Blinded by Humanity: What next for humanitarian aid?

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Humanitarian aid – Context and Constraints

- Legal
- Financial
- Organisational
- Cultural
- Political

- Refugees, internally displaced and asylum-seekers
- Coordination of humanitarian aid
- Peacekeeping
- UN policy
- Mine action
Context - Legal

**International Refugee Law:**

- Convention on Status of Refugees (1951) and Protocol (1967)
  - Is it fit for purpose?

**International Humanitarian Law (IHL):**

- Geneva Conventions (1949) and Protocols (1977)
  - Implications for humanitarian aid in conflicts
Constraints - Financial

Funding of humanitarian aid is voluntary

- “CNN factor” – some emergencies well-funded, others not
- Programmes “donor-driven”

Solutions?

- Other “pooled funds”
- Other solutions?
Constraints - Organisational

International humanitarian system

- Red X, UN, Bilaterals, NGOs, Private sector
- Fragmented and Supply driven

Emergency Relief Coordinator – (since 1991)

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- Does the system work?
Constraints - Political

Humanitarian aid in conflicts

- Influenced by donor politics
- Since 2001 role of military
- and counter-terrorism

Aid as alternative to political action

- Aid can prolong conflict
Context - Cultural

Knowing the context

• Language, culture, religion
• Short assignments
• One size fits all

Local ownership

• Who is responsible?
• Who is doing the work?
Many Constraints - How Are We Doing?

Good intentions are not enough

- Humanitarian operations difficult and complex
- Many dilemmas
- Coordination challenge

Blind to some simple solutions

- Brain drain
- Election madness
- Reform is possible
A Change of Perspective

High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness - Busan (2011)

- “Aid effectiveness” to “development effectiveness”
- New perspective

World Humanitarian Summit (2016)

- What prospects?
- What goals?