomes is not documented in Country Programme (CP) or project reviews. In addition, agency staff constraints often mean that programme staff are not able to devote the necessary time to UNDAF outcome/thematic group monitoring.

The *dilemma* is that despite the agreement of UNCT members to fulfil UNDAF monitoring arrangements, the weakness of outcome or thematic group monitoring and insufficient staff resources do not enable adequate outcome or output-level work planning and reporting to take place as required. The *policy implications* relate to the need for increased prioritisation and resources for UNDAF monitoring and the strengthening of existing monitoring mechanisms.

4.4 Management

The UNDAF reviews and evaluations in which the author has been involved have highlighted the need for more effective management of processes and tools at every level, particularly at those of problem identification, design of UN support arrangements, implementation and

monitoring. This also requires consensus-building and coordination skills among a disparate collection of agencies, staff and interests. Key among these are effective leadership at the RC/UNCT level, a well-resourced RCO, and functioning Outcome Groups (OGs) to ensure that UNDAFs are designed to optimise UN System support to sectoral and thematic priorities. The main *dilemmas* experienced have related to the varying priority given by RCs, agency heads and the UNCT to UNDAF matters in the face of agency priorities, staff and time constraints, national sensitivities, as well as inadequate tools. This has often been aggravated by the lack of support at the agency headquarters level for UNDAF participation. The *policy implications* relate to the need for increased accountability for the RC/UNCT to ensure that effective outcome groups are put in place for each priority area, linked as appropriate to national/donor thematic groups; and that they carry out systematic monitoring and reporting of UNDAF/agency results in each area of national programme support. This should include both substantive and financial monitoring, through regular (semi-annual, annual) reporting by OGs to the UNCT/UNDAF management, the existence of a well resourced RCO, including a monitoring and evaluation specialist.

4.5 Staff resources

A key feature of UNDAFs is the need for agency staff to be able to link their agency-related work to that of the UNDAF. In reality, agency responsibilities claim priority. Financial constraints also mean that the availability of RCO and agency programme staff for UNDAF-related meetings and work is often severely curtailed.

Staff are thus faced with the continual *dilemma* of work priorities, and sometimes conflicting loyalties between agency and UNDAF work, when in fact they should be mutually supportive. Once again, the *policy implications* relate to prioritisation and the strengthening of links between UNDAF and agency management, as well as strengthening RCO capacity.

4.6 Incentives

The current dichotomy between the UNDAF and agency work is often exacerbated by the lack of incentives to fully participate in UNDAF management work. In fact there are actually pronounced disincentives, caused by several factors, of which the most important are the polycentric architecture of the UN System programming, and the multiple funding sources, which are themselves polycentric, each having their own cycles, procedures, buzz words and so on.

The main *dilemmas* are the existence of sometimes conflicting UNDAF/agency work responsibilities and the need for more balanced incentives and rewards for participation in UNDAF and agency matters. The *policy implications* are the need for suitable priority and recognition to be given for UNDAF-related work, coupled with promotion and financial incentives.

5 Conclusions

The UN System has made substantial progress over the years in developing institutional arrangements for strengthening inter-agency coordination, both at the headquarters level through the CEB and undg mechanism, and the country level through the Resident Coordinator system. At the same time mechanisms have been developed to ensure that UN support is adequately coordinated, particularly through the UNDAF and DaO mechanisms, and through the promotion of joint programming.

Despite the inevitable tensions arising from potentially conflicting loyalties of agency and UN System accountability pressures, results have shown encouraging trends to strengthen coordination in the context of specific thematic areas, particularly those relating to the MDGs, and hopefully those of the SDGs.

But these results are often poorly documented, the value added of collaborative ventures not fully exploited, and more importantly, the actual contribution and impact of UN support (either joint or individual) to individual national programmes and priorities are not adequately monitored and reported upon. As a result, the tools developed, and the management arrangements put in place need to be strengthened so as to ensure that the collective contributions of UN agencies, funds and programmes are enhanced.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Margaret Anstee is often referred to as Margaret Joan Anstee.

³ General Assembly Consensus Decision of 1970.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 32/197 on Restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations System (20 December 1977).

⁵ The potential for inter-agency tension still exists due to the tendency of UNDP to support projects which would normally be the responsibility of a relevant technical specialized agency, thus leading to a perception of conflicting roles as coordinator and competitor, which still prevails in spite of firewalls.

⁶ The CEB meets twice a year and is chaired by the UN Secretary-General. It brings together the Heads of 27 United Nations System organisations (15 specialized agencies, 10 UN funds and programmes, the World Trade Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency). The CEB is responsible for keeping up to date on current political issues and concerns that face the United Nations. Additionally, the CEB approves policy statements on behalf of the system when the reporting bodies make recommendations to do so. There are three committees that support the CEB: the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) for global policy and other items that face the world at large; the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) to make businesses across the system work together; and the undg which works to promote country-level efforts within the system.

⁷ Made up of representatives of all resident and non-resident agencies (NRAs), and sometimes including World Bank representatives.

⁸ In 1997, a team of UNDAF Facilitators were designated to assist a first group of about 20 countries which had volunteered to pilot the UNDAF process. The author was a member of the facilitation teams sent to Senegal, Mali, Namibia and Kenya in 1997/98.

⁹ While a useful summary of UNDAF logic, and providing a useful baseline for monitoring, results matrices can be inflexible tools in changing situations. If the UNDAF document is to be a 'light' framework, it should focus on broad thematic areas, and outline the key national programmes and strategies, and the proposed support. More detailed design and results matrices would be provided in programme support documents.

¹⁰ The author assisted the UN System in the preparation of an UNDAF (called a UN Country Programme) for Papua New Guinea (2005), one of the 'self-starter' countries.

¹¹ 2007 Stocktaking Exercise – Key points emerging from Reports by Governments, UNCTs and the UN (27 March 2008).

¹² Stock-taking exercise of the Delivering as One experience (2007) and Report to the General Assembly on Delivering as One (2012). See: Note of the Secretary-General A/66/859, www.un.org/en/ga/deliveringasone/pdf/summaryreportweb.pdf

¹³ This section has benefited from Paul Balogun's report for UNDESA on 'The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations Development Framework' (May 2012) and Richard Longhurst's Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Report on 'Review of the Role and Quality of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs)'.

¹⁴ CCA/UNDAF formulation missions: Senegal (1997), Mali (1997), Namibia (1998) and Kenya (1998).

¹⁵ CCA/UNDAF formulation missions: Mongolia (CCA) (June 2000), Kenya (UNDAF Review/Revision), Lao PDR (UNDP CCF and UNDAF) (2001), Iran (CCA) (2002), Serbia and Montenegro (CCA) (2003), Bosnia and Herzegovina (CCA/UNDAF) (2004), Mozambique (UNDAF) (2005–06), Papua New Guinea (UNDAF) (2006) (12), Samoa and Fiji – Pacific sub-regional UNDAF Review and formulation of Implementation Plans (2008), Philippines (UNDAF) (2010), Indonesia (2014).

¹⁶ UNDAF mid-term review/evaluation missions: Kenya (2003), Cambodia (2004), Nigeria (2005), Sao Tome and Principe (2010), Equatorial Guinea (2009), Jordan (UNDAF/DaO) (2010/11), Niger (2012), Comores (2012), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), Lao PDR (2015).

¹⁷ The author assisted UNESCO in 2006 in developing UNESCO Country Programme Documents (UCPD) in each of the pilot countries as part of its process to strengthen its capacity to contribute to UNDAF/DaO processes, and later in the preparation of the Papua New Guinea UCPD.

¹⁸ Quote from copy of email from Stephen Browne to John Burley (16 February 2016) on subject of 'IDS Bulletin – chapter on agencies, 2nd version'.

¹⁹ Email from Richard Jolly to Stephen Browne, 11 April 2016.

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B.1.5 The Future of UN Development Assistance – Norms, Standards and the SDGs

*Stephen Browne*¹

Abstract

The UN's development activities were founded on a rationale of cooperation and include four main functions: setting norms, standards and goals; information and research; global cooperation agreements; and technical assistance. Development activities constitute the largest of the UN's four functions or pillars. Many successes have been recorded over 70 years, but the UN encounters challenges of organisational dispersion, marginalisation and rivalry. From inside and outside the UN there is a growing clamour for more change and adaptation as the UN begins a new post-2015 era, characterised by the Sustainable Development Goals. Reforms must address the two main areas of weakness. The UK government, as a highly influential UN member state, can exert a valuable influence, including helping to ensure that a reform-minded Secretary-General is elected in 2016.

Keywords: UN Development System, UN reform, UK government.

1 Introduction

The United Nations was established 70 years ago primarily as a security organisation based on international cooperation. Anticipating the need for human advance, the UN Charter mentions development in its preamble and contains two short chapters which are relevant to its future development role: Chapter IX on 'international economic and social cooperation' and Chapter X, establishing the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which would bring into the common development fold several organisations, to be known as specialized agencies of the UN (Burley and Browne 2015). Subsequently, the broadly defined development activities of the UN became its largest domain, in terms of staff and financial resources. This chapter looks at the four main development functions of the UN, reviews some of the achievements and looks ahead to the increasingly urgent tasks of adaptation and reform to ensure that the development UN can remain relevant. It concludes with some thoughts on a future role for the UK government.

2 Four functions

The UN Charter's definition of the development mandate was founded on a rationale of 'cooperation'. This was the key word and in practice, UN cooperation has been pursued in four broadly different ways (Browne 2014).

2.1 Technical standards function. The *first* and most straightforward is the technical standards function. States find a common purpose in international cooperation in order to facilitate cross-border exchange. Inter-state communications began the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the nineteenth century because of the imperative to assign international wave-bands and to allow mail to travel across borders. These two specialized agencies of the UN, along with five others created subsequently as UN entities – the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – are the seven most functional agencies, responding to specific and universal technical needs. They establish common technical standards which are fundamental to international collaboration. Some other parts of the system are also

'functional' in the Mitrany sense (1966) insofar as they help develop universal standards: World Health Organization (WHO) for health (and with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), for food safety), International Labour Organization (ILO) for the workplace, and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for culture and education (Lee 2009; Shaw 2009; Hughes 2011; Singh 2011).

2.2 Public information. The *second* type of cooperation is the generation of public information goods, in the form of statistics, surveys and studies. From the outset, the UN has collected statistics from its member governments, screened and processed them for robustness and comparability, and published regular compendia on a wide range of subjects. Initially, the UN strove to become the main repository of information relevant to development when knowledge of the process was in its infancy. The number of areas in which the UN can still claim primacy has shrunk – some of the major exceptions being population, gender and national accounts data. However, the UN has continued to collect data and undertake research in key areas as a basis for its advocacy of development values and goals. The ILO pioneered notions of basic needs in the 1970s, and from the 1980s onwards, work by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) led to the concept of human development (UNDP 1990). The UN calls on its research for its campaigns of advocacy in the development field. There is no better example than the work of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) whose periodic evaluation of global warming is the basis of the UN's advocacy of urgent mitigation measures.

2.3 International cooperation in support of common goals. The *third* type derives from the need for cooperation through international organisations wherever there are shared perceptions of a problem and a readiness to develop a consensus. This 'cognitive condition' (Rittberger and Zangl 2006) is the basis of inter-state cooperation through the UN and the closest approximation to global governance in key domains. The best most recent examples of such global cooperation have been the intergovernmental consultations leading to agreement on the *Sustainable Development Goals, 2016–2030* (United Nations 2015), and the *Paris Agreement* (UNFCCC 2015) on climate change, both concluded in 2015.

2.4 Provision of technical assistance. The *fourth* type of UN development assistance may be termed vertical cooperation, the rationale for which was the benevolent transfer of grants and expertise in the form of technical assistance (TA). From modest beginnings, TA has expanded to become by far the largest and most visible form of development assistance through the UN. The Charter did not provide for an operational role but the UN was soon active as the first global multilateral aid agency, initially through the dispensing of humanitarian assistance to children and refugees who had become the victims of conflict. To this day, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) are two of the most respected UN organisations. TA had been a limited feature of the defunct League of Nations fully paid for by the recipients (Rist 1997; Browne 2011). 'Free' TA, however, had not been anticipated, partly because giving away resources was controversial both for governments and for the secretariat. The two main commercial banking countries (the US and the UK) were initially opposed to unconditional funding which they could not easily control (Keenleyside 1966). Within the UN, David Owen and others were careful to craft mechanisms which ensured that TA would be fully matched by resources from partner governments. Cooperation, however, soon became assistance. Encouraged by the call from President Truman in his 1949 inaugural speech for a 'bold new programme' through the UN 'for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under-developed areas' (US Department of State 1949), the United States and several other governments made available US\$20 million for the new Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) (Murphy 2006).

These development functions form one of four pillars of the UN System today, which also comprises peace and security, humanitarian relief, and law and human rights. All four pillars have grown considerably in size. The development pillar alone now comprises more than 30 separate organisations and agencies and absorbs a majority of the UN staff. The total collective development budget is US\$16 billion to US\$17 billion per year (United Nations 2013).

Over 70 years, many development successes can be ascribed to the UN in its development functions. A selection of prominent UN Development System (UNDS) activities is shown in Table 7, which illustrates that the major organisations of the UNDS are each engaged in between one and four of the different functions. The specialized agencies have developed norms and standards of critical importance to human safety and welfare, while helping to facilitate global reporting on health, agriculture, labour and education. Most UN development organisations have produced noteworthy research and data, as well as managing numerous technical assistance projects. Some of the greatest successes, however, have been in the area of global cooperation, particularly in the domains of health and the environment. Campaigns led by WHO have helped to eradicate or control deadly diseases and pandemics. Climatically, it can be argued that the world has already been saved once, through the Montreal Protocol, which has helped to reverse erosion of the ozone layer. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described it as ‘perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date.’² The Paris Agreement of 2015 is a critical step towards addressing the perils of climate change through excessive carbon emissions.

3 Current challenges

The UN Development ‘System’ of organisations, however, is the part of the UN that has adapted least well to changing realities and it now faces two types of challenge as it looks to the future: dispersion and marginalisation.

3.1 Dispersion is a characteristic of development cooperation in general. Over 70 years, while UN has grown, the number of official and private development organisations has proliferated. Within the UN, dispersion is a legacy rooted in the origins of the system. The ‘functional’ logic of the growing family of UN development organisations from the late 1940s onwards resulted in the pursuit of many parallel disciplines: health, education, agriculture, industry and so on. Even within similar development domains, there is organisational parallelism, or rivalry: education is a concern of both UNESCO and UNICEF; international trade is a primary preoccupation of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). There are many other examples. Parallelism would matter less if UN organisations working in similar fields collaborated more closely. There are some good examples such as the WHO/UNICEF immunisation campaigns, the Standing Committee for Nutrition (WHO, FAO, UNICEF, World Bank and others), the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), with widespread membership and others like the Joint Consultative Group on Programmes (JCGP) and the previously cited IPCC. But these are the exceptions that prove the rule: the UN is more effective when it comes together but the examples of established partnerships are rare.

Things might have been different if, at its creation, the UN had been endowed with a strong centre. But this was not the case. ECOSOC could have played a centralising role, but the main architects of the UN – particularly the Americans – were cautious about creating a powerful multilateral economic body with wide jurisdiction (US Department of State 1944). So, as the Charter puts it, the specialized agencies were ‘brought into relationship’ with the UN through ECOSOC (United Nations 2006: art. 57).

Table 7 The UN Development System organisations, functions and selected services

	Development services			
	Technical standards and norms	Research, data, information	Intergovernmental cooperation, policy, conventions	Technical assistance
UN Agency/Organization				
DESA		World population projections; World Economic Situation & Prospects		Public administration support
UNODC		Narcotics production data	UN Convention Against Corruption (2005)	Crop substitution
UN Women			Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)	
UNDP		Global, regional, national human development reports	Mekong River Commission (1960s–80s)	Electoral assistance; aid management
UNICEF		National child assessments	Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)	Water and sanitation projects
WFP				Food for work schemes
UNFPA				Reproductive health measures
UNCTAD		World Investment Report; Trade and Development Report	Generalized system of trade preferences (1968)	ASYCUDA: automated customs administration
ITC		Export market data		Organic export promotion
UNEP		Climate change assessments	Montreal Protocol (1987) Convention on Biological Diversity (1993) Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015)	
UN-HABITAT		Global urbanization data		Urban water supply
UNAIDS		AIDS incidence monitoring (from 1990)		Support to national AIDS Commissions
Regional commissions				
ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA		Annual regional surveys	Support for regional institutions	

(Cont.)

Table 7 (cont.)

	Development services			
	Technical standards and norms	Research, data, information	Intergovernmental cooperation, policy, conventions	Technical assistance
Specialized agencies				
ILO	Labour standards	Global employment data	Migration policy	
UNESCO	World Heritage sites	Global Education Monitoring Report		Restoration of cultural sites; educational curriculum reform
FAO	Codex Alimentarius (food safety)	Global agricultural statistics		Agricultural extension services
WHO		Global health statistics	Smallpox eradication; Avian flu, SARS, Ebola containment	Health system capacity building
UNIDO		Global industrial statistics		Support to Montreal Protocol compliance
IFAD				Sustainable rural development
UNWTO		World tourism statistics		
ICAO	Airline safety standards			
IMO	Maritime safety standards		Piracy containment	
ITU	Mobile communication standards			Institutes for Broadcasting Development
UPU	International postal conventions			
WMO	Weather measuring standards	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports on global warming		
WIPO	Intellectual protection		Patent Cooperation Treaty (1070)	
IAEA	Nuclear safety standards			Nuclear safety management

Source: Author's own.

The absence of a strong centre was recognised by the Capacity Study of 1969, co-authored by Robert Jackson and Margaret Anstee, and was designed to enhance the role of the newly created UN Development Programme as funder and coordinator (United Nations 1969). But the study could not prevent the growing proliferation of organisations. These new organisations were each established to respond to an emerging development need, but they were managed autonomously. Their growing number further distanced the prospect of strategic oversight of the development UN, as the development process was becoming more complex and multifaceted.

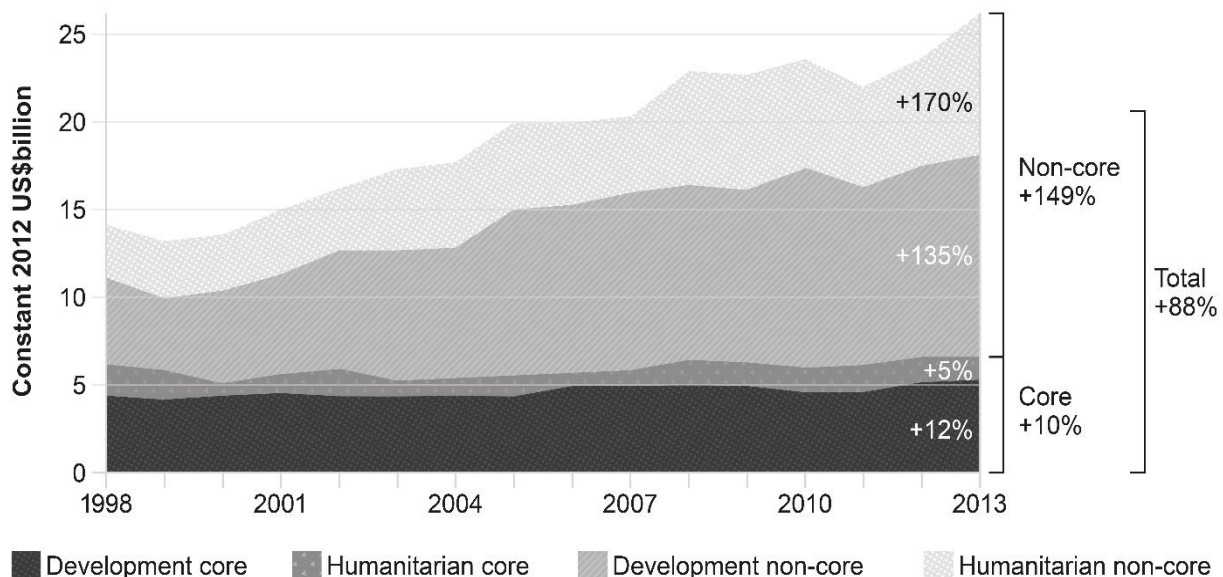
Today, in addition to the more than 30 development organisations in the UN – half of which do not even come under the authority of the General Assembly – there is an even greater number of functional commissions, training and research organisations. The UN University on its own now has 16 specialised centres. All these entities are physically dispersed. The headquarters of the main organisations are to be found in 14 different countries. Many of them support field representatives in offices, which now number more than 1,000 in total; nearly all of these representatives maintain separate administrations, budgets and premises. These numbers, moreover, are growing not shrinking. A sympathetic commentator is left 'breathless and bewildered at the sheer number of overlapping, agenda-sharing, and rival agencies within the world organization' (Kennedy 2006). The report of the high-level panel on system-wide coherence was equally critical (United Nations 2007).

The response of the UN to this dispersal has been to establish mechanisms of coordination, rather than oversight and control. The main development organisations are members of the UN Development Group (UNDG), which is chaired by the head (Administrator) of UNDP. But the specialized agencies (which nominally include the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, but which are not considered here as part of the UN Development System) have separate governance mechanisms beyond the authority of the Secretary-General. The function of the UNGDG chair is therefore largely passive. While the UNGDG is a useful forum for exchanging information on the UN's numerous development operations, encouraging UN country teams to develop joint programmes (UN Development Assistance Frameworks, UNDAFs) and helping to forge common ('standard') operating procedures, which have to be separately agreed by each governing body, the existence of the UNGDG and the many other UN coordinating mechanisms can have the effect of slowing down the UN's capacity to act. There are also powerful centrifugal forces which continue to drive the development system apart. Chief among these is the competition for funds. The specialized agencies and many of the organisations under the Secretary-General's authority receive core funding through fixed percentage levies on their members ('assessed contributions'). But organisations like UNDP and UNICEF are still voluntarily funded, even for their core resources. All the UN development organisations and agencies, however, compete for funds to finance their operations from the major traditional donors, as well as from many newer sources, including other multilateral agencies such as the European Commission (EC), vertical funding mechanisms such as the Global Fund, the Global Alliance for Vaccinations and Immunization (GAVI) and philanthropic organisations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The EC and the Global Fund are currently the largest sources of funding to UNDP. Donors like to patronise individual organisations of the system, and most of the UN's operational funding is now earmarked ('non-core') by donors for specific purposes and geographic destinations, through their chosen recipients. This bilateralism of the multilateral system has accelerated. While core contributions to the UN have declined slightly in real terms over the last two decades, these non-core contributions rose by nearly 150 per cent between 1998 and 2013 (Figure 2). They now account for more than 70 per cent of total funding (United Nations 2013). With stagnant or declining core budgets, UN organisations are reluctant to turn down offers of non-core funding, even when it results, as it often does, in an encroachment onto the mandates of other UN bodies.

3.2 Marginalisation. In norm entrepreneurship, in the generation of ideas, and especially in its TA functions, the UN Development System has strong competitors. The UN's universality gives it legitimacy in the establishment of norms in the wider societal interest. But it has no monopoly on technical norm-setting. The world's largest standards-setting organisation in the domains of 'business, government and society' is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) dating from 1946 with a membership of variable geometry which comprises governments, private business and civil society organisations: the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Since its founding, the ISO has developed more than 20,000 international standards, claiming to add more than 1,100 each year. Its voluntary consensus standard-setting, involving civil society and the private sector, is a model which the UN could

emulate (Murphy and Yates 2009) and arguably applies in the tri-partite structure of the ILO. A critical aspect of internet governance – the assignment of domain names – is another area which is managed by an NGO, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and where a purely intergovernmental organisation would threaten to encroach on freedom of communications. In sum, where norm-setting is purely technical and not value-driven, it need not always be the exclusive prerogative of governments.

Figure 2 Funding of the UN development and humanitarian system now comes predominantly from non-core resources



Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Report A/70/62–E/2015/4.

Turning to its ideational role, the UN in the 1940s and 1950s was the principle repository of original thinking on development. From that period onwards, the UN has counted many Nobel laureates among its staff and advisers. Inevitably, however, the UN's monopoly of original ideas was unlikely to be sustained while the volume of development research from the major development banks, numerous academic and research institutions, NGOs and bilateral development agencies has vastly expanded. Some of these alternative sources are more up-to-date, rigorous and evidence-based.

Most of all, the UN is becoming strongly challenged in its TA role. At a time when all TA – and aid in general – is coming in for heavy criticism (Moyo 2009; Deaton 2013; Easterly 2014), too many UN TA projects continue to peddle traditional techniques of knowledge transfer in often unreceptive environments. The most telling shortcomings of UN TA are the numerous examples of projects which are continually repeated. TA itself is based on the now wholly outdated assumption that development is more of a technical than a political or economic process. Experience has taught that politics trumps technical needs; while aid can fill some technical gaps, the real engines of development progress are essentially political: enlightened government leadership, transparency, a peaceful environment, competent and inclusive institutions and the rule of law (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Deaton 2013; Fukuyama 2014). These are vital areas in which the UN Development System is poorly engaged and the subject of just one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG number 16).

The SDGs represent a comprehensive set of new goals for the development system. They are an agenda of member states and not of the UN organisations as such, even though the system made important contributions to them. In the future, the UN Development System

needs to concentrate its TA on assisting countries to meet the norms and the goals which they have set for themselves, and monitoring their progress.

4 Looking to the future

Successive surveys of global public opinion by the Future UN Development System (FUNDS) project, which have canvassed more than 10,000 people across six professional groups since 2010, have underlined the need for changes in the development UN to overcome the dual weaknesses of dispersal and marginalisation. Almost 80 per cent of respondents in the 2014 survey pointed to internal organisational structures and the growth of earmarked funding as factors exacerbating dispersal. The five main proposals for change were the greater use of technology to cut costs and improve efficiency; updated mandates and activities of organisations; a common system-wide technology platform for administration and accounting; a single UN gateway to all UN research and publications; and increased funding but less earmarking (2014b).

When asked about the UN's impact, it is consistently humanitarian relief and peacekeeping that resonate more positively with respondents than the activities of the UN Development System (FUNDS 2014a). The marginalisation of the development system is reflected in perceptions about individual agencies. More than half the respondents in the 2014 survey considered the UN to be ineffective in areas such as energy, services and tourism, industry, employment, drug control and crime reduction – all areas in which the UN has dedicated organisations. Some of the UN development organisations are considered 'not relevant' by more than one fifth of respondents and the majority of organisations are judged 'not effective' by a third or more (FUNDS 2014b). These results are only based on perceptions, but they are the considered opinions of public voices who have some knowledge of the UN including many who work in it (the 'don't knows' were excluded).

Reform is about the 'what' and the 'how'. In terms of its development functions, the UN is being crowded out in some areas of research and information, as is much of its free-standing TA. The UN therefore needs to rededicate itself to the roles in which it is a unique global reference. These roles are clearly centred on the development and advocacy of norms and conventions in areas of human security, human rights and other aspects of human development including sustainable environmental management. Its activities should be increasingly orientated towards research and advocacy which supports these norms and conventions, and its operational role should be mainly confined to propagating norms and ensuring greater compliance, which is a current weakness (Weiss and Thakur 2010). The UN must also get closer to the essential political processes of development, as it does already in weaker and conflict-prone states. In these states, the development system should be just one of the players, combining with the other pillars of the UN in peace-building and reconstruction.

The 'how' begins with governance and funding: more joined-up management and oversight of the development system, and more pooled funding opportunities (in which the UK was one of the original pioneers). The prevailing patterns of patronage will be a huge obstacle to change, but greater convergence could be facilitated by enlightened leadership within the UN System. The current effective frontier of change is at the country-level, where the UN Development System continues to pursue its *Delivering as One* initiative. This process needs to embark on a new and more assertive phase (Fegan-Wyles 2016), leading to a further rationalisation of the UN country presence with policy convergence around the norms and values of the system.

5 Conclusion: a role for the UK?

The UN must strive to be relevant, particularly in its development activities, by addressing its problems of dispersion and marginalisation, and by acknowledging and adjusting to the quintessentially political nature of development. This should include:

5.1 Focus on values, norms and goals: This means more attention to values, norms and goals, and less to myriad self-standing technical interventions. The UK government, as the world's largest contributor to multilateral assistance, can continue to play a role in supporting the development UN where it is the unquestioned global reference, and in future reform.

5.2 Allocation of UK resources: Unfortunately, the majority of the UK's multilateral resources goes to the World Bank and the EU. A higher proportion of this should go to the UN.

5.3 Support to the SDGs: The UK has shown strong commitment through its support of the MDGs and the SDGs, the pre- and post-2015 development agendas.

5.4 UN reform: In UN reform, the UK Department for International Development's (DFID's) role has been seen in its support of *Delivering as One* and in its contributions to One Funds at the country level. The UK's enthusiasm for these reform initiatives has been waning but it is important that the government continues to influence change by pressing for reform.

5.5 Election of the next Secretary-General: More immediately, as one of the permanent members of the Security Council, the UK can help to ensure the election of a reform-minded UN Secretary-General in 2016.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Quoted in the UNEP document *Key achievements of the Montreal Protocol to date*: http://ozone.unep.org/Publications/MP_Key_Achievements-E.pdf

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B.2 Witness Seminar 2: Humanitarian Action

B.2.1 People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Challenges for the United Nations and Donor Governments *Martin Barber*¹

1 Introduction

When the British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants was planning its seminar on humanitarian action, held in Oxford in October 2015, one of three topics selected was 'Who does it best?'. By the time the seminar took place, the worldwide consultations organised in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) had delivered an unambiguous answer: local people and organisations in affected countries.

In 1991, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/182 on the coordination of international humanitarian assistance. Before that date, the international response to humanitarian emergencies arising from armed conflict had been *ad hoc*. The resolution created the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator and set up a forum, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to bring together the main international actors providing humanitarian aid.

In 2012, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that he would convene the WHS in 2016. In 2014, the WHS Secretariat began a series of consultations in all regions of the world, which culminated in a synthesis report, a global consultation in Geneva in October 2015, and the Secretary-General's report, 'One Humanity, Shared Responsibility', of February 2016 (UN 2016).

The WHS consultations described an international system that is fragmented, siloed,² and supply and mandate driven. In his report to the WHS, the Secretary-General echoed the demands of participants in the consultations in calling for a new 'business model' that is people-centred, focused on a few agreed collective outcomes, and demand-driven. In other words, the international response to humanitarian emergencies should be built around local and national capacity and not parachuted in from outside. This was also the conclusion of the panel on 'Who does it best?' at the Oxford seminar.

Three of the four articles that follow show how this new approach can be made to work in practice, looking at the way women's groups, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and refugee communities have taken, or are trying to take, control of their own futures, with or without the support of international actors. The fourth, by Adam Roberts, presents the conclusions of the Oxford seminar.

2 Features of today's humanitarian emergencies

Humanitarian emergencies continue to pose major challenges to national and international authorities alike. Whether caused by 'natural' events such as earthquakes, floods and drought, or 'man-made' ones such as conflict and enforced displacement, their affect on lives, livelihoods and the coping and recovery capacity of communities can be overwhelming. Recent and ongoing emergencies in Syria, Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan, Chad, the Ebola crisis and the Horn of Africa, New Zealand, Japan, Libya and Turkey have overwhelmed the capacities of humanitarian organisations and testify that no country, rich or poor, is spared the consequences of crises. With new drivers emerging – such as climate change,

population growth, diminishing resources and a volatile global economy – it is predicted that humanitarian need and crises will continue to grow.

Current analysis, reports and thinktank position papers have underscored a number of common characteristics and trends including:

1. An increase in the scale of crises, specifically those caused by climate change and ‘catastrophic’ extreme weather events;
2. An increase in the number of incidents and the ‘changing character’ of conflict and violence (driven by resources, ideology or transnational crime);
3. Increased numbers of actors responding to crises (‘extra-humanitarian’, i.e. actors who do not necessarily have a history of a value system based on international humanitarian law, specifically private sector/commercially based; military and local/national/civic/diaspora organisations, etc.);
4. Increased demand for the role of and ownership by national governments and national disaster and risk management organisations;
5. Increased citizen scrutiny and demands for the right to professional, quality, value and evidence-informed/-driven assistance;
6. Increased convergence of donor strategies for funding and for humanitarian/risk reduction policies;
7. Increased demand from recipient countries for coherent aid policies and ‘aid effectiveness’ based on shared universal language/standards; and
8. Increased demand by national and international aid workers to ‘close knowledge and capacity gaps’ by implementing common, universally acknowledged principles, standards, professional competencies and complementary/rationalised guidelines and tools that are easily adapted to local contexts.

All of these issues were debated and reviewed as part of the dialogues and preparations for the WHS, which was designed to initiate a ‘paradigm’ change in how local and international stakeholders responded to the myriad challenges of a future of global precariousness and volatility.

3 Changing the approach

Participants at the Oxford seminar, and contributors in many of the consultations during the WHS process, expressed frustration that a widely accepted diagnosis of the problem had not led to changes in approach among donor governments, UN agencies and international NGOs. While many in these organisations, including senior leaders, recognise the need for radical change, institutional resistance appears to be difficult to overcome. UN agencies and international NGOs have established business models that require them to be ‘operational’³ during emergencies. The idea that in many situations they would be more helpful and do less harm if they focused on channelling resources and technical support is hard to accept.

In her article ‘Globalising the Local: Enhancing Support to Local Institutions for Humanitarian Response’ (B.2.2), Angela Raven-Roberts examines the growing importance of local and national NGOs in the delivery of humanitarian aid and the obstacles and constraints that they need to overcome. She reviews several examples of local organisations that have operated successfully in situations where international organisations were absent. She concludes with recommendations for the way forward.

Nicola Dahrendorf’s article, ‘Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Empowering Women and Girls’ (B.2.3), evaluates efforts by aid agencies to adopt gender-sensitive programming in humanitarian emergencies and peace-building, in light of the UN Security Council’s ‘Women, Peace and Security’ agenda. She identifies five major obstacles to these efforts, as well as eight emerging lessons that governments and aid agencies need to learn if widely recognised benefits of empowering women and girls are to be realised.

In his article 'An End to Exile? Refugee Initiative and the Search for Durable Solutions' (B.2.4) Jeffery Crisp shows how refugees, faced with spending many years in unproductive limbo, are increasingly turning to irregular, often dangerous means to give themselves a chance of a decent life.

While many conclusions can be drawn from these and the many related contributions to the WHS, we feel that two demand immediate action from governments, the UN and international NGOs:

1. Commit to supporting national governments and local civil society organisations in their efforts to promote resilience in local communities and to strengthen preparedness for, response to, and recovery from humanitarian emergencies.
2. Commit to tireless advocacy and financial support for the rights of people uprooted from their homes by war or disasters to uninterrupted education for their children and productive livelihoods for youth and adults.

In the final article, 'The UN and Humanitarian Action: What Have We Learned?' (B.2.5), we return to our point of departure, the Oxford seminar of October 2015. Adam Roberts, who chaired the event, presents his overall conclusions, including six specific recommendations for action by governments and aid organisations.

A full report of WS2 was prepared to summarise the results of the seminar discussions and the contributions made. This also contains annexes with Witness Briefs and other articles submitted.

Box 4 Session recordings and transcripts

The proceedings of WS2 were all recorded and can be accessed on the following websites:

Session 1 Delivering humanitarian aid – Who does it best?

www.odihpn.org/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&urlid=681&mailid=252&subid=21653

Session 2 Working with political and development actors – Where should UN humanitarian 'sit'?

www.odihpn.org/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&urlid=682&mailid=252&subid=21653 (UN 2015)

Session 3 Delivering humanitarian aid while protecting human rights: the challenges for the UN or impartiality, access and advocacy

www.odihpn.org/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&urlid=683&mailid=252&subid=21653

Session 4 What has our experience taught us? Lessons for future policy

www.odihpn.org/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&urlid=684&mailid=252&subid=21653

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Definition of 'siloe'd': a system, process, department, etc. that operates in isolation from others, www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/silo.

³ In this context, operational means delivering assistance using their own personnel. The proposed new business model would require international organisations to offer funding, training and technical support to local organisations, to enable them to deliver the aid.

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B.2.2 Globalising the Local: Enhancing Support to Local Institutions for Humanitarian Response

*Angela Raven-Roberts*¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to review the need and current arguments for strengthening local institutions (including national authorities at the local level) for accountable disaster response and risk reduction. It begins with an outline of key definitions, roles and responsibilities that civil society and the civil service at local level play in implementing national legislation and responses to disasters. It then suggests ways in which specific, internationally agreed strategies and protocols regarding disaster risk reduction and response can also be implemented and 'owned' through these local systems. Major developments and challenges in global responses to disasters are also reviewed, including examples of ways in which local organisations have responded to crises situations. The article ends with recommendations for donors, the UN and the international non-government sector to strengthen their commitment and engagement with national organisations and authorities to help uphold their obligations and duties to protect their citizens against the outcomes of disasters through building resilience and enhancing risk reduction.

Keywords: Humanitarian support, NGOs, civil society, local government.

1 The humanitarian context and emerging trends

One of the most vigorous demands for 'change' emerging from the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) has been the forceful stand and advocacy from 'local' or national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations for a fundamental change in the whole context of their 'partnership' and engagement with international organisations. These demands have evolved from a history of felt grievances regarding inequality, monopoly of funding and 'decapacitating', as well as of perceived lack of recognition and apparent silencing by international actors of the history of local responses, local traditions and customs of mutual reciprocity and community-level coping systems and response (Bano 2012; Cairns 2014; Donini and Brown 2014).

The humanitarian narrative, it is claimed, privileges the external, 'expatriate' over the local, implements unequal salary scales within its own organisations between international and national staff, imposes heavy conditions for funding and uses the media to present stereotyped images of 'victims' of crises passively waiting for the saving hand of international aid agencies (Donini *et al.* 2008). Above all is the demand for recognition that the first-line responders are affected communities themselves, neighbours, impromptu volunteers and local organisations. In contrast, much external aid arrives late and, rather than complementing, scaling up and bolstering these initiatives, can distort or overwhelm them. International organisations set up their own complex architecture, bring in staff unfamiliar with the context of the environment and they monopolise the large amounts of funding that are mobilised through international appeals. The very principles and concepts of 'humanitarian aid' and 'Western charity' are being debated by academics in the global South (CICH 2016).

Changes that are being called for include redefining the partnerships, changing the funding modalities, clarifying the linkages between the donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and national intermediaries, more open 'listening' to the wishes and

needs of local organisations and more targeted and specific support for different levels of capacity building (Anderson, Brown and Jean 2012). These arguments are not new and have been part of a consistent critique since the evolution of ‘development’ and humanitarian studies, whereby analysts have highlighted the ways in which internal institutions and processes have been affected by external aid interventions (Hillhorst 2003; Austerre 2014).

2 Definitions

2.1 Humanitarian governance has been defined as the ‘specific legal, policy or institutional frameworks and processes that are guided by the principles of impartiality, neutrality, accountability and transparency and are implemented by governments and the network of actors in the humanitarian assistance sector so as to ensure need-appropriate life-saving interventions in times of natural or man-made disasters’ (Lautze *et al.* 2004). It is informed by key protocols and instruments such as international humanitarian and human rights laws that have been developed to influence state and non-state actors in crisis-affected areas to ensure the protection of the lives, dignity and livelihoods of affected populations. The principles behind these laws and protocols are to ensure that lives are saved, suffering is alleviated, and vulnerability is reduced for crisis-affected communities.

For the past 20 years, the UN and international actors have been campaigning to assist crisis-prone and vulnerable countries to develop viable disaster management systems. Beginning with the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) in the 1990s, followed by the International Strategy Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system, the Hyogo and the current Sendai global commitments and frameworks² have been made to ensure that all countries have systems in place to mitigate risks and hazards as well as to respond to disaster emergencies.

Many governments have established effective systems of disaster prevention, detection and response, such as those of India, China, Botswana, South Africa, Philippines, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Colombia, Vietnam, Mozambique and Iran. Many have also provided models for other countries currently establishing such systems. These principles and commitments spelt out by these UN-supported frameworks and re-enhanced in yearly international conferences, ask governments, INGOs, donors, private sector and other relevant stakeholders to commit themselves to supporting the development of risk reduction and other strategies, focusing especially on local institutions.

2.2 Local institutions. There is often confusion about what is meant by local institutions. Some other definitions include *civil society organisations (CSOs)*, *community-based organisations (CBOs)*, *not-for-profit* and *private voluntary organisations (PVOs)* and *grass-roots movements*. Within the humanitarian context these terms are used broadly to refer to two sets of social entities.

On one hand there are *nationally based more formal organisations* with specific welfare or protection mandates, management structures, funding mechanisms, programme implementation strategies and targeted beneficiaries. On the other there are more *community-based, semi-formal, voluntary institutions* or *solidarity-based networks*, where people are mobilised for social action through kinship-, household- or neighbourhood-based networks.

Examples of the first are national faith-based organisations, social welfare/development NGOs, diaspora associations and local foundations. These are characterised by and share similar organisational traits, i.e. they have official constitutions, boards, rules and regulations for membership and have legal recognition with the state where they located. Some of these may have wide national reach within the country or be centred in selected geographic regions, targeting specific vulnerable groups. In the second category are the village- and household-based community entities, also referred to as mutual aid associations or ‘informal’

institutions, functioning at various organisational and institutionalisation levels, such as credit and savings groups, work/livestock share groups, age set groups, and water-sharing groups (Esman and Uphoff 1984).

Distinguishing between these two categories is important in the context of the discussion of humanitarian aid partnerships. Whereas the current narrative on 'localisation' in the humanitarian sector refers to the collaboration or competition between the first category of international and national NGOs (referred to from now on as 'local' NGOs [LNGOs] or 'Southern' NGOs [SNGOs]) involved in the delivery of aid. The second category relates to the more specific ways in which community reciprocal and coping systems function to mediate livelihood strategies and the different ways in which households utilise resources or 'capitals' to manage risk and vulnerability. Though related, working with and supporting both sets of organisations requires nuanced approaches and entails different levels of engagement, and will involve a cascading of inputs and processes which will eventually promote risk reduction and enhance resiliency (Woolcock and Narayan 2000).

2.3 The civil service. The most common definition of the civil service is that of being the principle component of the state, which is responsible for implementing public policies formulated by government legislators. Its role is seen as providing efficient public service and use of resources; being responsive to citizens' demands, and being transparent and accountable to the public as well as to the government it serves. Thus it is also a key component of what development actors today are calling 'governance' systems that are essential in contributing to a state's management of development itself e.g. as per the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition: 'Governance embraces all of the methods – good and bad – that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems. Sound governance is therefore a subset of governance, wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to critical needs of society' (UNDP 1997).

3 Calls for partnership reform – national and international

The current call for a renewed partnership reform as expressed in the various global consultations that have led up to the WHS has been led by a consortium of national organisations which have developed a specific position paper and have organised a petition, 'Campaign for Change' (C4C), which is currently doing the rounds of partner agencies. Their key calls to international donors and NGOs are summarised below.

- Ensure participation of local actors and involvement of all stakeholders in the policies and terms of humanitarian response.
- Promote the planning of recovery and resilience in partnership with local authorities, national governments and local civil society.
- Enable local actors (SNGOs, local governments, and CSOs) to access funding to better anticipate and respond effectively to crises.
- Operationalise the 'People Centered Humanitarian Response' paradigm and, building on the commitments expressed in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, make INGO/SNGO capacity relationships a mandatory part of implementation and reporting requirements (ADESO 2015).

These calls are significant in that they imply a reconsideration of what power-sharing and engagement with local NGOs might mean. More specific requests are:

1. *Reforming aid financing:* Direct funding of SNGOs and agreement by donors to commit 20 per cent of their total humanitarian funding by 2020. SNGOs facilitate representation in countries where Common Humanitarian Funds/Emergency Response Funds are being applied.

2. *Dignity and flexibility*: Enable organisations to programme beyond immediate relief to recovery. Allow funds to be used to adapt to particular needs and people to choose what they want to use it for, funding not be tied to donor interests.
3. *Inclusive capacity development*: Diversify United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) by including representatives from national government and SNGOs. Hold coordination meetings in local languages. Enable SNGOs' direct involvement in response planning and fund dispersals.
4. *De-politicisation of aid*: Lift barriers caused by the World Trade Organization (WTO) legislation. Advocate to national governments to pass legislation that will allow NGOs to accept external funding.
5. *Accessibility*: Encourage use of local languages in proposal writing and reporting.
6. *Amplify voice of beneficiaries*: Encourage media to profile the activities of local responders and organisations. Enable individuals and community groups from crisis-affected countries to present their experiences at international conferences and conventions (ADESO 2015).

These issues have been arrived at on the basis of experiences and activities that national organisations have contributed to disaster relief, particularly over the last ten years.

4 Examples of response

4.1 Local response: Since the great Haiti earthquake and Tsunami crises international attention has increased and humanitarian reporting and analysis has focused on the ways in which local-level NGOs and community volunteers worked as first-line responders, helping to rescue neighbours, setting up food and water supply lines, administering first aid and even establishing and staffing medical centres (OCHA 2006; ALNAP 2011; DFID 2011; Grunwald and Binder 2010). The *Syria* crisis has peaked the profile of emerging local responses in the humanitarian sector with an estimated involvement of over 600 organisations that have sprung up to address the rapidly expanding humanitarian crises in all parts of both government- and opposition-held areas of the country (Svoboda and Pantuliano 2015).

At the same time the rapid expansion of communication technology has also helped to promote citizen participation in emergency relief operations, whereby *ad hoc* groups have been able to instantly mobilise help, provide information to search and rescue teams, identify at-risk localities or groups and provide other information such as registering names and locations to reunite separated families (OCHA 2012).

In situations where conflict has created no-go zones, international organisations have had to rely on remote management and aid dispersed through national organisations (see Overseas Development Institute [ODI] remote management reports). In the territory of *Somaliland* where the absence of political recognition of the state has meant that the territory is not able to access bilateral and multilateral aid, local organisations have been the main provider of welfare services. As Somalia itself has been increasingly compromised by the combination of conflict and the actions of anti-Western militias and political groups, INGOs and UN agencies have had to rely on a plethora of Somali NGOs, some with a history dating back to the 1980s (Abdillahi 1997). In *Sudan*, during one of the peaks of the crisis when international agencies were expelled from Darfur, local community organisations and NGOs were able to manage and run the entire emergency programme themselves.

Perhaps one of the best examples of long-term local response can be seen in the various *national societies of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement*. Despite the fact that they receive only limited amounts from the Red Cross Movement itself (Oxfam 2015), each country has an extensive network of volunteers and employees of national societies, who regularly respond to large- and small-scale emergencies, and take part in immunisation campaigns and mass publicity initiatives on various health and other risks affecting their communities. These can be categorised as being genuine local organisations even though

they are part of an externally funded movement. A portion of their funding is raised nationally. Nationally paid employees as well as volunteers staff them, and they have long-established histories in their countries (e.g. the Ethiopian Red Cross Society). Other countries also have various forms of civil protection or civil defence units which government agencies rely on for emergency response.

4.2 United Nations response in support to local institutions. The United Nations agencies, though mandated to focus more at the state and policy levels, have themselves long recognised the role of local organisations. Each agency has examples of initiatives they have supported in their humanitarian work.

- *UNICEF* has a specific policy and set of strategies for supporting and collaborating with local institutions on Child Protection in Emergencies. For example, local community groups in Somalia have been supported to maintain and run schools in the territory. LNGOs in Ethiopia are trained in nutrition survey methods and administering community-based therapeutic techniques. In Liberia LNGOs had direct funds to work on reintegration and tracing of families of demobilised child soldiers.
- The *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* works closely with migrants' associations in various countries as well as supporting diaspora groups to send individual experts to work in government ministries to train migration officials.
- The *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)* provides direct support to national NGOs working in the various refugee camps around the world;
- *UNDP*, through its Bureau of Crisis Recovery, has given training and direct support to many women's and youth organisations to take part in peace conferences and other activities, to enhance social cohesion in the post-crisis period.
- Both the *Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)* and the *World Food Programme (WFP)* support strategies to promote livelihoods and food security and they rely on national NGOs to deliver emergency food supplies to camps and other affected communities. FAO supports farmer cooperatives, initiates community-based risk reduction and resilience programmes and works with pastoralist communities to implement livelihood and literacy programmes.

5 Operational parameters to be taken into consideration

5.1 Cultural and historical sensitivities. Though the C4C consortium of national organisations (see Section 3) seems to particularly focus on the sharing of financial resources and the need to build the organisations' own capacities through this process, it would be important to widen the basis of a strengthened relationship between national and international NGOs by considering other aspects that have strained the relationships. For example, one of the main areas of misunderstanding or misconception is the lack of information and appreciation of the history of local responses that international organisations sometimes show when working in a country. Countries, specifically those undergoing conflict, are often portrayed as if they had no history or mechanism of aid or protection systems of their own. Humanitarian intervention, its principles and mass funding campaigns are presented as very Western concepts and the idea of charities or welfare organisations as non-existent until the emergence of the major bloc of Western NGOs (Donini *et al.* 2008).

For example, humanitarian histories until recently took no account of the kinds of solidarity movements that developed in the Caribbean and among African American communities in protest against the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia or of the welfare activities of independent African churches (often referred to as 'Ethiopian or Zionist') during the colonial period in that country. During days of Band Aid and the millions of dollars that were raised for Ethiopia there was no mention either of Ethiopians' own efforts to mobilise support nor any historical references to the support of Ethiopia to victims of the Turkish massacres of Armenians, its welcoming of fellow Orthodox Russians fleeing the revolution and its support

to refugees from anti-colonial movements in the rest of Africa (Lautze, Raven-Roberts and Erkinch 2009; Donini and Brown 2014).

5.2 Knowledge sharing, intellectual leadership and training. Centres of expertise for humanitarian research and training have mostly been located in the West. These are staffed by personnel who have come through the ranks of aid organisations and who make the transition or 'graduation' from agency to university and then are also able to use the networks and connections they had developed with donor agencies to obtain funding and continued consultancy opportunities for themselves and their organisations. Despite the fact that national staff of organisations and national civil servants involved in country disaster management institutions have many years of deep experience in management, research for assessment, training and negotiation, they have very little support to either acquire more credentials, take part in 'practitioner expert programmes', write their memoirs or journal papers/books, or to be employed as lecturers and visiting professors in universities. Research agendas are set in the West, led by expatriate 'experts' and published and circulated within a very closed community of donor and international organisations. Students on practicums or internships, and volunteers, in a similar fashion pursue a one-way path, going to crisis-affected communities with little chance of reciprocal exchanges of students and interns or of experiencing work in international NGOs (CERAH papers; CPWG University papers, etc.).

Until recently donors had not invested much in building the curricula of national universities or in ensuring that locally based consultancy groups had a fair chance to bid for evaluations and assessments. Knowledge of regional issues, local languages and academic connections seems not to be highly valued even by international relief workers. Training materials are very generic and international organisations, citing budget constraints, have no consistent method for providing even the most basic background information on culture and history, or language immersion courses, for the expatriates they send to particular countries. The call for dignity, flexibility and inclusive engagement also means providing support to local knowledge centres and research bodies, the integration of local perspectives on the humanitarian encounter, and more systemised and mandatory training to expatriates on local histories and culture (James 2010).

5.3 Relationship between local government and local institutions. The conversation regarding support to nationally based institutions must also include the role of national authorities and the state. In places where the state is weak or non-existent, the roles of civil society, national and international NGOs are obviously paramount. In most states the space for, and relationship with, national and international NGOs will vary according to their history and levels of participation. The state acts as the 'enabler' that can both promote or constrain the extent to which civil society can fill gaps in service delivery and take part in development and humanitarian activities. The relationship and potential for engagement between international and national organisations is also predicated on the overall relationship and status of NGOs and the state in any given country. The C4C makes several references of support also to national governments as well as to LINGOs. Given the sometimes contentious relationships that can develop between governments and humanitarian organisations over issues such as access, assessment figures and definitions of types of emergency, it will be important that international engagement with the national enables a more harmonised and universal approach to these issues.

5.4 Relationship between the state and humanitarian actors. The relationship between the affected state and humanitarian community has itself been the subject of several studies and initiatives (Harvey 2009) and there is a collective recognition that as they are the primary sources of citizen protection, international aid should serve to fill the gaps in their systems and support when their capabilities are overwhelmed. National governments have a role in ensuring protection and applying international standards to local crisis situations. Local

government and the civil service are major players in meeting the needs of their people and acting as conduits and managers of services that their national governments provide. The main encounter between community-based NGOs and the state is usually at the field, local level. It is here where the NGOs' employees meet with and negotiate with state officials, extension services and the civil service writ large.

6 The way ahead

6.1 Developing common principles and a common vision. The development of International Humanitarian Law has given rise to the development of codes of conduct, charters and other standards and principles to govern the activities and personnel of agencies in the field. These were developed specifically following the outcomes of the Rwanda emergency when there was a concerted effort by humanitarian agencies to establish codes of conduct, standards and verification indicators to ensure quality benchmarks for technical programme sectors and human resource management and care, as well as processes for engagement and communication with the community. The most common of these standards are the Red Cross Code of Conduct, the Sphere Minimum Standards for Humanitarian Response, The People in Aid Standard and the HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management (now reformed as the Common Humanitarian Standard). Over the years other standards and guidelines have also been developed, targeting particular issues such as gender, livestock, education in emergencies, and the enhancement of specific communication messaging and better use of media and IT. New or improved standards and guidelines emerge as new issues (along with their lessons learnt) arise from each emergency.

Implementation, knowledge and use of, and adherence to, these standards vary widely across agencies and, while some organisations have set up voluntary self-regulatory bodies, there is no commonly accepted enforcement mechanism to make sure that standards are met. The situation is equally similar within national disaster management institutions and civil protection units. The lack of familiarity and common acceptance of these codes can also become a source of misunderstanding if partners are not in basic agreement over the foundational principles they are both planning for.

For governments anxious to ensure that their citizens are getting the best of humanitarian practice from both national and international actors, it would be a natural move to ensure their own oversight and quality control by requiring that all agencies working in this sector adhere to these internationally accepted norms as well as their own nationally derived standards. Ensuring therefore that all their relevant public administration and civil service personnel are themselves knowledgeable about these standards would also go a long way towards helping national- and local-level authorities negotiate with NGOs and other humanitarian actors in the field context. Advocating for, and tracking adherence to, these standards, as well as providing support to their dissemination at the local level, and training for national authorities, would all form part of the key role and contribution of national NGOs.

6.2 Addressing imbalances between national and international NGOs. National and international NGOs involved in development and humanitarian activities have themselves become sites of research for a variety of disciplines ranging from anthropology, development and environmental studies to political science, organisational and business management (Korten 1990; Hobart 1997; Smith 2013; Schuller and Farmer 2012; Lewis 2014).

The power imbalances operating in the international engagement between national and international organisations is obviously a well-understood argument. Other issues affecting these relationships relate to the nature of local organisations, their own histories and degrees of legitimacy, credibility, accountability and representation of the communities they are embedded in, as well as their funding sources, ideologies, outreach and mandate consistency. Issues concerning their own capacity and outreach are additional factors to be considered. These issues are not only important for the external agencies that the local

organisations are partnering, but have also been of concern to many national governments (Shivji 2008).

Current challenges faced by national organisations stem from a range of perceived suspicions over their human rights approaches, their partners and influences and reliance on external funding. Governments accuse them of becoming 'rentier' (briefcase) operations with no real constituency in the community and cite their inability or unwillingness to work with government or support government development priorities, and also their siphoning away of professionals from technical ministries and the civil service (Hearn 2007).

Some of these issues have also been raised by international organisations as factors that prevent them evolving a true partnership with national NGOs (Oxfam 2015). The question of corruption and capacity to manage the large amounts of aid that humanitarian programmes entail is also a complicating factor. International organisations have taken many years to evolve and institutionalise themselves. The current trend of amalgamated/corporate international organisations commanding millions of dollars of resources and employing thousands of personnel has resulted in the creation of very powerful and influential entities for which genuine power-sharing is likely to be very difficult despite good intentions.

6.3 Reframing relationships between national and international partner. Over the last two years there has been a growing consensus amongst INGOs that their own relationships and approaches to national partners needs to change. A number of self-reflections and reviews have identified the key issues and recognition the unequal funding that they themselves are benefiting from and the unsatisfactory levels of capacity development that has emerged so far. Other reports have also presented case examples of innovative ways in which these partnerships have been supported and relationships improved (Christoplos 2005; Grey and Ceruti 2013; McGuinness 2012; ODI 2015).

There is also a recognition that while NGOs have a major role to play in situations where there is weak or no government services, they must work to support government. There is no disagreement that it is the sovereign responsibility of governments to be the first-line responders to crises in their countries. The concept of crises must encompass not just security issues but also all other hazards that could threaten the lives and livelihoods of their citizens. A few years ago Alex De Waal, in a seminal piece of writing on the failures of the international community to respond to famines and other crises, called for national and international governments and all humanitarian and development actors to adopt an 'anti-famine political contract' to implement a social protection system and mechanisms that would ensure that all were protected against hunger and starvation in times of crises.

6.4 Strengthening organisational accountability. The 'People Centered Approach' coming from the WHS debates is a renewed appeal for political as well as organisational accountability and the institutionalisation of consistent and predictable responses to crises. There is a danger, though, that the 'localisation' debate gets fixated on the issue of sharing money and neglects the core challenge that still faces the planet. If there is to be real collaboration and partnership between the local and the global, it is essential to ensure that countries have institutionalised and reliable systems in place to prevent, prepare for and respond in contextually appropriate ways to the myriad risks and hazards that can threaten communities. Strengthening systems requires embedding preparedness, scenario planning and response at all levels of national policy and planning as well as ensuring that there is sufficient capacity at local level in terms of both trained and resourced organisations, and skills and competencies of disaster-management professionals.

National NGOs can play an important role in contextualising and translating international principles into the national system as well as on a more specific community level, linking traditional local institutions to risk reduction and preparedness policies endorsed and implemented by national governments as well as international donors.

6.5 Promoting trust and transparency. The open challenge and demand from national organisations has reverberated through the international system, and organisations have been active in profiling their own responses and declaring new modalities of engagement. The emerging consensus rests on a commitment to increase funding to national governments as well as national NGOs, and strengthening capacity development for both sectors at the technical levels as well as for organisational, funding and accountability processes.

The recommendations of the C4C community have to be studied in detail for their implications and to lay the parameters for the new engagement. They are not just guideposts for the creation of copycat institutions based on the current INGO formats but a demand for a genuine transfer of power. The creation of trust between agencies requires recognition of local organisations in their own right and acceptance of their representations and definitions of need and response. Transparency requires an opening up of the closed loop between donor and international organisations and the application of the same frameworks of accountability as are being called for in respect of national institutions.

7 Recommendations

The C4C has charted a map that indicates the way forward and what transformation would involve. It outlines concrete recommendations on changing ‘subcontractual’ arrangements and sets pointers for a new relationship that should move beyond patronage and paternalism to a partnership of equals. Supporting the six sets of themes identified in the C4C charter would entail additional steps that donors and INGO partners could support to strengthen ‘bridging’ relationships to institutionalise enhanced contributions of national NGOs at the local level.

7.1 Direct funding to national partners: Building on the call for direct funding, ensure that funding can be targeted to the subnational level where specific programmes involving national NGOs and decentralised government services are/should be operating.

7.2 Rapid disbursement funding linked to Early Warning systems: Advocate with national governments to enable access and availability of local funds at subnational levels for rapid disbursements. Advocate that the availability and ‘triggering’ of these funds are closely tied to functioning and institutionalised Early Warning systems.

7.3 Local level preparedness planning: Ensure regular and joint preparedness and scenario planning at the local level with all national partners from community members to local extension workers, local government and national NGO partners.

7.4 Training in humanitarian principles: Accelerate joint training of national authorities and NGOs in humanitarian principles, laws, assessment methodologies, and technical and ethical approaches to emergency and recovery approaches. Ensure integration of local perspectives and applicability of national ‘social welfare’ and traditional approaches to protection and community cohesion.

7.5 Training and research: Support the integration of disaster response, disaster risk reduction and preparedness issues into curricula of civil service colleges and other relevant academic institutions at national levels. Support local research institutions to develop cadres of evaluators and other research teams that can monitor and take part in inter-agency and inter-donor assessments, impact assessments, evaluations, etc.

7.6 Archiving of research and related reports: Ensure that all research, and other assessments and related reports from both international and national NGOs, are submitted to relevant national archives as part of key documentation on history and social change affecting local communities.

7.7 Training of international aid workers: Widen curricula and training of international aid workers and curricula in 'Western' universities to include local/national perspectives and histories of humanitarian approaches.

7.8 Induction training of international staff on country-specific environment: Advocate for all INGOs/UN agencies to conduct mandatory induction training to all international staff going to specific countries on background history, culture, local perspectives on aid, etc.

7.9 Exchange visits and training between national and international staff: Support exchange visits and peer-to-peer 'on-job training' of national staff of local government and national NGOs, to enable them to spend time with peer colleagues in international organisations as ways of developing mutual understandings of management, coordination and other issues related to disaster risk management.

7.10 Training of senior managers: Increase numbers of national government and LNGO executives, senior management and technical experts in cluster trainings and UN coordination/'leadership' trainings.

7.11 Media coverage of local crisis responses: Advocate to local and international press agencies to profile local responses to crisis response, and profile human interest stories from the perspective of affected households regarding their own risk and vulnerability management strategies.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework) is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action. It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly following the 2015 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

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B.2.3 Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Empowering Women and Girls

Nicola Dahrendorf¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore what has and has not worked in regard to empowering women and girls in the context of working on peace processes and developing policies on sexual and gender-based violence. My experience suggests that in the majority of cases women and girls are given a notional voice but actual participation is rarely a reality. More intelligent and circumspect policy and programme work around gender sensitivity and inclusiveness needs to be crafted to overcome silos and to allow for more meaningful inclusion of women and girls in humanitarian programmes and political fora. Five blockages are identified which need to be addressed to bring about concrete results. Finally some emerging lessons are identified.

Keywords: Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), peace processes, conflict, Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), terrorism, post-conflict.

1 Introduction

The perspective offered in this article is based on my work dealing with different aspects of addressing gender-based violence mostly in Rwanda, former Zaire and then the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti and Somalia. I worked on two different aspects related to sexual violence and gender. First I focused on sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers, and the issue of institutional accountability. I led the investigations into the disturbing scandal of sexual exploitation and abuse that engulfed the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC – a subject that has resurfaced now in a prominent and uncomfortable way for the UN with the current scandal around sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and other peacekeepers in the Central African Republic.

The second aspect was that I developed a programme and a strategy for addressing sexual and gender-based violence among the population, especially in eastern DRC. My emphasis was on the need to explore further the cultural and political basis of extreme levels of violence and also to challenge widely held normative assumptions on gender and violence, by ‘unpacking’ and questioning the way that the notion of gender is used in a political and institutional context. From my viewpoint, sexual and gender-based violence is not only a gender issue but is rooted in a complex culture of violence, with strong political and ethnic overtones and the complex psychology of trauma and pressures placed on communities who have lived with conflict over a long period.

This article is **structured** along the following lines: In *Rhetoric and reality* (Section 2), I highlight the disconnect between the global policy framework and its impact – or lack thereof – on the ground. The legal and policy framework for *framing gender sensitivity* (Section 3) in a humanitarian and conflict context is well established, but I identify there five *blockages* (Section 4) to bringing about concrete action, namely (i) view of gender sensitivity as a non-political technical fix; (ii) insufficient understanding of the anthropology on the ground; (iii) the tendency to talk about cross-cutting while still programming in silos – with a particular focus on sexual and gender-based violence; (iv) gender sensitivity is insufficiently integrated in peace processes; and (v) political sensitivity trumps gender sensitivity – challenging

conventional assumptions of women and girls as passive victims. In identifying *emerging lessons* (Section 5), I outline, *inter alia*, that one size does not fit all, national and large-scale programmes need to happen concurrently with localised projects, and more research is required around opportunities, relevant work and evidence of what women and girls actually need.

2 Rhetoric and reality – challenging notions

The notion of ‘empowering women and girls’ has been a buzzword in policies and programmes for too many years. There is broad international consensus that empowerment of women and girls is important for an equitable society and is a fundamental building block for stronger economies, to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and improve the quality of life for families and communities. Development programmes promote female empowerment by offering opportunities for leadership and participation. This is done by delivering basic literacy, numeracy and vocational training, for example in South Sudan; or by promoting women’s leadership in marginalised communities in Sri Lanka; or by improving the economic empowerment of women in Afghanistan by developing their business skills and increasing their employability; or educating family and community members on the important role of women in the work place, in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

Influential donors also exert pressure for all proposals for funds and programmes to include a cross-cutting gender element and to ensure that the role of women and girls is recognised across programmes.

Sexual and gender-based violence has also attracted major international attention and led to high-profile initiatives, such as the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), launched by the UK in 2014.² Under its aegis, a number of protocols have been developed aimed at addressing a culture of impunity to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice and also to improve support to survivors of sexual violence.³ Campaigning is also an important facet to increase political will and the capacity of states to do more. The PSVI has raised awareness and an urgency to commit to prevention on a political level and in a more systemic way.

As a consequence, the public profile of sexual and gender-based violence as an intractable problem has increased substantially, in part through this PSVI and also through celebrity involvement. This high visibility has also led to oversimplification and does not take into consideration the complexity of the issue. For example, the recent two-year so-called ‘anniversary’ of the kidnapping of the Chibok Girls in north-east Nigeria by a Boko Haram group in April 2014, has generated great media attention on the back of the ‘Bring Back Our Girls’ campaign that featured a host of well-known personalities two years ago.⁴ Yet little attention is paid to the context or origins of the problem around Boko Haram, such as historic social exclusion of Muslims in north-east Nigeria where Boko Haram originated and the economic and political marginalisation of communities. Furthermore, numbers are much higher, as to date a total of around 2,000 girls and boys have been kidnapped and held by various Boko Haram groups (Human Rights Watch 2014).⁵ Most importantly, little is known in the public domain of the whereabouts of the girls or indeed if they are still alive. Some have argued that the heightened media attention has inadvertently undermined the safety and potential release of the girls. This raises questions over the manner of conducting advocacy campaigns and the need for a more nuanced approach.

There is a disconnect between the rhetoric and ‘policy-speak’ of donors, international agencies and the UN Security Council, and the intricate reality on the ground. For example, in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), a number of meetings discussed how to improve civic engagement of women in humanitarian emergencies and peace processes. For the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,⁶ a workshop developed concrete recommendations on how commitments to gender equality, women’s

empowerment and women's rights could actually be realised and fed into the WHS. In preparation for this meeting an online survey was conducted on how humanitarian action could be held more accountable in meeting women's and girls' needs.⁷ Individuals of national civil society organisations made contributions, as did non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in gender equality and humanitarian action. Some of the recommendations were that: women and girls need to be involved at every stage of humanitarian action, and not as an after-thought or 'box-ticking' exercise. One respondent emphasised the need to 'take women into account from scratch'. Also, the need to 'consult with women's groups prior to interventions' and that 'consultations should be brief, efficient and practical.' Another challenge identified was that the prevailing belief system in affected communities is essentially patriarchal in nature, and that this is also reflected by the attitude of partners in humanitarian action. The survey requested that donors make gender equality programming and indicators mandatory across the programming cycle. A vital call to international agencies and donors was *to actually empower, rather than create more dependency*. This could be done through concrete activities such as livelihoods training for women and access to land and credit.

3 Framing gender sensitivity in a humanitarian and conflict context

International legal and policy developments over the past decade have been effective in raising female empowerment and participation at the political rhetorical level but have had limited impact either in practice or on women's and girls' actual lives. The international framework for empowering women and girls is now well established through the UN Security Council and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. So far, the Security Council has adopted four additional resolutions on WPS.⁸ These resolutions taken together comprise the WPS thematic agenda of the Security Council, and the international security policy framework. The obligations in the resolutions extend from the international to the local level, as well as from intergovernmental bodies, such as the United Nations, to national-level governments and civil society. As the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council is now obliged to systematically address gender and women's rights in its work in policymaking. It is obliged to implement all of its resolutions on WPS. Given that the Security Council agenda consists of both geographic situations and thematic issues, WPS is one of the largest thematic agenda items on which the Security Council holds annual open debates, *ad hoc* briefings, and adopts resolutions and presidential statements.

One of the consequences of the historic adoption of UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on 31 October 2000 was that it highlighted how women and girls have different experiences of conflict and contribute to peace-building in different ways. It also emphasised that action needs to be taken to protect women and girls and that more needs to be done to inspire and motivate communities, institutions and individuals to allow women to participate in significant ways to finding solutions to conflict and maintaining peace. At the policy and programme design level, calls grew for 'a greater integration of a gender perspective in peace building and related efforts' (G7 2015).

There are numerous cross-cutting agendas in the international arena that are relevant to UNSCR 1325, in particular, the agendas around Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), (UNSCRs 1261, 1314 and subsequent), the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (UNSCRs 1265, 1296 and subsequent) and applicability of International Humanitarian Law; the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as initiated in 2001 and 2005 and invoked by the Security Council in a number of resolutions and Presidential Statements; the legal framework of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW committee meetings in 2014.

Altogether, gender and conflict is not a 'stand-alone' topic but needs to be closely aligned with other aspects of strategic development and policies. It has to be framed within the broader framework of the Protection of Civilians agenda and linked in with and creating entry points to other issues, in particular, sexual exploitation and abuse, conduct and discipline,⁹ and international human rights and humanitarian law.

There are important linkages with other substantive areas, in particular with child protection or trafficking. Gender and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) are generally not perceived as central to military and civilian training and Security Council discussions, and too often, these briefings are delivered to tick a box. A number of UN Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and Police Contributing Countries are themselves at different stages of their own internal security sector reform processes. Some TCCs and Security Council members, such as the UK, through development and stabilisation programmes, fund much of this either directly or indirectly. Research to date has shown that in order to address gender, especially in conflict situations in a meaningful way, a major shift in terms of culture and mindset is needed across military and other uniformed institutions in a number of UN TCCs. There is currently an under-explored avenue to use security sector reform for training peacekeeping troops and to ensure that gender and conflict is integrated into this process.¹⁰

4 Blockages to bringing about concrete action

Several blockages need to be tackled to turn the participation and empowerment of women and girls (as originally outlined in SCRs 1325 and 2122) into a real and viable plan for action with concrete and sustainable impact on the lives of women and girls. These blockages relate to:

4.1 Blockage 1 View of gender sensitivity as a non-political technical fix

For donor efforts to be gender-sensitive, they tend to be limited to the project level, seeking technical fixes to political problems. Yet gender sensitivity in its fullest sense is fundamentally a political endeavour. Therefore, rather than being at odds with the growing donor discourse to think and work politically, there is significant overlap between the two agendas (political and gender/conflict). There is growing recognition of the concept of gender sensitivity in conflict situations and that policy commitments to gender sensitivity at respective headquarters are not being adequately applied in the field due to a critical lack of incentives. Thus gender-blind programming remains widespread.

4.2 Blockage 2 Insufficient attention is being paid to the 'anthropology on the ground'

One approach to bring women's and girls' empowerment closer to reality is by applying an anthropological lens. Contextual analysis rather than assumptions about gender should inform interventions. Good conflict analysis is sensitive to relations of power, including gender. This necessitates understanding the roles and relationships between men and women, between age groups and corresponding power relations and private and public spheres. There is also a need to be aware of traditional power dynamics and how they have changed over time. It also means understanding the spheres of influence and how women can participate in decision-making.

When I worked in the DRC in efforts to coordinate the implementation of programmes to assist women who had been violated in exceptionally brutal ways, I found myself in a position where I sat in humanitarian Protection Cluster meetings. Sexual violence and abuse were being discussed and there was general consensus that more needed to be done and women were the victims. At the time, very few programmes were actually focused on addressing the issue in either a strategic or a concrete practical way. None addressed the issue of prevention and profiling of perpetrators. Given the precarious security, access to affected communities was difficult to negotiate. When we were able to visit communities, any

meetings and interviews with women and girls were time-bound because of safety reasons. Hence the main humanitarian players knew little about communities, their make-up and how conflict had affected or undermined the social fibre and values.

Sexual violence happens as a result of power imbalances, and is deeply rooted in inequality and discrimination. To stop rape, the unequal status of women and children, especially girls, in relation to men must be addressed. Understanding gender and how it links to peace and conflict in a particular time and place is key to designing inclusive and effective programmes and peace-building interventions. For example, gender-sensitive analysis can help to identify and understand similarities and differences in the experiences of different women, men and gender minorities in conflict-affected areas. It also helps in understanding how relations of power are produced or reproduced by social processes, such as peace talks, and other peace and security decision-making processes. These often exclude women but also more generally those who do not hold power directly or indirectly, including civil society organisations.

Women often play key roles in relation to peace and conflict but many of their contributions go unnoticed, or are undervalued and unsupported. This is because they do not fit neatly into existing notions of peace-building. A gender-sensitive conflict analysis can shed light on these efforts and may help to identify obstacles to participation in official peace and security decision-making. It is also important to recognise how gender norms may be driving violence. Attention paid to gender and violence is often focused on sexual violence. Yet other gendered factors such as militarised notions of masculinity also may play a role in driving or even causing armed conflicts.

4.3 Blockage 3 Tendency to talk about ‘cross cutting’ while still programming in silos

Many donor and agencies’ initiatives at national and local levels aim to address the complexity of sexual violence through national programming, localised projects and advocacy at different levels. A major challenge consists of the difficulty in being able to obtain a comprehensive picture in most emergency and conflict situations of who is doing what, where. For example, in the DRC, the large number of actors and the inability of being able to identify both the precise role and the expertise of each actor with regard to sexual violence hindered programming. Some actors adopted a more holistic approach to prevention and response, whereas others focused on one sector only, primarily health and justice.

In South Kivu I met with a group of women who had sought refuge in a ‘safe house’ – a small overcrowded construction, clean and well run by a local woman who had originally taken in two women and their children, born of rape, as they had been ostracised in the neighbouring community. Six months later, there were 15 people and the place was overcrowded. At the time, little support was being provided to her, except for occasional visits by International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates. In part because of her remote and insecure location but also because of her work, we had to be discreet as she was protecting women and their sons and daughters not only from militias but from members of the Congolese army. ‘There are spies everywhere’ she would say.¹¹ There are many angles to this encounter – one important lesson for us was that the only way to assist was to cut across the silos of traditional humanitarian support. In designing programmes, we needed to develop a more holistic approach, which encompassed integrated support for health needs, legal requirements and psychosocial support, while finding ways of protecting the community as a whole.

The cross-cutting aspect of addressing sexual violence is often hard to incorporate in programming. Furthermore, most emergency, conflict and post-conflict scenarios have widely varying coordination mechanisms in place that affect the pooling and management of funds.

There was a clear need in the DRC, as in other situations such as South Sudan, to harmonise programmes, especially with regard to training, sensitisation, advocacy initiatives and reinforcing capacity within each sector of intervention.

Conflict magnifies and exacerbates the everyday violence that girls and women live with in times of peace. During acute emergencies and conflict, children and women face the constant threat of rape, sexual exploitation, trafficking and forced pregnancy as well as the violence and instability that affect their entire community. It is now well documented that in Bosnia and Rwanda, as in many other conflicts, rape was used specifically as a weapon of war. Rape may be treated as a reward for soldiers. In lieu of salaries, looting and raping is often seen as a legitimate payment for those involved in fighting. In most conflict settings, children and women are subject to sexual violence by military forces, by police and security officials, local leaders, fellow refugees or displaced persons, or members of the host community.

In the midst of conflict, the sexual victimisation of women and children has more dramatic consequences. There are estimates that two in three women who were raped as part of the genocidal violence in Rwanda are HIV-positive. Many women and girls bore children as a result of these rapes. In addition to the psychological impact of becoming pregnant from rape, women who carry their pregnancies to term have extremely high rates of maternal and infant mortality. Some resort to unsafe abortions.

Furthermore, the end of conflict does not signal an end to violence for children and women. Post-conflict periods are characterised by rapid increases in prostitution and a rise in domestic violence. Prostitution leaves girls and women extremely vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. In the struggle to survive economically, exchanging sex for food, money or protection may be the only available option. In post-conflict or post-disaster chaos, traffickers thrive on vulnerable targets. After the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, trafficking to and from the Balkans increased.

There is overwhelming evidence of a substantial increase in domestic violence in post-war settings. In Cambodia, in the mid-1990s, some 75 per cent of women were victims of domestic violence, often at the hands of men who kept the small arms and light weapons that they had used during the war.

The absence of reliable **data** on incidents of sexual violence poses an additional obstacle to interventions and programming in emergency, conflict and post-conflict settings. To allow for a better platform to analyse trends and actual and potential hotspots, reliable data is required. This will permit a clearer indication of the prevalence and response to sexual violence, providing details on incidents, victims and perpetrators, and on judicial, medical and psychosocial responses, as well as reintegration and protection.

The **stigma** attached to survivors applies in all situations, but seems to be particularly pronounced in conflict situations where communities and local support structures are already fractured. It means that survivors often feel that there is no one to turn to. The role of protection-mandated agencies is particularly relevant.¹² The impact of sexual violence needs to be mitigated through post-rape care, including access to health care, psychosocial care, safety and whenever possible access to legal redress. Women's groups and other local groups are important in helping survivors and in providing community-based protection mechanisms, but they need support. These groups offer a community network for survivors and can provide vital information. If girls and women realise that there is a social network to turn to for help, they are less inclined to avoid seeking treatment.

Survivors of sexual violence are victimised again by the shame and they lose family and community. They need **educational and economic opportunities**, so as not to be forced to turn to prostitution. Access to income-generating and micro-credit schemes can help in

rehabilitation and reintegration back to communities. Sadly the same myths and ‘victim blaming’ that exist in the larger community also exist among health care workers. Challenging these biases is critically important. In the DRC, for example, training for health workers is being piloted on a small scale, on care and support for rape survivors, which is designed to challenge attitudes as well as to provide technical guidance on the physical treatment of rape.

Sexual violence has devastating **health** care consequences. The provision of support to hospitals is vital, to provide the best possible care to girls and women suffering from fistulae and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Ensuring that health care to survivors of rape is provided in a non-judgmental manner is a vital part of this intervention.

Root causes. Sexual violence happens in conflict because it is allowed to happen. Until perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes, the violence will continue. It is critical to bring about an end to impunity. In Sierra Leone and East Timor, technical assistance was provided for the involvement of children in truth and justice-seeking mechanisms. A relationship was established that included a formal agreement with the International Criminal Court. A more concerted effort could be made to apply such experiences directly to cases of sexual violence. The importance of post-conflict truth and justice-seeking mechanisms has increased in recent years, and is likely to continue to do so with the International Criminal Court. A stronger involvement in and development of the expertise of humanitarian and protection agencies in this area is urgently needed.

It is now a well-established finding of post-conflict reviews, lessons learned and research, commencing with the Brahimi Report in 2001, that establishing **the rule of law** is critical.¹³ Certain measures can achieve a more comprehensive and far-reaching sense of justice: national law reform; support for the establishment of a judicial system in conformity with international human rights standards; gender and child rights training for judges, lawyers, police and social workers. To illustrate, in North Kivu, a province in eastern DRC, social workers have been trained to assist with the reintegration of rape victims into communities and to help transform attitudes that blame victims for what has been done to them. Women’s groups are vital: they can provide a safe place to encourage rape survivors to speak out, which can serve as a bedrock for changing social attitudes about sexual violence.

4.4 Blockage 4 Gender sensitivity is insufficiently integrated within peace processes

Women often play vital roles in conflict situations by mediating at the community level. But many of their contributions go unnoticed, or are undervalued and not supported. This is because they take place outside the available social sphere, or do not fit neatly into ideas of peace-building. For example, there have been long-standing campaigns included in the negotiations around the Syrian peace process, which have only borne fruit in the recent round of peace talks in Geneva. A more nuanced type of analysis can shed light on these issues and can help in identifying obstacles to participation in official security and decision-making fora.

Gender sensitivity was a major feature of the Fragile States Principles of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). This was notably in commitments (1) to take context as starting point; and (2) to do no harm. While potentially supportive, an analysis of peace processes shows that peace agreements rarely contain an explicit and broad commitment to gender (Durham and O’Byrne 2010; Pfaffenholz 2015; Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces 2014). The box is ticked but there is no politically viable implementation plan for inclusion.

Women’s participation is not well reflected in political and economic deals. One example is the New Deal for Somalia endorsed in 2013.¹⁴ This is an overarching framework setting out

peace-building and state-building goals that took forward an international consensus that progress on the Millennium Development Goals in fragile states was impossible without achieving peace and security. The fundamental premise was that in order to improve the management of international assistance, the Somali Federal Government with international partners decided to 'improve its ability to govern and make development more responsive to the needs and concerns of its citizens.' The compact, which was at the heart of the New Deal, represents an action plan for 2014–16. However, gender issues and social inclusion were poorly reflected. New discussions and drafting is currently under way for the development of the next three-year National Development Plan 2017–20 and greater pressure is now being placed on more proactive integration of improving civic engagement of women in all sectors, with a target set of 30 per cent, and of improving educational opportunities for girls.

Somali women's organisations have a powerful voice. The Somali head of a Kenyan NGO *Adeso* has challenged the lack of funding for local NGOs, especially women's groups.¹⁵ She is now leading a loud rebuke over the 2 per cent that local organisations currently receive directly in terms of humanitarian funding. She argues that small local organisations do most of the work; women are invited and brought to international conferences, yet when they return they have no funding, no support and no voice. This is not new, given the range of assessments and evaluations that have challenged international agencies for failing to put local responders at the centre of any crisis response while also receiving the smallest share of funding.

4.5 Blockage 5 Political objectives trump gender sensitivity

Concerns over gender sensitivity are misinterpreted or even overridden when **countering violent extremism** – above all at the level of policy dialogue. One example is around perceptions of women involved in terrorist activity where the dominant narrative of female involvement in terrorist violence is one of coercion. This argument is supported by high incidents of kidnappings of girls and women, the testimony of escapees (from ISIS or Boko Haram) who report egregious physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their captors. Human rights groups have reported that some girls and women appear to have been 'brainwashed'.¹⁶

Female suicide bombers, especially girls, are an increasing phenomenon, something I encountered when working in north-east Nigeria. In June 2014, Nigeria experienced its first attack by female suicide bombers. Since then, Boko Haram has increasingly used girls and women as operatives in suicide attacks on soft targets. Female suicide bombers used to serve a tactical purpose: they are effective smugglers and rouse less suspicion while moving in civilian areas. These attacks have a high propaganda value and are more likely to attract sensationalised media reports than attacks by men. In addition, some female bombers were children as young as seven years old, incapable of granting informed consent to participate in such an act.

Conventional assumptions are made that suggests that terrorist groups resort to the use of female operatives when they are at their weakest. For example, Boko Haram's spike in female suicide bombings could indicate that Boko Haram is experiencing difficulty in recruiting from its historic support base – young, uneducated, unemployed men from Nigeria's north-east. However, there are increasing sources for so-called ISIS and Boko Haram, for example, that suggest most women are acting voluntarily and that martyrdom is an acceptable option. They become suicide bombers to seek revenge for the deaths of their spouses or parents, as well as for reunification in the afterlife. Given the often dire human rights and humanitarian situations in many of their places of origin, there is some evidence to suggest that many girls and women feel that there is little prospect of a return to civilian life. Those who choose to return are being ostracised and would be culturally ineligible for marriage.

There is growing evidence to suggest that female support for terrorist/insurgency activities has been understated. Women were reportedly converting female family members; some women had donated their daughters to carry out suicide bombings – for example, in 2014, several members of a ‘female Boko Haram cell’ were apprehended in Abuja, charged with recruiting female members.

The two narratives of female involvement in terrorist activities – passive victims versus active participants – are not mutually exclusive. Both reflect the complexity of gender in insurgencies, and should contribute insight into post-conflict policy. Treating women and girls solely as passive victims can lead to an incomplete understanding of conflicts and inadequate peace processes. Women may also be political actors with grievances that find resonance with extremists. As important sources of community knowledge, women are uniquely positioned to build or disrupt ideological momentum for political movements. Hence the argument that greater research for gender-inclusive peace-building strategies could help diminish support for extremists.

5 Emerging lessons

There is still much to learn about the types of interventions that reflect the needs on the ground, challenge conventional assumptions on gender and actually empower rather than just tick boxes. Based on my experience and case histories, a number of lessons are emerging:

(1) *There is no single approach to gender and to sexual violence in particular.* Conflict and post-conflict situations are too varied and opportunities too specific. Humanitarian, development and political actors should avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach – such as only addressing access to justice or health, or ‘engaging community groups’. Experience in a growing number of cases shows that a long-term commitment, a focus on context and policy objectives, and an imaginative and flexible use of initiatives and practices can have an impact on dependency and also reduce sexual violence.

(2) *The risk of sexual violence can be reduced but not eliminated.* Concerns over legitimate state authority and the political will to address sexual violence abound. Immediate needs have to be met, alongside building capacities and developing institutions and trying to bring about political change. Investment in and the use of advocacy and public communication are highly commendable. Any funding for sexual violence in a fragile conflict-affected environment is inherently more risky, more money will be ‘diverted’ than in normal contexts. The public in these countries need to be convinced that it is for the benefit of all that sexual violence is reduced.

(3) *The tacit acceptance of rape as an inevitable part of war* contributes to its continued and growing use during conflict. This notion must be challenged at every opportunity – sexual violence during conflict is common but certainly not inevitable. To ensure that children and women are protected from violence, rather than further victimised by it, the humanitarian community can engage with armed group leaders to secure their commitment to greater protection for civilians, including protection of women and children from sexual violence; and it needs to develop mechanisms to monitor and hold violators accountable, as well as promoting the empowerment of women and girls and encouraging their leadership in transition periods and their participation in political decision-making.

(4) *National and large-scale programmes need to happen concurrently with localised projects.* Both make a difference. Service delivery and social protection are important as preservers of human capital. Rather than thinking in terms of ‘scaling up’ from a series of local often short-term and project-based approaches, it is important to think long-term and programmatically from the outset and then work out careful implementation methodologies. Entry points need to be found, such as National Priority Programmes (Afghanistan) or National

Plans for Security or Justice reform (Liberia, the DRC) or the National Development Plan (Somalia).

(5) *Programme implementation will involve many actors, state and non-state.* Effective programme implementation to address power relations, gender dynamics and sexual violence will typically involve partnerships with the state, UN, civil society and private sector, and not one or the other. This makes programmes more flexible. At the same time it is not a good idea to avoid the state and certainly not sensible if the long-term goal is to rebuild the state and bring about a shift in values and approaches. Programmatic approaches are more likely to be successfully absorbed by the state at some time in the future rather than localised and *project-based* approaches.

(6) *Improved coherence requires better frameworks.* Greater coherence is needed among security, development and diplomatic interventions to ensure they have impact on the lives of women and girls and on reducing sexual violence. This is especially the case where aid is less significant for donor states than their military and political interventions. This requires standardised strategic frameworks to address gender and sexual violence across the conflict spectrum, from emergency, to post-conflict. Frameworks have been developed to prioritise and plan donor interventions in the absence of developed state planning structures. There is a need to incorporate special initiatives and programmes for sexual violence, for example. Frameworks are often too *ad hoc*, too unrelated and there is often competition between institutions as they champion different approaches.

(7) *Experiment.* Working on sexual violence across the conflict spectrum requires experimentation and flexibility based on local knowledge. Many of the most interesting approaches have evolved through several cycles of reform and adaptation. This requires long-term commitment, good monitoring and evaluation, money and above all dedicated staff. Donors need to adjust human and financial resource allocation procedures to facilitate this.

(8) *Research is needed* to identify the best entry points and to be able to lay down a concrete proposal and options for discussion and political advocacy. In particular, further research is needed to:

- i. understand in detail the gender sensitivity challenges emerging in peace processes and how the mechanisms could plug gaps;
- ii. situate gender sensitivity in relation to policy frameworks and key discourses including major reviews around counter-terrorism policies, Sustainable Development Goals, the New Deal, joint risk assessments and the discourse around thinking and working politically;
- iii. further explore opportunities, relevant work and evidence of what people actually need.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, www.gov.uk/.../2010-to-2015-government-policy

³ International Protocol on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 2014, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319054/PSVI_protocol_web.pdf

⁴ #BringBackOurDaughters Campaign in May 2014. See also in 2016. www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-nigeria-chibok-girls-2-years-20160415-story.html

⁵ See also internal United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports.

⁶ 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): www.uclg.org/en/media/events/59th-session-commission-status-women

⁷ Report and Recommendations from 11 March, 2015 UN Women, the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat and Care International Workshop in the margins of CSW 59 on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the World Humanitarian Summit.

⁸ In addition to SCR 1325 (2000), these resolutions are: SCR 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013).

⁹ UN peacekeeping now has Conduct and Discipline Units that also address sexual exploitation and abuse as part of their remit.

¹⁰ See also G7 Report on the Implementation of the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, 25 November 2015.

¹¹ Author's notes, based on interviews conducted in 2009 in South Kivu.

¹² Protection-mandated agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) but also larger international non-governmental organisations such as International Rescue Committee (IRC), Oxfam, etc.

¹³ The *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (2000), commonly called the 'Brahimi Report', named for the chairman of the commission that produced it, Lakhdar Brahimi. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had convened the Panel on 7 March 2000, ahead of the upcoming Millennium Summit, and had tasked it with making a thorough review of United Nations peace and security activities and recommending improvements. The report was published on 17 August 2000.

¹⁴ The New Deal for Somalia following the Somalia Conference, endorsed in Brussels, 2013–2016.

¹⁵ Wall, I. (2016) 'We are Demanding Change', *The Guardian*, 21 March, www.theguardian.com

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 24 November 2015.

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B.2.4 An End to Exile? Refugee Initiative and the Search for Durable Solutions

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Abstract

Refugees have historically been able to find durable solutions to their plight by means of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, local integration in the country that has granted them asylum or resettlement to a third country. In recent years, however, these three solutions have become increasingly elusive, leaving growing numbers of refugees with a highly uncertain future. Rather than acquiescing to circumstances, refugees are increasingly pursuing their own solutions and life strategies, frequently involving mobility, irregularity and transnationalism. This article examines the causes, manifestations and consequences of this trend, as well as its implications for humanitarian agencies, the international refugee protection regime and refugees themselves.

Keywords: refugees, UNHCR, refugee responses.

1 Introduction: the notion of durable solutions

The international refugee protection regime was established in the wake of the Second World War and consists of three main components: an international legal instrument, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention; an institution, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and a set of norms, the most important of which, the principle of *non-refoulement*, prevents refugees from being returned to countries where their life or liberty would be at risk.

The interchangeable notions of ‘durable’, ‘permanent’ or ‘lasting’ solutions are central to the functioning of the international refugee protection regime. While these concepts do not appear in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the UNHCR Statute defines one of the organisation’s primary responsibilities as that of ‘seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees’ (UNHCR 1950). Using very similar language, UNHCR’s current mission statement says that the agency aims to achieve ‘the resolution of refugee problems... by seeking lasting solutions to their plight’ (UNHCR 2016).

In practical terms, refugees have historically found such solutions in three different ways:

- By means of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, conducted in conditions of ‘safety and dignity’ and followed by ‘sustainable reintegration’ there;
- By means of local settlement and integration in their country of first asylum, entailing the progressive acquisition of rights, including, eventually, that of citizenship; and
- By means of organised resettlement from refugees’ country of first asylum to a third country that has agreed to admit them, provide them with permanent residence rights and the opportunity to be naturalised.

While these three solutions are distinct and require different preconditions to be met if they are to be attained, they have an important common feature: that of reconnecting refugees to a state and enabling them to benefit from that country’s effective protection. The end of exile is only attained when that bond has been established.

2 Solutions in practice

For the first 50 years of the international refugee regime’s existence, this three-pronged approach to the pursuit of refugee solutions operated in a generally effective manner. In the late 1940s and 1950s, for example, large numbers of people displaced by the armed conflict

in Europe were resettled to countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia, where their labour was needed to support the process of post-war reconstruction.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the focus of the global refugee problem shifted to Africa, where national liberation struggles and a spate of post-colonial coups and conflicts uprooted large numbers of people. In many instances, those refugees were able to benefit from local settlement and integration programmes, which provided them with secure residence rights, as well as land and other agricultural inputs needed for them to strive for self-sufficiency.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, resettlement to industrialised states became the predominant solution for more than 1 million refugees fleeing from conflicts and persecution in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, as well as for people who were in need of protection from dictatorships, as in Chile and Argentina.

With the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, voluntary return to countries of origin became the solution of choice for the largest number of refugees, to the extent that UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata dubbed the 1990s 'the decade of repatriation'. With superpower proxy wars coming to an end or diminishing in intensity, and with the UN establishing post-conflict peace-building operations to stabilise the countries concerned, large-scale repatriation became possible with respect to countries and regions such as Afghanistan (around 2 million returnees), Mozambique (1.7 million), Cambodia (365,000), Central America (150,000) and Namibia (45,000).

While these were undoubtedly positive developments, bringing durable solutions to large numbers of refugees, there was also a darker side to repatriation. UNHCR and UN member states came to the conclusion that repatriation was the best and in many instances only way that refugee situations could be resolved (Crisp 2004). And in their eagerness to promote this solution, the principles of voluntariness, safety, dignity and sustainable return were violated.

Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, for example, were induced to return to Bangladesh, despite the persecution and discrimination they continued to experience in their country of origin. And Tanzania forced more than 300,000 Hutu refugees from Rwanda back across the countries' shared border, with the support of UNHCR and donor states (Long 2013).

3 Protracted refugee situations

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly difficult for refugees to access the three durable solutions from which they have historically benefited. As a result, growing numbers have found themselves trapped in 'protracted refugee situations' (defined by UNHCR as those that have persisted for more than five years), unable to go home, to move to a resettlement country or to locally integrate in the state that has granted them asylum. According to the organisation, some 45 per cent of the world's refugees found themselves in such circumstances at the end of 2014, a figure that has continued to rise since that time (UNHCR 2015a).

This trend can be ascribed to three principal developments. First, a number of the world's most important refugee-producing conflicts have gone unresolved, making it impossible to repatriate refugees on anything like the scale that took place in the 1990s. Indeed, refugee repatriation figures are now at historically low levels, with minimal levels of return to countries of origin such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and Sudan.²

Second, the past five years have witnessed a spate of new refugee emergencies, provoked by armed conflicts in countries such as Central African Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, none of which seem likely to be resolved in the immediate future. As a result, the number of people throughout the world who have been displaced by armed

conflict and persecution has jumped to around 60 million, the largest number since the end of the Second World War (*ibid.*).

Third, while refugee numbers have gone up, access to solutions has stagnated. Voluntary repatriation is out of the question for most of the world's refugees, and yet the option of local settlement and integration is not available to them. Major refugee-hosting countries, including Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Thailand and Turkey, have all made it very clear that the large number of refugees admitted to their territory have no hope of remaining there indefinitely and acquiring the citizenship of those states.

At the same time, the number of resettlement places available to the world's refugees has not kept pace with the demand. In 2014, around 100,000 refugees benefited from this solution, around 70 per cent of them being admitted to a single country, the USA.

UNHCR has calculated that around 1 million refugees, including around 400,000 Syrians, are now in need of resettlement given their lack of other options (UNHCR 2015b). But efforts to persuade the world's more prosperous states to increase their resettlement quotas have generally met with meagre results, largely because those same countries are confronted with the arrival of significant numbers of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. In current circumstances, the appetite for increased refugee arrivals simply does not exist, even if those people were to arrive in an organised and legal manner (Siegfried 2015).

4 Refugee responses

On World Refugee Day 2013, UNHCR lamented that so many people had no immediate prospect of finding a lasting solution to their plight. Millions of refugees around the world were languishing in camps and dependent on international aid for their survival.

It was a misleading statement in two respects. On one hand, less than 50 per cent of the world's refugees are now accommodated in camps, and that proportion is in steady decline. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence to suggest that many refugees are not 'dependent' or 'languishing', but are taking active steps to find solutions for themselves, often employing a number of interrelated strategies that are designed to maximise the opportunities available to them and to minimise or spread the risks that they encounter. The following sections provide a brief examination of those strategies.

4.1 Moving to urban areas

Refugee-hosting states and humanitarian organisations have had a long-standing preference for the establishment of refugee camps, derived from the notion that they facilitate delivery and distribution of assistance, are conducive to maintaining local security and, by making refugee situations highly visible, help mobilise donor state funds. Based on these assumptions, refugees have often been confined to camps and had serious restrictions placed on their ability to take up residence in urban areas, despite cities and towns providing refugees with better livelihood opportunities and a more familiar way of life.

In recent years, refugees have increasingly ignored such restrictions and have voted with their feet, either moving from camps to cities or taking up residence in urban areas immediately on arrival in their country of asylum. The Kenyan capital Nairobi, for example, has an estimated refugee population of around 75,000, despite the fact that the government formally maintains a policy of 'strict encampment' and has made periodic efforts to forcibly relocate the urban refugee population to camps in remote rural areas of the country. In neighbouring Uganda, an easing of official restrictions on refugee mobility has prompted at least 50,000 refugees to take up residence in the capital Kampala.

Belatedly recognising that many refugees refuse to be confined to camps and are determined to find new opportunities elsewhere, UNHCR has adopted policies that assert the right of refugees to take up residence and establish livelihoods in a location of their choice, irrespective of government policy (Crisp 2015).

4.2 Onward and irregular movement

For many refugees, moving to an urban area is just the first step in an onward journey that takes them to more distant countries and continents that appear to offer them greater security and better opportunities in life. The movement of Eritrean refugees through Sudan, Egypt and Libya to Israel and Italy provides one long-standing example, as does the more recent and much larger movement of Syrian refugees from Turkey to Greece, the Balkans, Germany and other parts of northern Europe. A third example can be found in the route taken by Central Americans escaping from gang- and narcotics-related violence, many of them children, who are obliged to endure an arduous passage through Mexico in their efforts to reach the USA.

Needless to say, the visa restrictions and border controls the world's more prosperous states have established almost invariably require such journeys to be undertaken in an irregular and clandestine manner, with the assistance of people traffickers, document forgers, corrupt officials and other members of the burgeoning 'migration industry'. As witnessed in Egypt's Sinai desert and the Mediterranean Sea, the high cost of such journeys provides no protection against harassment, exploitation and death to those refugees who strive to find their own solutions in this way.

4.3 Transnational lifestyles and livelihoods

For many years, the international refugee protection regime worked on the assumption that an individual refugee or refugee household could live in only one place at a time, whether that was their 'country of origin', 'country of asylum' or 'resettlement country'. At the same time, these three durable solutions were regarded as mutually exclusive. Refugees had a simple and straightforward choice: to go back home, to be relocated to another country or to remain where they were.

The process of globalisation, which has been responsible for a significant expansion in the scope, scale and complexity of human mobility, has seriously undermined such assumptions. Far from living in and belonging to only one place, refugees can now find solutions for themselves by establishing transnational lifestyles.

Many Afghans, for example, move on a periodic basis between their own country and Pakistan, depending on the economic opportunities and security situation in those locations at any given time. They might also move to work in Iran or the Gulf states, where they can earn the money required to support family members in other locations or to finance their onward journey to other parts of the world.³ In this respect, the distinction made between 'refugees' on one hand and 'labour migrants' on the other no longer appears to be as clear-cut as UNHCR and other members of the international refugee protection regime have often assumed (Long 2009).

Somali refugees are also particularly well connected across international borders, with a sophisticated ability to establish livelihoods and lifestyles based on the circulation of goods, capital, information and people between the many sites where their compatriots and clanfolk are to be found: Mogadishu in Somalia, Nairobi and the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, as well as Uganda, South Africa, the UK and USA.

4.4 De facto integration

Only a small minority of refugees in the developing world can benefit from local integration in its full and legal sense. Rather than being able to look forward to the day when they become naturalised citizens of their asylum country, the majority are confronted with the prospect of long-term restrictions on their access to residence and voting rights, the labour market and business permits, and public services such as education and healthcare.

Despite these formal restrictions, refugees often attain a high degree of *de facto* integration in their asylum country by finding a niche in the local economy, establishing close social relations (through marriage, for example) with members of the host community and by enjoying the sponsorship and protection of local elites with whom they share an ethnic, tribal, sectarian or political affinity. Such is the situation of some Angolan refugees in Zambia, for example, and Iraqi refugees in Jordan (Bakewell 2011; Crisp *et al.* 2009).

In situations where refugees are able to acquire national identity documents (whether on the basis of a financial transaction or in return for services such as electoral support) the line between *de jure* and *de facto* integration becomes more blurred. In Gedaref state in eastern Sudan, for example, around 60 per cent of Eritrean refugees living in the area are thought to hold Sudanese documents, a situation that helps them to avoid the restrictions on land ownership and labour that would otherwise be imposed on them. Large numbers of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are also known to have acquired local identity documents (genuine and forged), thereby facilitating their efforts to pursue transnational lifestyles and livelihoods (Ambroso, Crisp and Albert 2011; Baloch 2015).

4.5 Competing for resettlement places

A final way that refugees in developing countries strive to find solutions for themselves is to compete for the relatively small number of resettlement places that are made available by countries in other parts of the world. The advantages of resettlement need little elaboration. Resettlement allows refugees to move in a safe, legal and relatively inexpensive manner. It enables refugee families to stay together, comes with the promise of integration assistance in the country of destination and often allows refugees to take up residence in locations where there is already a supportive diaspora community.

At the same time, the resettlement selection process is surrounded with uncertainty and even mythology, leaving refugees uncertain about how they can maximise their chances of gaining access to this durable solution. For some, it means demonstrating – and even exacerbating – their protection needs or their economic, physical and psychological vulnerabilities. For others, it entails learning a language, a vocabulary and a set of skills that they feel will be attractive to UNHCR and government officials engaged in the selection process. The quest for resettlement can prompt refugees to falsify their personal identity as well as their ethnic or sectarian affiliation. In the most disturbing cases, it can tempt refugees into corrupt, exploitative or aggressive behaviour, and can even become a psychological fixation.⁴

5 Durable solutions or fragile outcomes?

A large proportion of the world's refugees are currently denied access to the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration. Rather than acquiescing to a life in indefinite limbo, many are doing what they can to improve their circumstances in life, whether by moving to an urban area or another country, establishing transnational lifestyles and livelihoods, quietly integrating into the country and society where they have found asylum or competing for resettlement to another part of the world.

Humanitarian organisations and the media have not given such strategies sufficient recognition. On too many occasions have they preferred to portray exiled populations as dependent and passive recipients of international assistance, rather than as purposeful actors who can exercise a high level of agency.

That image has been modified somewhat by the way that Syrian and other refugees have sought to assert control of their own destiny, challenging the many obstacles placed in their way as they try to move from the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas to the European Union (EU). But at national government and EU levels, this assertion of refugee autonomy has been portrayed as a threat, to be countered with ever more draconian measures, including forced expulsions.

While the strategies that refugees employ to improve their prospects in life should be acknowledged, supported and even celebrated, their limitations must also be recognised. The solutions that refugees attain by means of these strategies are not necessarily durable or permanent, but can be fragile and reversible. Rather than being embedded in a solid legal framework, they are often contingent on the goodwill, neglect or corrupt nature of other actors. And in many cases, they do not lead to an outcome in which the refugees have a firm and legal bond with a state whose protection they can rely on.

The refugee strategies described in this article can also have a number of unintended and adverse consequences. They can lead to the long-term separation of family members; they can oblige people to embark on hard and dangerous – often deadly – journeys and to live in the shadows of illegality; and they can evoke negative responses from host states and societies, and challenge the integrity of the resettlement process. They are most successfully pursued by those refugees who have the capacity to thrive in challenging circumstances.

UNHCR and other members of the international refugee protection regime consequently have a responsibility to reinvigorate the search for durable solutions in ways that are creative and – unlike some of the repatriation movements that took place in the 1990s – fully consistent with international refugee and human rights law.

More effort should be made to ensure that refugees can move from one country to another by regular means, through the provision of appropriate travel documents and their incorporation into labour migration programmes. The number of privately sponsored resettlement places should be expanded, an objective that will require greater engagement with civil society and diaspora communities in destination countries. Governments that have tolerated the *de facto* integration of refugees should be encouraged to provide refugees with legally secure residence and employment rights. And further thought should be given to the establishment of ‘orderly departure’ and ‘humanitarian visa’ arrangements that enable people who are at risk in their own country to find protection elsewhere without the danger and trauma entailed in first becoming a refugee.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² In 2014, fewer than 130,000 refugees were repatriated, the lowest figure for 30 years (UNHCR 2015a).

³ The fluid nature of Afghan identity, residence and legal status is neatly summarised in Kronenfeld (2008).

⁴ The situation of Somali refugees in Kenya provides a useful illustration; see Jansen (2008) and Horst (2006).

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B.2.5 The UN and Humanitarian Action: What Have We Learned?

*Adam Roberts*¹

Abstract

In his concluding remarks on WS2, the moderator, Adam Roberts, summed up the lessons learned from the seminar. The article starts with a summary of the UN's operational framework for humanitarian affairs within the broader context of the incidence and impact of international and non-international conflicts. Reflecting on the nature of future humanitarian crises and the challenges of protecting civilians in danger, the article highlights the new human rights frameworks of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Human Rights up Front (HRuF) initiatives, which were established to address failures the UN has experienced in conflicts. The article concludes with six key recommendations for consideration by the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016.

Keywords: Humanitarian crises and response, protection of civilians, human rights, WHS, R2P.

1 Introduction

These summary remarks touch on issues that needed to be faced at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016. They were intended to summarise in the briefest possible form some conclusions relevant to what the UN Secretary-General's report for that summit might ultimately contain.²

I focus more on humanitarian action against man-made disasters of war and repression, as distinct from the extensive and important work regarding natural disasters such as droughts, tsunamis, floods and earthquakes. One of the documents preparing the way for the summit – the UN synthesis report, *Restoring Humanity*, released on 5 October 2015 – rightly emphasised the connections between war and humanitarian action, and also between humanitarian action and development:

At the end of 2013, the ten largest consolidated humanitarian appeals involved armed conflict, with most of these crises under way for over five years. In contexts such as Somalia, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo or Afghanistan, it is difficult to distinguish between humanitarian issues and development or peace-building challenges, making collaboration between sectors a necessity (WHS Secretariat 2015: 55).

2 The UN framework

It is useful to remind ourselves of the framework within which UN bodies have been involved in humanitarian action. Although the UN Charter mentions 'human rights' seven times, the word 'humanitarian' is mentioned only once, in Article 1(3), which includes in the UN's list of purposes:

To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.
(UN 1945)

There was no specific provision for humanitarian action during or in the aftermath of armed conflicts. That would have been difficult to include in the foundational document of an organisation whose aim was to prevent war altogether. Yet the commitment to humanitarian action began early. Even before the UN itself was created, the wartime alliance called 'the United Nations' created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Within a few years of the creation of the UN in 1945 involvement in humanitarian action increased. The Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949 and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950–51.

3 The incidence and impact of international and non-international conflicts

The fact remains that the UN was founded with one over-arching purpose in mind: to address the problem of *international war*. In this there has been some success. The past 70 years have indeed seen a significant reduction in the number of international wars, and in the numbers killed in them.³ One can, according to one's interests and ideological predilections, attribute this reduction to a wide range of causes going well beyond the UN System: the existence of nuclear weapons, the harsh lessons learned from two world wars, the operation of military alliances, the growth of democracy, the progress of economic development – the list goes on. And one can be sceptical about whether the trend will continue. But the UN era has been characterised by a reduction of wars between states – and this is a cause for celebration.

This reduction in international wars does not mean that all war is on the retreat: on the contrary, the decline in international wars has been accompanied by a rise in *non-international armed conflicts*. As we see daily in Syria and Yemen, some of these have dragged or attracted outside forces into their ambit, hence the oxymoronic term *internationalised non-international armed conflicts*. Non-international armed conflicts of all types are notoriously difficult for an international organisation to address; witness the incapacity of the League of Nations to tackle the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and the no less obvious difficulties the UN has experienced in countless cases, including in the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and in Sudan, right up to the present.

With some significant exceptions, it has been primarily non-international armed conflicts – whether internationalised or not – that have contributed most to the development of so-called humanitarian crises. Although international wars and natural disasters have also produced a series of humanitarian crises, civil wars and post-conflict situations have been at the centre of many of the most difficult and controversial humanitarian operations. The UN has essentially been expected to address problems it was not created to tackle.

4 Reflections on the nature of future humanitarian crises

In the future, the nature of the humanitarian crises the UN faces will certainly evolve, not least in view of the effects of climate change and increased incidence of extreme weather events. However, some problems show fewer signs of changing. Throughout its 70-year history the UN has continuously addressed some very familiar types of problems, especially those arising from the break-up of empires – whether the European colonies in Asia and Africa, or the socialist federations of the USSR and Yugoslavia. Establishing new states, with legitimate borders, effective systems of government and peaceful relations between different ethnic and religious groups, is an inherently difficult task and provides the background to almost all major UN humanitarian and peacekeeping involvement. Preoccupation with these types of issue is likely to continue.

I am therefore sceptical about arguments that we now face a completely new paradigm or a dramatically new era. A problem with such approaches is that ways of thinking about the

world do not change in unison; and even if we believe we are in a new age, many people in many countries have different and more historically grounded views.

WS2 confirmed the obvious and sobering critique of humanitarian action: that it is often a central part of the UN's response to a crisis precisely because the main UN bodies, especially the Security Council, could not agree on a substantive and decisive course of action. This point, valid as it is, does not negate the value of humanitarian action. Such action has saved huge numbers of lives. In the last decades of the twentieth century, significant achievements – never free from controversy – included providing support for huge numbers of refugees from Vietnam and Afghanistan from the 1970s to the 1990s before ultimately assisting some of them to return home and others to resettle; and bringing food and medical supplies to Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the siege from 1992 to 1995. In the twenty-first century, they have included emergency relief following the 2004 Asian tsunami and 2010 Pakistan floods; and supporting the large and growing number of displaced persons in East and Central Africa.⁴

Unsurprisingly, the UN's increasing involvement in humanitarian activities has resulted in much trial, error and adaptation. One perennially difficult issue has been maintaining an impartial stance in ongoing conflicts. Respect for impartiality is often critical for the effective operation and very survival of international humanitarian workers; yet it is hard to achieve even at the best of times, and particularly hard to achieve in those cases where the UN has several types of involvement in a conflict. Peacekeeping forces, coercive sanctions, enforcement measures and humanitarian missions do not mix easily with each other.

5 Protection of civilians in danger

Humanitarian involvements during armed conflicts or situations of extreme repression raise particularly difficult issues. The failures of UN peacekeeping forces to prevent mass slaughter, and the limited effect of humanitarian programmes, were evident in Rwanda in 1994 and at Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995.⁵ It was natural that out of these and other crises a new emphasis emerged on protecting civilian populations. This raises a fundamental question about whether, in situations of danger, humanitarian assistance should be understood to encompass the military protection of endangered communities; and whether the UN in all its varied activities should place greater emphasis not just on the provision of food, shelter, education and medical services, but also on defending human rights, providing security and addressing the fundamental issues at stake in the crisis.

'We don't need food. We need safety.' A refugee child carried a placard with this simple message in Safwan, in the demilitarised zone in southern Iraq, just after the end of hostilities in the 1991 Gulf War.⁶ The message remains a challenge in many of the situations where international bodies provide humanitarian assistance today. On the other hand, just as there are obvious dangers in humanitarian work being associated with plans to address the fundamental issues of the conflict, so there are also dangers in humanitarian assistance being associated with military action.

The UN Security Council has devoted considerable attention to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It has received a series of reports from the Secretary-General on the subject.⁷ It has also passed thematic resolutions on it, starting in 1999.⁸ This process has had significant effects, and contributed to the increasing emphasis on the protection of civilians in the mandates for peacekeeping forces. The Security Council's attention to civilians has led to follow-up debates and resolutions on women and children in armed conflict. Attention on the dangers journalists face has also increased.⁹ However, in some respects the process has been superficial. In particular, there has been a tendency towards abstract generality rather than actual experience, and reiterating old proposals (for arms embargoes and demilitarised zones) without discussion of the conspicuous failures of exactly these proposals in several conflicts in the 1990s and the present century.¹⁰

5.1 Responsibility to Protect

Apart from this extensive Security Council activity, there have been two major attempts in a UN framework to develop a doctrine to address the key issue of what to do about protection of civilians in ongoing situations of danger. Both emerged in response to terrible failures of the UN to prevent the slaughter of civilians towards whom the UN had obligations. The first is Responsibility to Protect (R2P), enunciated in the 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (IDRC 2001). It placed major emphasis on the responsibility of governments to protect their own citizens, but did not exclude as a last resort interventions backed by the Security Council to prevent mass slaughter. It went on to recognise that taking military action 'might make it impossible for humanitarian workers to remain' (IDRC 2001: 61). The broad principle of R2P was subsequently incorporated into the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document (UN 2005).¹¹

5.2 Human Rights Up Front

The second attempt is Human Rights up Front (HRuF). This is a response to a highly critical report issued in November 2012 on UN humanitarian operations in Sri Lanka in the last months of the war there that ended in May 2009 (UN 2012). Prepared by a panel headed by Charles Petrie, the report concluded that UN action (or inaction) in the final stages of armed conflict in Sri Lanka was a 'systemic failure' (UN 2012). In response, in July 2013 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and senior colleagues approved a plan initially labelled 'Rights Up Front' (Ban Ki-moon 2013).¹² As Ban Ki-moon subsequently emphasised in a letter to all UN staff and at a staff meeting at UN Headquarters, he now wanted the UN to have 'a transformational impact in preventing and ending gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law' (UN 2013).¹³ In 2014 the initiative was re-labelled 'Human Rights up Front' (HRuF).¹⁴

John Holmes, who was the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator at the time, has criticised the Petrie report and the resulting doctrine of HRuF.¹⁵ In his remarks at WS2, he indicated that the doctrine risks suggesting that humanitarian work is the same as human rights activism. However, the main problem confronting the HRuF initiative is that it has been discussed much less than R2P: the risk it faces is oblivion rather than denunciation.

HRuF was not intended to be quite as ambitious as R2P. But one of the features they have in common is that, while starting from a humanitarian problem, they propose solutions that go beyond 'humanitarian action' as it is conventionally understood.

Both of these attempts to promulgate general doctrines have run into severe difficulties. For both, the civil war in Syria since 2011 is a case from hell: a huge humanitarian crisis; deep disagreement between the permanent members of the Security Council on how to tackle it; the post-Iraq lack of willingness of the US and allies to put boots on the ground; and a vast refugee crisis that has left governments, UN agencies and the European Union unable to do much more than react to some of the symptoms of a deep tragedy. Moreover, the way that Russia has used arguments of an R2P type to justify its military actions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 illustrates the potential dangers inherent in doctrines that place human and humanitarian concerns above the rights of sovereign states.

It is noteworthy that neither of these doctrines was mentioned in the 2015 synthesis report for the WHS, despite that report's frequent emphasis on the importance of protection (WHS Secretariat 2015: 103–5). Nor were they mentioned in another substantial report geared to the WHS, which was also issued in 2015 (Global Humanitarian Assistance Programme 2015).

The lack of mention of these two doctrines can be defended. As hinted above, both doctrines are problematic. They also pose special problems for humanitarian assistance. Those involved in humanitarian action are aware that different kinds of action, including military,

may have massive and sometimes positive effects on populations, but do not wish to allow them to be described as humanitarian. Most humanitarians would struggle with the idea of humanitarian intervention, because they do not believe the motives are usually humanitarian, and it is obviously difficult to calculate how many people from one group it is legitimate to kill to save another group of people. They perceive a need to stop politicians claiming humanitarian motives when they are too often nothing of the sort. All this may of course apply rather more to R2P than HRuF. Nonetheless, the absence of mention of these issues is one of several cases indicating that there may be a risk of the WHS not confronting directly some of the key doctrines, and difficulties, of humanitarian action in conflict situations.

It was suggested at WS2 that humanitarian action faces a serious crisis; and in particular that today's conflicts challenge the very foundations on which our assumptions and guidelines for humanitarian action are based. It is certainly true that if one party to a conflict puts a premium on killing neutral people, or if a government refuses to have any dealings with an organisation that has worked in a rebel-held part of its state territory, the possibilities of impartial humanitarian action are drastically reduced. I share this concern, but such hard cases do not necessarily invalidate humanitarian action more generally, nor the principles on which it is based. The question is, what can be done about this and many other problems that confront those engaged in humanitarian action today?

6 Six conclusions for the World Humanitarian Summit

The WHS met in Istanbul in May 2016. Its goal was to bring the global community together to commit to new ways of working together to save lives and reduce hardship around the globe.¹⁶ Our discussions benefited from the presence of several colleagues who took part in preparatory work in the form of the WHS Global Consultation.

Many conclusions could be drawn from our seminar, some of them similar to those in the documents prepared for the WHS and some of them different. What follows is a personal selection of just six matters that need to be emphasised – and in some cases emphasised more than they have been so far in the WHS preparatory work.

6.1 The need for consent and cooperation by governments. Humanitarian action, in almost all situations, involves consent and cooperation by governments. For humanitarian organisations, establishing working relations with governments is a difficult and hazardous enterprise. Humanitarian action by foreigners – whether non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations or armed forces – can only too easily be seen by states as a threat, not least because it challenges their basic competence, and calls into question any claims they may make that they are the protectors of their own citizens' interests. There are of course many problems in underlining that states should be treated with respect, especially in those cases where a state is engaged in massive assaults on civilians or is preventing particular humanitarian operations. To say that respect has to be a default position can never mean that all criticism of a government's policies and actions is avoided. Nonetheless, as a default position respect may better than a 'holier than thou' attitude.

6.2 The need for respect for local culture, economy and languages. Humanitarian workers need to show respect not just for states but also for the local culture, economy and languages. This conclusion, as with the first one, reflects a view that the *local* legitimacy of any kind of operation (peacekeeping, humanitarian or a mix of the two) is at least as important as its legitimacy from on high – for example, from the UN, a regional international organisation or an international humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. This conclusion is one of many to have emerged from Martin Barber's book reflecting on his long career in UN humanitarian operations (Barber 2015: 207, 209–10, 217–8). Much the same conclusion has been reached about various peacekeeping operations.¹⁷ In humanitarian as in other kinds of international operations, an ability to speak local languages can be of vital importance, contributing to the whole operation's legitimacy.

WS2 participants emphasised the language issue. The *Restoring Humanity* document for the WHS makes several welcome references to the importance of understanding local languages (WHS Secretariat 2015: 19, 95, 110). However, these are not reflected in the document's conclusions, nor in some of the other documents for the WHS.

6.3 Protection of civilians. There is a need to recognise explicitly that protecting civilians is a multi-faceted, inherently difficult and often controversial task. Several WS2 participants indicated this. The word *protection*, often used imprecisely, actually has some very different meanings. So far as humanitarian action is concerned, there are three main ones. Firstly, it can refer to a legal status, as in the provisions regarding 'protected persons' that form the heart of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and the equivalent provisions for the 'protection of refugees' in the 1951 Convention on refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Secondly, it can refer to a large range of non-violent measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of attacks on particular groups of people. Thirdly, protection can also involve something very different: physical security, including the use or threat of armed force to prevent and oppose attacks. It is vital that UN agencies should be clear about which of these three meanings they are referring to when they use the word 'protection'.

In UN documents, protection issues are sometimes discussed in vague and general terms. A draft UN Concept Note for the WHS has this:

Equitably offering assistance and protection to all people affected by conflict, in particular in zones of active combat, remains a critical challenge. Work under this theme will include identifying more effective strategies and methods of providing assistance to people affected by conflict and other forms of violence across lines of combat or hostility.

(UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2013: 3)

A particular difficulty for policies of physical protection is that they tend to involve some degree of reliance on outside powers and alliances, and also on local forces – even on a party to a conflict. The report of the panel on UN Peace Operations chaired by José Ramos-Horta, issued in 2015, addresses protection of civilians and makes some important proposals, but disappointingly restricts its discussion to actions by UN peace operations themselves (UN 2015b).¹⁸ Even then, it does not cite certain effective cases of protection, including the UN rapid reaction force outside Sarajevo in summer 1995, which helped to end the three-year siege of the city. Some of the complexity of the task is missed. In this, as in some other matters, the UN needs to avoid two familiar risks. Firstly, creating inflated expectations, which lead to disappointment; and secondly, using vague forms of wording on issues that require clear discussion.

6.4 Coordination of humanitarian activities. The perennial call for better coordination of humanitarian activities needs a response that takes into account a huge range of experience – including experience of how things should not be done. The call for more coordination arises for good reasons. The main need for coordination is between the different bits of the humanitarian system (or non-system) – not least between the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross – because it is such a fragmented world. In addition, humanitarian operations almost always necessitate close cooperation with many other organisations with different functions: government ministries, development agencies, regional organisations, diplomatic missions, local NGOs and more. The urgent need for more coordination was the main reason for the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), and then the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the 1990s.¹⁹ Preparatory consultations for the WHS rightly drew attention to 'the relative absence of local and national actors in coordination and decision-making platforms and their lack of access to humanitarian funding' (WHS 2015: 1, 13). Whether or not there is improved machinery of coordination at the top, a huge amount depends on practical collaboration and personal chemistry between the parties involved, even if that means breaking with their usual ways of operating.

6.5 Improved management of whistle-blowing. Whistle-blowing needs to be managed much better than it has been. Things sometimes go dreadfully wrong in humanitarian operations and it is best to be frank about this. It is important that personnel at all levels should have confidence in any procedure for hearing and dealing with concerns. A particular problem within the UN System is the perception that staff members are reluctant to report failures, abuses or corruption because they fear their report may be ignored or even that they will lose their jobs; and the Ethics Office, established in 2006, would appear to have a long way to go to build confidence in its procedures and advice (see, for example, Hamilton-Martin 2015: 24). The documents for the WHS make extensive and welcome reference to the importance of accountability, transparency, performance monitoring and so on. However, they do not explicitly mention whistle-blowing and its problems: they should do so.

6.6 Financing of humanitarian action. The financing of humanitarian action is too precarious, making long-term planning and consistent delivery of programmes extremely difficult. This is far from being a new problem, and was mentioned in WS2 as having hampered many humanitarian projects of the twentieth century. In this century it has recurred repeatedly in unusually acute form because of a rise in humanitarian needs. In 2014, although overall international humanitarian assistance reached a record high, there was the biggest shortfall in UN-led appeals (US\$7.2bn, which is 40 per cent of the total US\$18bn requested). Things got even worse in 2015, with UN humanitarian agencies experiencing huge shortfalls in their funding for emergencies in Syria, South Sudan and Yemen, necessitating abrupt cutbacks in vital services such as education. The WHS synthesis report rightly says that ‘simply asking for more money will not solve the problem’, and offers a useful summary of the problem and an indication of possible additional sources of financing (WHS Secretariat 2015: 124–36). The WHS must become a focus for new approaches to addressing the age-old problem of funding humanitarian relief.

One possible approach to this funding problem – not free of difficulty, but worth at least discussing – would be for states and international bodies to be even more flexible than they have been about the use of development aid funds for emergency humanitarian relief – including in countries not classified as ‘developing’. The UK record in respect of the bilateral part of its official development assistance budget illustrates the issues and the possibilities. In 2013, of the £6,745m disbursed by the UK as bilateral development assistance, humanitarian aid increased to £826m, a 94 per cent rise from the 2012 figure of £425m. This increase brought humanitarian relief into the top five sectors receiving bilateral aid from the UK, but it still represented only 12.3 per cent of UK official bilateral development assistance.²⁰ There is a strong case for increasing that proportion further – a conclusion that may apply to other major donor countries as much as it does to the UK. This of course involves a complex consideration of the relative merits of emergency assistance and longer-term development assistance.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² On 2 February 2016, more than two months after this article was completed and a copy was submitted to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at UN HQ in New York, the Secretary-General's report for the WHS, *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility*, was published as a UN General Assembly document. It addressed some of the points raised in this article but did not fully cover certain issues, notably the importance of language competence (conclusion 6.2 below), the meaning of the term ‘protection’ (6.3), and whistle-blowing (6.5).

³ Table from Uppsala Conflict Data Program, www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts_and_graphs.

⁴ For extensive statistics on East Africa, see the Global Humanitarian Assistance Programme (2015), especially pp. 4–7.

⁵ The Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 led to a remarkably thorough and frank analysis, *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35: The Fall of Srebrenica, A/54/549*, 15 November 1999.

⁶ Photograph in *The Times*, London, 18 April 1991, p. 3.

⁷ For example, the Secretary-General's 11th report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, UN (2015a).

⁸ UN SCR 1265, 17 September 1999, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

⁹ See the references to journalists in UN SCR 1738, 23 December 2006, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

¹⁰ For a short critique of UN Security Council resolutions and of the Secretary-General's 1999 report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, see Roberts (2011: 371–3).

¹¹ Paras. 138 and 139.

¹² A team led by Jan Eliasson, an experienced and respected diplomat who was UN Deputy Secretary-General from July 2012, did much of the work leading to this Action Plan.

¹³ See also his speech on the same topic, UN Headquarters, New York, 22 November 2013, at www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/speeches/statments_full.asp?statID=2068#.VjuenITxoYK.

¹⁴ *Human Rights up Front*, on the Secretary-General pages of the UN website, www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront/doc/RuFAP-summary-General-Assembly.shtml.

¹⁵ For his overall perspective on the end of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009 see Holmes (2013), especially pp. 89 and 127.

¹⁶ Summarised from the WHS website, www.worldhumanitariansummit.org.

¹⁷ Whalan (2013: 6–9, 156–65). Her definition of 'peace operations' on pp. 4 and 21 indicates that they address 'complex security, political, and development crises'. Although the definition does not encompass humanitarian operations, her argument about the importance of local legitimacy has obvious relevance to them.

¹⁸ pp. 11, 22, 25, 36–41, etc. On the panel, the most serious divisions were on the difficult issue of the use of force; this helps to explain the report's cautious approach and language on this issue.

¹⁹ The DHA was established following UN General Assembly resolution 46/182, 19 December 1991.

²⁰ DFID (2014: 37–8). The figures for 2013 quoted cover only bilateral aid. The total UK official development assistance budget, bilateral and multilateral, was £11,462m. The proportion of UK multilateral funding that went to organisations concerned with emergency relief is more difficult to determine from this series of statistics, but may also have increased.

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B.3 Witness Seminar 3: Peace and Security

B.3.1 Overview

Michael Askwith^{1,2}

WS3 took place at in the Hoare Room, Church House, Westminster, on 13 January 2016 to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the first preparatory meeting of the UN Security Council, which took place in the same room on 17 January 1946. Organised by the United Nations Association-UK (UNA-UK), with support from the British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants (BAFUNCS), King's College London and the Bodleian Library, Oxford, with funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), it sought to collect testimony from current and former British professionals who have worked in or with the UN System throughout the organisation's lifespan.

The anniversary provided an opportunity for those involved in or with the UN System to reflect how the organisation had stood up to the fluid and diverse political, economic and social challenges of the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Specifically, the seminar considered the UK's record on the UN Security Council and the council's activities to prevent and resolve conflict, as well as to keep peace.

It proceeded in four sessions that were designed to draw on participants' insights and provide lessons and recommendations for the future:

- Session 1: The UK on the Security Council: assessing the record after 70 years
- Session 2: Prevention and early action
- Session 3: Peacekeeping and peace-building
- Session 4: Lessons and recommendations from seven decades in international peace and security.

Organised in the form of panel discussions led by a chair, one or two panellists and two respondents, the seminar provided an opportunity for participants to share a wide variety of experiences, insights and views, which were recorded and of which transcripts are envisaged.³ A draft report on the seminar has been prepared.⁴

The seminar was attended by 140 participants drawn from former UN staff, and representatives from academia, UNA-UK, the FCO, the Department for International Development and UK Ministry of Defence, non-governmental organisations, and interested individuals. It included one present and five former UK Permanent Representatives to the UN. A series of 15 Witness Briefs were prepared, as well as transcripts of two oral interviews. Some of these have been used as the basis for articles for the present IDS Evidence Report.

Adam Roberts assesses the record of 'The UK and the UN Security Council: 70 Years and Counting' (B.3.2) and describes the UK's involvement in the creation and operations of the UN Security Council from 1941 to 1945. He highlights salient features of the UK's involvement in the UN since then, including where the UN has been vital for British interests, and how it has played key roles in its development, and as one of the five Permanent Members of the Security Council. Roberts identifies issues relating to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, and the need for choice between 'selective security' and 'collective security'. In conclusion, he suggests areas where the UN's role could be improved: in the functioning of the Security Council, in changes in the Secretariat, in strengthening press coverage of the UN, in tackling climate change, and in maintaining a perspective of realism and selectivity in UN and Security Council affairs.

Margaret Anstee, in 'Experiences in Development and Peacekeeping, and UK Support' (B.3.3), describes her early UN career in Asia and Latin America, mainly focusing on development issues, and her experience in senior positions in United Nations Development Programme, the UN Department of Technical Cooperation for Development and the UN Office in Vienna. She relates her experience as head of the UN Angola Verification Mission, the first woman to head a UN peacekeeping mission. She also highlights opportunities that she considers the UK could have taken in relation to the implementation of the Brahimi Report on peacekeeping.⁵

Lastly, Jeremy Greenstock draws out 'Lessons and Recommendations from Seven Decades: International Peace and Security' (B.3.4). He highlights key aspects of the UK's role in facilitating the UN's work in peace and security and gives examples of his own personal experience in dealing with UN matters. He underlines the UK's key, and often unique skills, and urges greater recognition of the UK's soft power capacity in diplomacy and the promotion of a stronger rules-based international order. Greenstock offers a passionate plea for stronger recognition in London of the UN's unique convening role in bringing together a wide diversity of nation states and in building consensus around issues of security and international action in many fields.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Based on WS3 on 'The UN and International Peace and Security: Navigating a Divided World? British Perspectives', Church House, Westminster, 13 January 2016.

³ WS3 recordings are available online at www.dropbox.com/s/e80t4latqqljrb/2016.01.13%20United%20Nations%20HMH.MP3?dl=0 and Lord Malloch-Brown's reception remarks are in a separate file, available at www.dropbox.com/s/uudhw4rkfwddnjc/Malloch%20Brown%20reception%20address%20recording.m4a?dl=0.

⁴ BAFUNCS/UNA-UK (2016) The United Nations at 70. Report of Witness Seminar 3 on the UN at 70 and the UK in Peace and Security: Navigating a Divided World: the UK and the UN Security Council, draft, May.

⁵ UN (2000) *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305 S/2000/809)*, 21 August.

B.3.2 The UK and the UN Security Council: 70 Years and Counting

*Adam Roberts*¹

Abstract

This article draws on the author's wide experience observing and researching UN affairs, and summarises his views on the history of the UN, and of the UK's involvement in it, particularly of the Security Council. He highlights moral and practical arguments for respecting the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention. He indicates that the UN has proved unable to provide anything approaching a system of collective security, and is better understood as embodying a system of selective security. He also notes with satisfaction the decline of international war between sovereign states, even though this has coincided with continuing high levels of conflict in many post-colonial states. In conclusion he highlights areas where the UN's role could be improved: in the functioning of the Security Council, in changes in the Secretariat, strengthening press coverage of the UN, tackling climate change, and in maintaining a perspective of realism and selectivity in UN and Security Council affairs.

Keywords: UN, Security Council, UK, collective security.

1 Background

What is special about the UK's involvement in the creation and operations of the UN Security Council? In the extended negotiations in 1941–45 for the future world organisation, the UK played a leading part that has not always been accorded proper recognition in the histories of those years. The British had one considerable advantage over the US and Soviet negotiators: the UK had been part of the League of Nations throughout its existence, and had clear ideas about the hazards to be avoided. In the long and drawn-out process of creating a UN that might have a chance of being effective, Winston Churchill, the prime minister, manifested a peculiarly British combination of enthusiasm for international organisation and a deep-seated realist belief that, for states as for individuals, interest is the most fundamental guide to action. The combination of hard-headed realism and a strand of idealism has been detectable in British attitudes to, and roles in, the UN Security Council over a period of more than 70 years.

British diplomats involved in drawing up the charter did not see their contribution, or indeed the resulting UN Charter, as exclusively idealistic. Charles Webster, a distinguished historian who was part of the British team, said in a moment of exasperation that the plans were drawn up among those to whom 'it is no use appealing to principle. The Office is all on the other side and opportunistic as usual' (Webster 1945 [1976]: diary entry, 25 October 1944: 52). The UN Security Council veto was accepted by the British not because of optimism, but because of a realistic (and not unwilling) recognition that neither the USSR nor the USA would enter the organisation on any other basis. There was no assumption that relations between the great powers would necessarily be harmonious, or that the new machinery being created would work. Gladwyn Jebb, the British diplomat who during the latter part of the war was head of the economic and reconstruction department of the Foreign Office, later stated that 'even a cursory look at the memoranda shows that we were not utopians or even internationalists. Throughout hard-headed British self-interest was paramount.'²

UK negotiators have often said how important it is to avoid claiming too much credit even when the UK has had a successful part in negotiations at the UN. That principle has not always been followed perfectly. On the day the Charter was signed, Webster wrote in his diary this private and not altogether modest appraisal:

It is an Alliance of the Great Powers embedded in a universal organisation as the Covenant also was. But this fact is more clearly denoted because of the fact that sanctions cannot even theoretically be put on a Great Power as it could in the Covenant. This is a great blot and I wish it were not there. Otherwise there is little I would do to alter the Charter, except of course clear away some of the verbiage which has accumulated round it during these 9 weeks. Its new ideas come mainly from me, if I may so record without undue egoism. The Purpose & Principles, the promise to settle all disputes, the acceptance of primary responsibility by the Security Council, the promise of the other states to obey it – all come from my original paper before it was even submitted to the Law Committee. Some of the phraseology has come right through.

(Webster 1945 [1976]: diary entry, 26 June: 69–70)

2 The UK and the UN

Throughout its participation in the UN the UK has been highly selective about which issues it takes to the UN and which issues it prefers to address through other means – whether essentially internal, or else involving allies and coalition frameworks separate from the UN. In the long struggle in Northern Ireland, between 1969 and 2005, the UK chose (in my view, rightly) to treat it as essentially an internal UK issue, albeit one with many international ramifications. In the Anglo-French Suez imbroglio in 1956, the British government resented several of the attempts to raise the matter at the UN. In the short Kuwait crisis of 1961, the UK preferred to act on its own, and then through regional instruments. In 1963–72, on the subject of minority white rule in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the UK wielded the veto on its own – that is, without any support from other members of the Council – no less than five times. And in deciding to join in the US-led military intervention in Iraq in 2003, the UK invaded a sovereign state without an explicit authorisation from the Security Council. As with Suez, the Iraq invasion has left a legacy of suspicion of the UK: repairing that particular damage remains hard work to this day.

At other times, support from the UN has been vital for the UK. Key instances include:

- Following the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, UN Security Council resolution (SCR) 502 of 3 April 1982, calling on Argentinian forces to withdraw, contributed to the legal and political basis for the subsequent UK military operations to recover these territories.
- Following the Iraqi invasion and purported annexation of Kuwait in August 1990, UN SCR 678 of 29 November 1990 went so far as to explicitly authorise states (including the UK) to liberate Kuwait.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 1995 the UN Security Council helped to provide the framework for, and thus legitimise certain key UN and NATO military actions. These included the positioning and use of the UN rapid reaction force just outside Sarajevo. This helped to end the siege of Sarajevo and prepared the way for the end of the war.
- UN SCR 2249 of 20 November 2015, calling on member states to take action against Islamic State/Da'esh – also known as ISIS – paved the way for the UK House of Commons vote on 2 December to authorise British participation in the bombing of ISIS targets in Syria.

The UK pattern, of sometimes acting outside the UN framework and sometimes inside it, would be easy to criticise. Yet there is a possible rationale for it. Other countries exhibit similar patterns of selective involvement. Each crisis really is different, as is each country. There is a serious case for tailoring responses – and the procedures for reaching decisions on action – to the particular circumstances of each case. The vast increase since 1945 in the number of UN member states (from 51 in 1945 to 193 today), and the significant role regional organisations play, reinforces an already strong case for careful discrimination in how issues are handled.

That the UK felt generally comfortable with the structure of the UN – notwithstanding early differences on certain colonial matters – has not meant that the UK always performed well in a UN context. Margaret Anstee describes examples of UK performance in (a) promoting UK representation in the Secretariat and (b) supporting projects or missions in which UK nationals in the Secretariat have a lead role. She concludes: ‘In both cases UK performance has been chequered... sometimes brilliant, sometimes disappointing.’¹³ On the strength of the evidence she presents, one can only agree.

Indeed, there are some respects in which the UK is in danger of selling itself short in regard to the skills needed in UN work. Here I will mention just one: the serious decline in language competence in the UK is undermining our capacity to relate to other societies. In his Witness Brief, David Stephen rightly observes that, while English is certainly the *lingua franca* of the UN, ‘there is a less attractive side to anglophonism, when it becomes synonymous with monoglotism.’ He is right to conclude that the UK should ‘work to ensure that its officials, both nationally and in the UN Secretariat, do not become cocooned in a monoglot Anglophone world.’¹⁴

On many issues that the UN has addressed – including disarmament, and the perennial demands for enlargement of the Security Council – the UK has a long record of willingness to support reform proposals in principle, combined with nervousness about rushing headlong into their implementation because they might in the end prove to be dysfunctional. In 1961 the UK’s policy towards the idea of a permanent UN force was to support it, but to point out the practical difficulties.¹⁵ Some might view that as emblematic of British policy more generally. It might even be seen as hypocritical. However, conservative caution about attractive radical proposals can be a perfectly respectable position to take.

Many positive aspects of the UK’s approach to the UN may spring partly from a healthy recognition that, if the UK is to justify its continued membership of the ‘Permanent Five’ members of the Security Council – and, one could add, if it is to overcome the widespread criticism of the UK’s participation in the 2003 intervention in Iraq – it must be seen to perform effectively. At the meeting at Church House on 13 January 2016, especially in the impressive presentations of the three UK Permanent Representatives to the UN – Matthew Rycroft (2015–), Jeremy Greenstock (1998–2003) and Mark Lyall Grant (2009–15) – there were at least three pieces of evidence of the results of such an approach:

1. The emphasis that has fairly consistently been placed on ensuring that UK personnel chosen to occupy key positions at the UN – whether in the UK Mission or as members of the Secretariat – are qualified and prepared for the work they will be doing.
2. The UK’s avoidance of the use of the veto. In the period since 1989 the UK has not cast a veto on the Security Council. The Permanent Representatives have, rightly, regarded this as a positive achievement.
3. The UK’s commitment to the UN’s Official Development Assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP). The degree of commitment shown is unusual, and is widely appreciated at the UN.

3 Sovereignty

It is a paradox that the UN has presided over the vast expansion in the number of sovereign states at the same time as political ideas (such as human rights and democracy) and certain countries (mainly but not exclusively 'Western') have in various ways challenged the supposedly absolute principle of sovereignty. The tension between human rights and sovereignty is built into the UN Charter, and is itself part of an age-old debate about the fundamental principles governing international relations. There is certainly no way that this debate can be resolved by a neat verbal formula. What is clear, however, is that Western visions since the end of the Cold War have been too optimistic – both about the consequences of even well-intentioned military interventions, and about the chances of achieving democratic change in authoritarian and/or fragile states. Elections are not quite the magic means of bringing conflicts to an end that many hoped they would be 20 years ago.⁶ Today, sadder and wiser, we know that interventions tend to arouse strong nationalist or separatist responses, and that democratisation is an extremely difficult and hazard-strewn process.

There is a larger question: have the Western powers sometimes gone too far in challenging the rights of sovereign states? I am not suggesting here that they should for one moment accept that dictators have the right to slaughter their own people; nor am I denying that there can be circumstances in which the Security Council, and even member states acting outside the its procedures, are fully entitled to act against a particular state that is violating fundamental norms. However, there is a serious moral and practical argument for respecting the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention. Those principles embody a decent respect for civilizations and cultures different from our own, and they may save us from rushing into unwise military adventures. Showing that we understand and respect that argument may allay some of the suspicion about Western interventionism – suspicion that Russia and China have been able to exploit in today's equivalent of the Soviet and Chinese liaisons with the non-aligned states in the last decades of the Cold War.

4 Selective security

The history of the Security Council, and the presentations we heard in WS3, amply confirm the view that it is always and necessarily selective. It is not the only body at the UN that is selective. All UN member states are selective as regards which issues they take to the UN and which peacekeeping or other operations they choose to support through actual participation. We do not yet have anything like a full system of collective security, in which the security of every state in the system is the concern of all. The prospect of completely unanimous military action against deviant states is as remote as it has ever been. What has been created is a partially effective system of international cooperation overlaid on an existing, and continuing, system of states and alliances. It is important that this should be recognised frankly: exaggerated claims for what the UN has achieved, or might achieve, invite damaging levels of scepticism about the organisation.

Yet the fact that there is a great deal of common action in the security sphere – in the form of peacekeeping, coalition military actions with Security Council approval, and continuous discussion of security issues between major powers – is an indication that some progress has been made. 'Selective security' is not a slogan or even a goal, but it is a sober description of what actually exists. Moreover, in almost all spheres of life selectivity can be a positive virtue. The UN Security Council could not possibly address on equal terms every single conflict, whether internal or international, and its selectivity is part of the explanation for the UN's unique record. No other international organisation of general competence can even begin to rival the UN's record of surviving 70 years.⁷

5 The decline of international war

In that period of 70 years, war between sovereign states has been in decline. The causes of the decline are numerous, but at the very least one can say that the UN's roles and actions have not been incompatible with that decline.⁸ At a time of numerous armed conflicts, and renewed power-political rivalry between Russia and Western states, it is important to recall that the UN era has seen significant achievements – in the field of development as well as security.

The decline of international war has coincided with a continuing high level of conflict, but mostly in the post-colonial world. There is a pattern of instability and civil war in many post-colonial states, and in many cases other states and movements are drawn in. Syria is a great stain on the UN, and we see daily how our inability to stop this war has consequences for our own societies. Essentially, in such post-colonial conflicts the UN has been asked, ever since 1946, to tackle a type of problem that it was not set up to address. It has gained much valuable experience of dealing with this type of problem, but Syria shows how difficult it can be to end such wars, especially when major powers have conflicting policies on the issue and at least one of them is willing to use the veto.

6 Where to now?

The many areas of difficulty and failure confirm that it is important to think about the areas in which the UN's roles could be improved.

6.1 Improvement in the functioning of the UN Security Council

Firstly, if we accept that structural reform of the Security Council is impossible to achieve for as long as major powers (especially China) oppose it, there is an urgent need for continued practical improvement in how the Council operates.⁹ The improvements in consultation with states that are not members of the Council have been significant and need to be further developed. The consideration of thematic issues, direct reports by experts on specific conflicts and visits to conflict areas have shown seriousness and have brought the Security Council into contact with realities. At WS3, Rycroft gave a vivid picture of actual and potential progress in these areas. He also pointed to the practical challenge that we all face: if Charter revision on this matter is impossible, what is the maximum change that can be achieved short of actual Charter revision?

6.2 Changes in the UN Secretariat

Secondly, the Secretariat needs to be more open to the world. At WS3, Michael Williams, who has held several important UN posts in matters relating to peace and security, argued persuasively that the performance of the Secretariat could be improved if changes in ethos and procedure could be initiated, with the aim of encouraging staff to go on field missions. And he may well be right that the Department of Political Affairs and Department of Peacekeeping Operations need to merge. I have personally seen just how absurd is the rigid division between these two departments, which have closely related (though certainly not identical) mandates.

6.3 Press reporting on the UN

Thirdly, some matters not under the UN's direct control need improvement. For example, I have often been struck by the variable quality of media reporting on the UN. In the UN's 70 years, only a handful of correspondents have developed real expertise in, and an appropriate feel for, the organisation. This is not a plea for the media to be kinder to the UN: indeed, a lively media might have exposed certain UN scandals earlier – whether about the wartime military record of former Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim (1972–81), corruption in the UN oil-for-food programme in Iraq in 1995–2010, or sex crimes by UN personnel that were the subject of a report by the SG in 2013 (UN General Assembly 2013).

6.4 Implications of climate change for the UN

Fourthly, it is self-evident that climate change has immense implications for the UN. The essence of the CO₂ problem – what makes it so intellectually and diplomatically challenging – is that action within any individual state to reduce CO₂ output only benefits that state and its inhabitants marginally, and only to the same extent as it benefits the rest of the world. To devise technologies, accounting mechanisms and diplomatic procedures to overcome this problem by providing incentives to decarbonise demands high levels of skill, ingenuity and commitment. It is natural that the UN should continue to address the issue, as it did at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015.

6.5 Maintenance of perspectives of realism and selectivity in UN and Security Council affairs

Finally, we need to continue and further develop the strong UK tradition of viewing the UN in general, and the Security Council in particular, in a perspective that, while recognising and applauding the purposes and principles of the UN as enunciated in 1945, also encompasses that strong element of realism and selectivity that has been an important part of the UN's history and has contributed to such modest success as it has enjoyed.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Lord Gladwyn (1990: 25). See also the unashamed assertion that his proposals for dealing with the US representatives 'had a certain flavour of Niccolò Machiavelli, for which I was no doubt responsible' (Gladwyn 1972: 117).

³ Brief for WS3 at Church House, London, 13 January 2016, in file of pre-submitted Witness Briefs, p. 6.

⁴ David Stephen, brief for WS3, in file of pre-submitted Witness Briefs, p. 14.

⁵ Edward Hale of the Foreign Office's UN Department, 'A Military Force for the United Nations', 7 April 1961, in the Public Record Office as FO-371/160957, UN-2284/8, cited in Briscoe (2003: 133).

⁶ At WS3, Jonathan Prentice was right to state that, in the process of ending conflicts, the contribution of elections is often over-estimated.

⁷ For a fuller discussion of the concept and practice of selective security, see Roberts and Zaum (2008).

⁸ For a brief discussion of the evidence of the decline of international war, and the possible causes, see *ibid.*, pp. 31–5.

⁹ A point made by Francesc Vendrell and others at WS3.

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B.3.3 Experiences in Development and Peacekeeping, and UK Support

Margaret Anstee^{1,2}

Abstract

In her contribution to WS3, Margaret Anstee describes her early career in Asia and Latin America with the UN, mainly focusing on development issues, and her experience with respect to UK government support to later senior positions she held as Assistant Secretary-General with UNDP and UNDTCD (the first woman to reach ASG level), and then Under-Secretary-General in charge of the United Nations Office in Vienna. She then relates her experience as head of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission, the first woman to head a UN peacekeeping mission, including experience of British support to her. Finally, she highlights opportunities which she considers the UK could have taken in relation to the implementation of the 'Brahimi Report' on peacekeeping.

Keywords: UN, EPTA/TAB, UNDP, DTCD, UNOV, Peacekeeping, UNAVEM, Brahimi Report.

1 Background

Most of my 41 years as a UN civil servant (1952–93) were spent in the field on operational programmes and, when at Headquarters – New York (1974–87) and Vienna (1987–92) – I was directing operational programmes all over the world. Initially, therefore, I had little knowledge of the UK's performance or policies in the Security Council. My contribution is predominantly from the field perspective of a British national working in different parts of the secretariat, without the political support of the UK government, except on rare occasions. Beginning as a local staff member in a tiny new office in the Philippines, I was very remote from Headquarters and the political and policymaking bodies in New York. This changed in 1956 when I went to Latin America as the first woman field officer of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance of the UN Technical Assistance Board (EPTA/TAB) and the then UN Special Fund, which merged in 1965 to form the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As a Resident Representative I found myself for the first time in an intensely political environment. Resistance to American dominance of Latin America in pursuit of the anachronistic Monroe Doctrine (1823)³ was growing, fuelled by several acts of aggression by the US. The Cold War was escalating and any signs of non-conformity or liberal policies were construed as Communist sympathies.

In 1965, the US intervened to unseat the democratically elected president of the Dominican Republic, Juan Bosch, in a manner reminiscent of the overthrow of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzman of Guatemala a decade earlier, in 1954. On one of my rare visits to New York en route to home leave and, invited to lunch by the UK Permanent Representative, I expressed my dismay and surprise about the UK's support of the intervention. The Representative explained that the special relationship with the US and the need for Western solidarity was behind the decision. I cannot help suspecting that similar considerations would have guided UK positions at the UN.

2 Career progression from local staff member to ASG/USG with UNDP and UNDTCD

Early on I discovered that, while many member states were assiduous in promoting the careers of their nationals already in the secretariat, the UK was averse to doing so. This 'hands off' approach was, of course, the morally correct policy, though I said at the time 'The UK is playing cricket while everyone else is playing American football!'

I rose gradually in the ranks of EPTA/TAB and then UNDP field staff under my own steam. I only began to be noticed with my transfer to UNDP Headquarters in 1974, and then my promotion to UNDP Assistant Administrator (Assistant Secretary-General (ASG)-level) in 1977, and then UN ASG on transfer to the main UN Secretariat in 1978. I was the first woman to reach the ASG level. The UN post came about because the Secretary-General rejected two UK nationals proposed by Her Majesty's Government (HMG) for the newly created United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (UNDTCD) as insufficiently qualified and decided to appoint me instead. Thus the UK assisted my appointment but without meaning to do so!

Then I stagnated for eight years and became the longest serving ASG at that time. There was still no woman Under-Secretary-General (USG). Opportunities did arise and I was considered by many to be the most qualified candidate within the Secretariat, but I was constantly passed over. I consider this to be because of my British nationality and my gender. Such posts included United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) twice, and director of the World Food Programme. Initially the UK government supported me for both of these roles but this support crumbled in favour of male candidates proposed by other states – a Swiss candidate proposed by the US in the case of UNHCR (he left before completing his term and I was proposed again but by then it was too late) and an Australian presented by his government at the last moment. In all the cases HMG did not seem prepared to mount a strong campaign or stay the course in the face of alternative candidates presented by political allies.

In 1986, when Brian Urquhart retired, the then Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, told me he wished to promote me to Under-Secretary-General and appoint me to head all peacekeeping operations. This time the UK actively opposed my advancement, having a candidate of their own, a senior British diplomat. The UK Permanent Representative to the UN told me that I could not aspire to this post as no woman could ever command the military. 'What about Mrs Thatcher?' I enquired, in vain! It appeared to me that they wanted their own man and I did not qualify, despite having been a member of the senior branch of the UK Foreign Service at the beginning of my career.

In 1987, Pérez de Cuéllar at last succeeded in making me Under-Secretary-General when, under his own authority, he reorganised the UN Office in Vienna (UNOV) (the third UN headquarters), strengthening the authority of the Director-General and extending it to cover, *inter alia*, all UN drug-related activities.

I do not think the UK was involved or consulted, but the prime minister, Mrs Thatcher wrote me a personal letter of congratulations, offering all support, saying she was happy that the senior woman in the UN was British and occupying a post to which they attributed much importance. She was as good as her word. When she came to the General Assembly the Secretary-General invited me to his meeting with her.

She took the lead and, fixing me with a steely blue gaze, said 'Since Miss Anstee is here, let's discuss drugs', launching into a claim that, being a trained chemist, she knew that modern herbicides could provide a quick solution. Taking a deep breath I mentioned a few other factors such as poverty and the need to reduce demand as well as production, and a lively exchange ensued until she noticed that the Secretary-General's eyes were beginning to glaze over, and I to fear for my career prospect.

The prime minister suggested we continue the discussion in her office in 10 Downing Street the next time I was in London. This we duly did. I managed to persuade her to modify her position and the result was the highly successful first and only global conference on the reduction of the consumption of narcotic drugs, held under the joint auspices of HMG and the UN Office in Vienna, at which the UK provided funds and the venue, and my office provided technical support. It was an excellent example of member state and Secretariat cooperation.

A crisis at the beginning of my period in Vienna led to a high-level intervention by the Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey (later Lord) Howe. The head of one of the drug programmes that was to come under my authority according to the new arrangements took the unethical step of circulating a draft resolution to member states attending a drugs conference rescinding the Secretary-General's decision to appoint me. This flagrant act, contrary to the oath of obedience that we each swore on joining the UN, should have been severely sanctioned immediately, but the official in question was a protégé of the then Italian Foreign Minister, Giulio Andreotti, and no Secretary-General would risk such a confrontation. It was Geoffrey Howe who took the matter up with Andreotti. An uneasy compromise was achieved but when new problems arose later on the UK Foreign Office was not as supportive as the prime minister.

True to its tradition, the UK has been much less blatant than other member states in pushing for candidates from its own national government services to occupy senior political posts in the secretariat who are not always fully qualified for that particular function.

There have been cases when a UK candidate well suited for one particular post, but who has been unsuccessful, has been switched to another for which they are less well suited, in order to maintain a seat at the political high table in the UN secretariat.

3 Peacekeeping and peace-building

3.1 UN Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II) (1992–93)

In 1992, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali appointed me to my last official field posting as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Angola and head of UNAVEM II.

UNAVEM II was one of the first batch of peacekeeping missions emerging after the end of the Cold War that were designed to embrace elements other than those of a purely military nature. In the case of UNAVEM II the mission was to end in free and fair multi-party elections and the installation of a new, democratic government. Based on negotiations in which the UN had had no part, the Security Council mandate limited its role to monitoring the execution of the Bicesse Accords⁴ and provided an inadequate mandate and resources. The UK presumably took part in the Council's discussions but does not seem to have argued against the 'small and manageable operation' favoured by the Council. By that time, the UK had abandoned its earlier practice of contributing military contingents to UN peacekeeping forces on the ground. The UK Ambassador to Angola was, however, extremely helpful in supporting my difficult mission and in feeding information and requests back to London, especially during the battle for Luanda in which he played a key role as the UK was president of the European Union.

I held regular meetings with all UN Ambassadors in Angola, especially those with seats on the Security Council so as to keep them informed of developments and needs. The irony was that those of us on the ground usually found ourselves in agreement, but found that our views were not shared by the policymakers in our respective Headquarters who had no direct experience of field activities but seemed rather to act on collective thinking at a different level.

It was a combination of all these factors that led to the tragic culmination of the mission in failure, with an incalculable loss of Angolan lives. Behind it all I felt there was general international indifference to the plight of an African country, a forgotten tragedy in contrast to the conflict in former Yugoslavia, which was perceived (wrongly I believe, in a global geopolitical context) as greater. This was a general failure in international strategic thinking but I could have wished that the UK, with its vast international experience, would have taken the initiative in broaching an alternative approach.

Another fundamental flaw in UNAVEM II was the lack of any provision in the mandate or the resources for peace-building, a concept still in its infancy then, or the assurance of sustainable peace. The mission was to hold the elections and then leave the country to its fate. I had to canvas individual member states for voluntary funding of such obvious immediate follow-up measures as vocational training of demobilised soldiers (Germany did this) or the provision of barracks to house the new army (the UK did this).

The UN was not supposed to gather military intelligence but only 'information' of a less sensitive nature. SRSGs were thus dependent on major powers with sophisticated intelligence services to provide secret data that might be relevant in a conflict situation. The US and UK occasionally did this but not always. Coming back through London from New York to Luanda in June 1992, about halfway through the electoral registration period in Angola, I was invited to attend a meeting in the Foreign Office to discuss the situation.

Throughout the meeting there was an undercurrent of expectation as if something of importance was about to be imparted but it was never divulged (even though I had myself been a member of the UK Foreign Service, had also worked in the Prime Minister's Office and had sworn the Official Secrets Act). It was only months later that I learned that an act was being planned by one of the parties to the conflict that would have disrupted the electoral process. By then, preventive action had been taken but it would have affected some of my decisions had I known what was going on at the time.

3.2 Security Council resolutions on UNAVEM II

By rejecting the election results of September 1992, withdrawing his generals from the newly formed joint army and resuming the war, Jonas Savimbi (founder and leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola – UNITA) was in flagrant breach of the commitments that UNITA and he had undertaken under the Bicesse Accords and with the Security Council. This rank disobedience should have been punished immediately with the strongest sanctions. Instead, the Council adopted a series of half-hearted resolutions, wringing its hands over the turn of events and timidly increasing the strength of the verbs but still stopping short of any form of sanctions until September 1993, and even then applying only a limited regime. The reason for this was US insistence that they still had influence with Savimbi, did not want to alienate him and could persuade him to cooperate.

The UNITA lobby in Washington continued very strong; the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that their priorities lay elsewhere and so the US was taking the lead.⁵ By January 1993, UNITA had occupied huge swathes of Angola and a humanitarian crisis of vast dimensions was overwhelming the civilian population. At about that time the Security Council called upon me as SRSG to mount a large programme of humanitarian relief with the resources at my disposal (these were rapidly diminishing and this anodyne phrase meant

that no additional money would be forthcoming). I believe that it might have been helpful if the UK had insisted that UNITA's transgressions were summarily dealt with and resourced. As the conflict and UNITA threats against me escalated after the elections in September 1992, the Security Council adopted a number of resolutions and presidential statements calling on UNITA to withdraw the death threats against me. The UK was part of these supportive measures. When my mission in Angola ended in July 1993, I had a farewell session with the Council, at which the president, the then UK Ambassador, David (later Lord) Hannay, was particularly generous in his tribute to me.

4 Follow-up to the 'Brahimi Report' on peacekeeping

The 'Brahimi Report' (UN 2000), commissioned to recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping and peace-building operations, contained a paragraph recommending that the Secretary-General should prepare a UN plan for peace-building. This plan would ensure the effective participation and cohesion of all the relevant agencies and organisations of the UN System, through all stages of dealing with a particular conflict, from the initial ceasefire to a long-term development programme designed to address the causes of conflict and establish the conditions for sustainable peace. Now retired, I was asked to undertake this work as a consultant attached to the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), assisted by a small team from the Secretariat.

We produced an articulated plan which envisaged a versatile system adaptable to each individual situation. It comprised a multi-agency body at Headquarters, centred on DPA, to establish the overall policy and the respective roles of the various entities at the start of the operation. Once the overall plan had been devised for a country, responsibility for its implementation would be delegated to a similarly composed multi-agency body at the field level, led by the SRSG. The central policy board at Headquarters would receive regular reports from the field and monitor progress, intervening *only* in the event of emergencies or deviations from the original policy blueprint. In short, there was to be maximum centralisation of policy between the various UN bodies concerned to ensure cohesion of overall approach combined with maximum decentralisation of execution to the field level, to ensure rapid and efficient implementation, reduce bureaucracy and increase accountability.

The snag was that my remit required the final draft to be cleared with no less than 17 UN agencies. This took an inordinate amount of time and when the comments (mostly self-serving) were included, the proposal resembled a 'dog's dinner' rather than the original coherent and integrated plan. I had suggested that a pilot project be tried in one or two countries where the conditions were not too adverse. To my dismay the Administrative Committee on Coordination decided on Afghanistan, where the Taliban were just tightening their hold! An integrated strategy was prepared there but predictably could never be implemented. The plan was discussed by governments in various fora but in the absence of a powerful backer and amid clamour for a Peacebuilding Commission it lost its way. After some previous dispiriting experiences I had foreseen that something like this would happen and at an early stage sought to interest the UK Mission to the UN. I saw the Ambassador, and a member of the UK mission came from time to time for briefing but there was no real support. I had thought that this could be a worthy cause for the UK to support, which, if successful, would also lay the foundations for solving other problems of coherence and efficiency latent in the UN System, but it appeared that the UK's priorities lay elsewhere. Another great chance of reform was lost. I do not know what the Secretariat did with the ill-fated plan. I have a copy!

5 Conclusions

This article has described some examples of two kinds of UK performance:

1. in promoting UK representation in the staff of the secretariat;
2. in supporting specific projects or missions in which UK nationals in the secretariat are playing a lead role.

Of the two I consider the second the more important. In both cases the UK performance has been chequered in my experience: sometimes brilliant, sometimes disappointing. It is thus impossible to reach an overall assessment.

One general impression I do have is that the UK could have been more adventurous in taking the lead in strengthening Security Council resolutions establishing mandates and resource levels for peacekeeping and peace-building. There has perhaps been excessive readiness in following the position of the US rather than ploughing a more independent furrow.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Margaret Anstee's article was submitted to WS3.

³ The policy, established by President Monroe in 1823, that the US opposed further European colonization of and interference with independent nations in the Western hemisphere.

⁴ 'The Bicesse Accords, also known as the Estoril Accords, laid out a transition to multi-party democracy in Angola under the supervision of the United Nations' UNAVEM II mission. President José Eduardo dos Santos of the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola] and Jonas Savimbi of UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] signed the accord in Lisbon, Portugal on May 31, 1991' (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicesse_Accords).

⁵ Both UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, and the MPLA led by Jose Eduardo dos Santos, hired US public relations or lobbying firms to promote their respective causes through influencing the US Congress and government into providing military, diplomatic and other support.

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B.3.4 Lessons and Recommendations from Seven Decades: International Peace and Security

Jeremy Greenstock^{1,2}

Abstract

In the concluding session, Jeremy Greenstock summarised the discussions and drew out key principles relating to the UK's role in facilitating the UN's work in peace and security as the bedrock for effective development work. He highlighted examples of his own personal experience in dealing with UN matters; underlined the UK's key, and often unique, skills; and urged greater recognition of the UK's soft power capacity in diplomacy and the promotion of a stronger rules-based international order. In his concluding remarks, he highlighted the UN's unique role in bringing together and protecting a wide diversity of nation states, the need for a strong unity of purpose and strategy between London and New York, the importance of good communications between all types of actors and, finally, the importance of the UK's diplomatic and facilitation role in brokering selective issues affecting the UN and member states.

Keywords: UN, Witness Seminars, peace and security, UK diplomacy.

1 Introductory remarks

These comments draw on my experience as chairman of United Nations Association (UNA)-UK as well as of being the UK Permanent Representative at the UN in New York. In this final session we need to move from analysis to prescription, to prescribe where we think the UN should be going, and what lessons this set of Witness Seminars should bring to the UN, to the UK at the UN, and to the UK in the context of its national interest.

We will attempt to draw out where the UN stands against its geopolitical background and where human society is going in the twenty-first century, because we have to look forwards instead of backwards to learn the true nature of the lessons that all of us in our professional lives, as practitioners in the UN and as observers, have gathered through our great interest in a working global institution.

Inevitably, we must be more political in this session. Politics rules in the end, as it rules at the UN. One central theme is sovereignty and the role of the nation state. After 70 years of peace, in a history of human affairs which has never, ever known more than 100 years of quasi-peace between human societies, we are reaching the fourth quarter of this maximum span of a period of peace – *unless* we do something about the natural tendencies of human beings to be violent.

2 Purpose

In this session, we home in on three issues:

(1) *The potential for UN service for peace and security.* The UN's continuing potential to offer a global service for peace and security against a changing geopolitical background. The health of the UN is a vital UK national interest – and, by the way, a vital national interest also for all those member states who place such a premium on their sovereignty being protected by the UN.

(2) *The capacity of the UK to continue to play its traditional roles:* The capacity of the UK to continue to play the role at the UN that it has played for 70 years. Whether it will continue to do so as relative power structures and relationships change, and whether its image is right to play that role, is something we need to comment on.

(3) *Recommendations for UK policymaking:* UNA-UK, British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants (BAFUNCS) and King's College, but particularly UNA-UK, want to take to the UK government, as well as to the UN, some recommendations on the requirements for UK policymaking and resource allocation, in the context of finding global solutions to global problems through collective diplomacy.

3 Personal experience and lessons learned

I've been asked to use this moment to offer a witness account, in terms of my five years at the UN from 1998 to 2003, and I shall do so very briefly. I've given a succinct witness statement, nothing like as anecdotal, as interesting and as amusing as Margaret Anstee's, but a succinct statement about what the lessons are for somebody who has worked at the Security Council. I think the most important lessons relate to:

3.1 The relevance of the UN: The UN remains highly relevant for the maintenance of global peace and a stable and increasingly prosperous world – much more relevant than most nation states, including the UK, give it the credit for 70 years on. Why? It's about the need to avoid big power conflict which, much more than the impacts of climate change, or a lack of security in certain regions, or the absence of growth in the global economy, is the immediate threat to continuing successful human existence. The potential for big power conflict does not attract enough attention, while all these other things are going on – that is, the potential for a relapse into real conflict amongst great powers in competition with each other. We need to have a sense of where power really lies, that's what politics is all about. The UN cannot be successful if it just dabbles in the bureaucratic interstices of its charter, mandates and discussions, and its formals and informals, and informal informals. It has to analyse where power lies and where power and human instincts are dragging human affairs in the next generation.

3.2 The UK's strong skill sets: Secondly, the UK is as skilled as any member state in its capacity to operate in a complex, political, multilateral environment. Perhaps it is losing some influence and impact due to the changes in relative power around the world. Perhaps it is losing a touch of political will at the highest political levels, to play the role that it can play, and has played, as will no doubt be illustrated with further anecdotes during this session. And perhaps, I sense, it is not focusing on the real potential of highly qualified personal diplomacy by Permanent Representatives in New York and elsewhere in the multilateral system. There is scope – as Matthew Rycroft has indicated and as I'm sure Mark Malloch-Brown will indicate, as Crispin Tickell and David Hannay can show in their stories, and as I can testify to – for personal diplomacy to make a difference in that inspiring and frustrating atmosphere of New York, where the courtesy of relationships can sometimes, with intellectual skill, trump the competition between national interests and produce answers where you didn't think that answers could be produced. In my experience there are no two better countries at doing that than the UK and France at the UN.

In that context, the UK does retain a certain amount of respect. Yes, it gets vilified for being a permanent member. Yes, it gets vilified for our role in Iraq and for the damage that Iraq has done to the image of the UN, to the image of the US, to the image of the UK, and to the image of multilateral diplomacy, when you contrast it with the April 1999 Chicago speech of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Yes, the UK's relative power is diminishing, but it is constantly contributing to collective diplomacy, looking for the best outcomes for the Security Council, being a penholder (i.e. a

lead drafter) for good reason – in that we're better at it than most others, and others recognise that and want us to do it. That active role can be brought out as a matter of criticism and resentment, but it is also respected. As Danilo Türk, the Slovenian Permanent Representative, said to me when we were both serving on the Security Council: 'It's only you two countries [France and the UK] that can produce resolutions in industrial quantities.' And the work of the UN Security Council on peace and security is an industry.

3.3 The under-valuation of UK diplomacy: Are we still prepared from the top political level downwards to make concessions, to put our energy and effort into all of this? I feel at this moment that diplomacy is being undervalued in London. It has been said during the course of today, but I want to underline this very particular policy point: we are one of only two countries in the world that devotes 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to our overseas assistance budget and 2 per cent or more of GDP to our defence budget.

But where is the third leg of the stool of a balanced hard–soft power capability? Diplomacy is the professional skill which brings together development and military intervention; that has to deal with the politics of global issues going wrong. It appears, however, that it is not being given the priority it deserves. I am not just talking about budget cuts to my old department; I am talking about my interest as an elector in the United Kingdom who wants a peaceful world for a more prosperous UK. You cannot do without diplomacy; and you cannot do without the high skills of British diplomacy at the UN being resourced to have representatives around the world who feed into the teamwork that is the hallmark of British operations in multilateral diplomacy. And if that is not a lesson that gets through to the British government out of this series of witness statements, I won't have been doing my job as the corrector of the draft that eventually goes to the British government.

3.4 The need to invest in a rules-based international order: We also fail to invest sufficiently in a rules-based international order. We want it, we talk about it, but we do not invest in it in the way that this session will try to recommend. Yes, there was damage from Iraq. Yes, we are draining power. But are we also, as the UK, withdrawing a bit into our shell because we have too many domestic concerns – 'domestic' to include the European Union environment – to look at a global situation which, against the background of the polarisation of identity politics in the world, is going wrong on us as the fourth quarter of that 100 years begins to trouble us? That is what we need to discuss in this session.

4 Concluding remarks and recommendations

We've handled a huge amount today and we could go on for a long time if we didn't have other lives to lead. I now want to say one or two things about the substance we've covered over the past eight or nine hours.

4.1 The UN's role in bringing together and protecting nation states: Some of the things that have been said underline that the world has got a problem. The problem concerns the fragmentation of political objectives amongst 193 or more nation states. The central theme of what the UN is about, and of what we have been talking about today, is actually its role in bringing together as well as protecting nation states.

The UN is a member state-oriented institution, and the level of decision-making, for all the metaphors about collective diplomacy at the UN, in the European Union, at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), or wherever in multilateral diplomacy, still rests with the capital of member states. There is no higher level of political decision-making, where the buck stops, than the president or prime minister in the capital. The power–politics aspects of what we've been talking about today have to be taken seriously across the whole range of the complexity of geopolitical interaction. To play its role at the UN, the UK has to do more than just have a wonderful Permanent Representative at the UN, and serious people in Geneva – of which Julian Braithwaite is one at this moment, and his predecessor, Karen Pierce, who might have

been with us today. We do take the other UN centres seriously, but the Security Council and the politics of New York is what captures the world's headlines and what leads on the distribution of power decision-making in today's world.

4.2 The relationship between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London and UK Mission to the UN in New York: The relationship between New York and London has only been lightly touched upon. The Permanent Representative, for all the skills of his or her diplomacy, cannot operate without political direction – and that political direction has got to have objectives, it's got to have strategy, it's got to have will and it's got to have an interest in the power of the UN to continue solving global problems. And those of you in this seminar who are more political than others, or are in a position to affect the decision-making of politicians, must constantly bring them to realise that the UK is a marvellously skilled player in this complex arena of human interaction, internationally, if it is allowed and empowered to do so, which it isn't always.

4.3 The importance of good communications in promoting development, peace and security: What the UN is all about in its main work is the development of weaker states, including the peace and security aspects of development. As both Mark Lyall Grant and Matthew Rycroft will recall, I passed on my advice that you have to make it clear that your privileged position as a permanent member of the Security Council recognises that the UN is all about development, and peace and security are an essential component of development. But that has to be managed through communication – that is the methodology of the UN. Communication includes being in a position to, and being prepared to and authorised to, speak to really nasty people, both at the UN, where the courtesies of the UN enable you to do so, but in capitals also, and in other groups around the world where things are going wrong.

The importance of good communications was underlined in the case of the travesty of Hamas being excluded from the Middle East peace process when it is a stakeholder. In my view, it was a method of Israel's to avoid the possibility of any meaningful discussion of a peace settlement – one of those tricks of political diplomacy to have a buffer zone that is protected so that the real zone never gets dealt with.

The UK should be above all of that and use its skills to get into difficult areas. Adam Roberts' point about selective security, not collective security, is absolutely fundamental. It is not in our interest at a particular moment to throw away the principles we stand up for in order to go for an urgent short-term objective. I believe that Iraq was all about that: principles were destroyed in the ambition to get rid of a political dictator who wasn't immediately troubling our national interests.

4.4 The importance of the UK's skills and facilitation role in brokering issues affecting the UN: We have to analyse these things better. We have to be intelligent at adapting to our modern circumstances. We have to have the team to operate within our own make-up as the UK, and at the UN, and with our international partners, to deal with the issues that actually confront us. The UK is, most of the time, in its operations, a more skilled player than people sometimes realise.

I will just give you a small anecdote in that respect, in relation to the peace-making process relating to East Timor, because it's been mentioned today and I like the history of it. I apologise for the small element of trumpet-blowing involved, but that Security Council mission to East Timor in the first few days of September 1999 was a marvellous reintroduction, under Kieran Prendergast's impulsion, of the idea of a Security Council mission. It wasn't all 15 members wanting to get on a jolly to go somewhere. It was five members of the Security Council – an immediate advantage in that it wasn't a crowded bus.

The mission was led by one of those really influential Permanent Representatives from an unassuming country, Martin Andjaba of Namibia, which often makes so much difference at the UN. It was Martin Andjaba who stood up to Senator Jesse Helms in the Security Council in 2001 in response to Senator Helms' statement that the Security Council should realise that the dominant force in the decision-making on international affairs is the voice of the American people. This statement elicited dead silence around the horseshoe table. We all sort of hummed around in responding to Jesse Helms. Martin Andjaba eventually spoke last and pointed out that while listening to Senator Helms' statement carefully, in his home country of Namibia the United States was of no use in delivering independence to a country where the majority of the people supported his political party and wanted freedom from the influence of South Africa. He expressed the opinion that the Senator should realise sometimes that the American people do not stand up for freedom. And that put him in his place.

On the East Timor mission Martin Andjaba was the leader; he had the moral authority of an unthreatening state and a charismatic personality, and it was behind his leadership that I was able, first of all, to bring the British press with me, to put real pressure on the Indonesian Minister of Defence, General Wiranto. And it was the use of the contact group in Jakarta – of the US, Germany, Australia, Japan, the UK and France, which actually worked behind the scenes without the mission knowing what I was doing to fix things with Indonesia's President Habibie – that would make sure that what Habibie wanted to do was going to work internationally. And it was that connection of moral authority and diplomatic skulduggery that actually produced results.

The British are always there playing that sort of role. When the Americans do it in that sort of way, they do it brilliantly, but it usually leaks before they get there. When the French do it in the French context, they do it brilliantly. And when the French and the British are working together in the UN Security Council (or the UN generally), nothing but a veto can defeat them because they both have wide and differing constituencies. And my relationship with the French Permanent Representative, Jean-David Levitte, where we both defied instructions from national capitals in order to work together on Africa, was an example of personal diplomacy being able to work on the opportunities that multilateral diplomacy gives you.

There is an enormous amount to be done, still, with a UN that stands for legitimacy, for communication and for the absence of big power conflict, which will be the death of this period of peace if we are not careful.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the authors and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Edited transcript of Jeremy Greenstock's introductory and concluding remarks of Session Four of WS3: The UK on the Security Council – Lessons and Recommendations from Seven Decades.

PART C: Conclusions and Recommendations

*Richard Jolly, Adam Roberts and Jeremy Greenstock*¹

The three Witness Seminars resulted in the preparation of a series of recommendations which were forwarded to the prime minister, Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) with respect to WS1; to DFID and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs with respect to WS2; and to the FCO and the Ministry of Defence, with respect to WS3. These recommendations are reproduced below.

C.1 Witness Seminar 1: Development Cooperation

The conclusions reached in WS1 are as follows:

At country level, the UN and its agencies have often had considerable impact. Leadership by UK professionals has often been an important ingredient of this success.

The Millennium Development Goals have served as an important focus for UN development activities, in practical achievements and in raising the public profile and popular awareness of the UN's work. The Sustainable Development Goals – to which you² contributed through the high-level panel – will help carry these achievements forward.

But the UN has reached a critical juncture, with weak leadership and an increasingly poor image internationally. The UK needs to press for it to be strengthened.

We identified areas for priority UK attention and action:

1. *The UN System needs a stronger Secretary-General.* The next appointment, due in 2016, is a major opportunity for states to select a highly competent individual with true international stature, vested with adequate authority and freedom to act. We believe that this will require a better appointment process, and limiting the appointment to a single, longer term. We are encouraged by the steps that the UK has already taken in support of this, and by the widespread support for the 1 for 7 Billion campaign, which United Nations Association (UNA)-UK helped to found and which has a grass-roots base of 45 million people worldwide. We ask you, prime minister, Mr Cameron, to use your personal influence to support the call for a fair, open and inclusive process of selection, and for a single, longer term.
2. *The UN System needs stronger leadership at all levels.* 80 per cent of those entering the UN at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and above are political appointees with no previous experience of the UN and often with inadequate qualifications for the posts they hold. A similar situation often exists at other levels of the UN. The UK could do much to improve this situation, for example by supporting clearer criteria for appointments and more professional induction and training schemes at all levels, in all of which the UK has expertise and professional experience to contribute. This also applies to the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system at country level and coordination processes relating to 'Delivering as One', the enhancement of national ownership, and the promotion of human rights.
3. *The UN System needs structural reinforcement.* One way of achieving this would be increasing the share of UK aid allocated as core (un-earmarked) funding for the UN. We are delighted that the UK has led the way by becoming the first G8 country to meet the 0.7 per cent target. The UK is now the largest contributor to multilateral aid.

4. *DFID studies have shown that multilateral aid, carefully administered, produces high value for money.* Yet a relatively small share of UK multilateral funding goes to the UN's funds and specialized agencies (under 10 per cent), with most going to the European Union, and the share to the UN has fallen since 2011. A larger share going to the UN programmes, especially as core support, would increase the net economic and social impact of UK aid, as well as provide more leverage for the UK on the Boards of the organisations concerned.
5. *The UK's influence on the work of the UN can be greatly strengthened from within by expanding opportunities for UK citizens to work throughout the UN System.* The Conservative manifesto pledges to triple the size of the International Citizen Service with opportunities to volunteer abroad. We applaud this ambition and hope that UN Volunteer opportunities will be publicised through this initiative.

C.2 Witness Seminar 2: Humanitarian Action

While the seminar did not adopt formal recommendations, the seminar's Chair, Adam Roberts, in his concluding remarks, identified six issues arising from the discussions that participants agreed should be considered ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). They can be summarised as follows:

1. *The need for government consent and cooperation:* Almost all humanitarian activities require consent and assistance from governments, who may perceive humanitarian actors as a threat – to their basic competence and to their legitimacy. While recognising that government actions can contribute to the emergence of a humanitarian crisis or hinder its amelioration, humanitarian actors should consider adopting 'respect' as their default position. This should not preclude criticism when necessary, but may provide a better starting point when seeking to establish working relations with governments.
2. *Respect for the local culture, economy and language:* The legitimacy of a humanitarian operation depends not only on interactions at the state level but also on how much it respects local culture and capacity. This is at least as important as legitimacy from 'on high' based on UN credentials. The importance of speaking local languages was emphasised throughout the seminar but is not reflected adequately in the conclusions of *Restoring Humanity*, the WHS synthesis report.
3. *Clarity on 'protection' of civilians:* Protection of civilians is multifaceted and difficult. The word 'protection' is too often used imprecisely and therefore confusingly. The UN needs to avoid raising false expectations and using vague and imprecise language that inhibits good decision-making. The WHS should discuss the complex relationship between humanitarian action and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. At present, neither the Responsibility to Protect nor the Human Rights up Front initiative are referred to in the preparatory documents for the WHS.
4. *Effective coordination of humanitarian activities:* Good coordination of humanitarian assistance requires effective collaboration between local, national and international actors. This means designing coordination systems that promote this kind of collaboration as well as providing leeway for actors on the ground to build the partnerships they need. The seminar presentations gave a convincing picture of how, whether or not there is improved coordination machinery at the top, a huge amount depends on practical collaboration and personal chemistry. This implies also a need to ensure quality appointments to key positions.
5. *Improved management of whistle-blowing:* A particular problem within the UN System is the perception that staff members are reluctant to report failures, abuses or corruption because they fear that their reports may be ignored or that they will face retribution. Documents for the WHS make welcome references to accountability and transparency but unfortunately no mention of whistle-blowing.

6. *Financial stability and predictability*: Financing of humanitarian action is too precarious. The WHS needs to identify a range of new solutions. This could include more flexibility in the allocation of bilateral assistance; for example, the use of development aid for emergency relief, including in countries not classified as 'developing'.

C.3 Witness Seminar 3: Peace and Security

The UK at the Security Council

1. Continue to support improvements to Council working methods that increase transparency, accountability and effectiveness;
2. Continue to work towards strengthening the Council's capacity to act preventively, including by pushing for briefings from the secretariat and for an action-orientated Council culture;
3. Call out states that are reverting to outdated conceptions of sovereignty or that disregard the protection of human rights and the authority of the Council, and engage them in open debate;
4. Support the closer integration of the work of the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Political Affairs (DPA);
5. Consider how to help strengthen the capacity of elected Security Council members to work effectively on the Council.

The British government

1. Reconsider its investment in diplomacy and the FCO;
2. Outline a strategy for the UN and its place in British interests;
3. Improve knowledge and understanding across Whitehall of the UN, its constraints and its importance to British national interests;
4. Maintain the political independence of appointees to the Secretariat and ensure that such positions are recruited on merit;
5. Continue to strengthen its engagement with UN peace operations, including its work on the Council and its contributions of civilian, military and police personnel.

British parliamentarians

1. Hold the government to account on its commitment to the FCO, demonstrating support for stronger investment in the UK's diplomatic capacity;
2. Scrutinise the government's approach to the UN and call for a comprehensive strategy that establishes the place of the UN in UK national interests;
3. Insist on regular briefings about the UK's work on the Security Council, particularly with regards to improving working methods and strengthening its preventive capacities.

Notes

¹ The opinions expressed here represent the views of the author and participants in the Witness Seminars, and not necessarily those of the IDS, the UNA or BAFUNCS.

² Here, 'you' refers to the UK government. In July 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the 27 members of a high-level panel to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, the target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The panel was co-chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, and it included leaders from civil society, the private sector and government. The panel was part of the Secretary-General's post-2015 initiative mandated by the 2010 MDG Summit (excerpt from www.un.org/sg/management/hlppost2015.shtml).



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