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First Transatlantic Dialogue on Humanitarian Action

Learning From the Field:

Fostering effective transatlantic action on disaster relief and preparedness

Conference Report

Max Planck Society, Harnack-Haus Berlin-Dahlem, June 2-3rd, 2008

Global Public Policy Institute

Reinhardtstr. 15
10117 Berlin · Germany

Tel +49-30-275 959 75-0

Fax +49-30-690 88 200

E-Mail gppi@gppi.net

Web www.gppi.net



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1. Introduction

On June 2-3rd, 2008, the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) convened the first in a series of Transatlantic Dialogues on Humanitarian Action (TDHA). Entitled “Learning from the field: Fostering effective transatlantic action on disaster relief and preparedness” the conference was held at the Harnack-Haus, Max-Planck-Society, in Berlin-Dahlem and was made possible through funding from the European Commission, with additional support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The European Union and the United States of America are the world’s two largest donors to humanitarian issues. However, these two bodies give aid in very different fashions. Given the rising importance of humanitarian aid and the likelihood of an increase in both number and severity of disasters in the years to come, it is vital to integrate the American and European debates and approaches to aid. Increased cooperation between the transatlantic partners stands to benefit not just both sides, but the international community in general for two reasons: Firstly, we can learn a great deal from the different policies and experiences of each donor. Secondly, dialogue and cooperation are essential to devising joint strategies for effectively dealing with the global challenges of managing and preparing for disasters.

The “Raising the Bar”-Project is designed to enhance transatlantic coherence and cooperation in humanitarian action. Over 18 months, a project team based on a unique network of transatlantic organizations will conduct field-based empirical research organized around four key study areas:

- 1) Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development
- 2) Improving Humanitarian Performance through the Implementation of Lessons Learned
- 3) Business Engagement in Humanitarian Action and
- 4) Civil-Military Relations.

In order to foster joint transatlantic action “Raising the Bar” also conducts multi-stakeholder dialogues. In this context, the conference brought together more than 40 decision-makers and professionals in the humanitarian field from both sides of the Atlantic for strategic debate on the key issues of humanitarian aid. This conference was used to launch the project, present its key goals and work program components, and in particular discuss and receive feedback on the research design. Working groups during the conference were structured along the four research themes that are being pursued as part of the “Raising the Bar”-Project. These working groups were complemented by three panel discussions. To promote a lasting transatlantic dialogue on humanitarian aid, participants were highly qualified professionals from academia, the UN, European Commission, various NGOs and the US and German governments.

The conference was opened by a pair of keynote addresses outlining the challenges facing the transatlantic partners. Core challenges highlighted included climate change, and the subsequent increase in complex emergencies, as well as the changing international environment, including the different perceptions of and goals the transatlantic partners have for humanitarian aid. The main panel discussions focused on (i) the state of transatlantic cooperation on humanitarian aid and differences in transatlantic approaches to relief and preparedness, (ii) the field perspective on

transatlantic roles in humanitarian aid, as well as operational principles and priorities from different humanitarian institutions, and (iii) ways to improve transatlantic cooperation, lessons learned and next steps.

Twice, participants broke into working groups; one for each of the four key study areas covered by “Raising the Bar.” In each working group, a participant with particular expertise on the topic was asked to give a short introductory presentation. A night cap session on the first day examining the planned integrated phase classification system for humanitarian disasters, provided excellent fodder for the second day’s debate.

Rather than providing a summary of each of the panel sessions and working groups, this conference report traces some of the key themes and issues that drove discussion during the two-day meeting.

Chatham house rules applied throughout the conference.

The project is generously supported by:





2. Panel Discussions

The first Transatlantic Dialogue on Humanitarian Aid had three panel discussions to discuss the following issues: (i) the state of transatlantic cooperation on humanitarian aid and differences in approaches to relief and preparedness, (ii) the field perspective on transatlantic roles in humanitarian aid, as well as operational responses and priorities from different humanitarian institutions, and (iii) ways to improve transatlantic cooperation, lessons learned and next steps. This section outlines the key outputs from these discussions.

2.1 *The state of transatlantic cooperation on humanitarian aid*

Discussions at this conference began from an agreed understanding that emergencies and disasters are increasing in frequency and severity as a result of climate change and that this will lead to more complex emergencies as people fight over increasingly scarce resources. In addition, climate change coupled with the shrinking global food supply and rising population will also make ongoing crises such as those in Iraq, Somalia, Darfur and Gaza more difficult to solve. As the EU and US provide over 50% of the world's humanitarian aid, participants stressed, they simply must cooperate or coordinate their approaches.

Panelists, however, also emphasized the difficulty of defining the exact contours of such cooperation or coordination. This is due, in part, to the current lack of consensus on the definition and function of humanitarian aid. As a result of this lack of consensus there is also no joint political strategy towards the governance of humanitarian aid. When examining the governance of humanitarian aid at an institutional level, it becomes clear that the system as a whole is not well integrated. This also showed during recent calamities such as Hurricane Katrina. In addition to having different standards, rules and regulations for the procurement of supplies and aid workers on either side of the Atlantic, the institutional set up for governing aid is also fragmented. For example, in the European Commission humanitarian aid is supported by ECHO, Relex, DG Dev and DG Environment. In the US, there are also a multitude of agencies in the Defence, State, and Agriculture Departments with responsibility for various parts of humanitarian aid. A more streamlined system of aid in the US as well as the EU would go a long way towards facilitating better international cooperation in humanitarian aid by helping to increase transparency, and ease of access for other donors and agencies wishing to collaborate with each other.

Participants emphasized that one of the most interesting issues regarding the governance of aid is the concept of LRRD. If the transatlantic community is to develop a joint political strategy on aid it will need to examine whether or not linking relief to development efforts is worthwhile. Proponents of this believe it is the only way to effectively pull countries of a cycle of ever worsening disaster and humanitarian crises. But creating the institutions to do so comes at a great cost and would require significant restructuring in donor governments. Currently, development and humanitarian aid are largely separate endeavors, with totally separate structure and functions, both at a national and international level. This organizational separation of development and humanitarian departments is an issue on both sides of the Atlantic and needs to be overcome if the international community wants to seriously work on LRRD.



The lack of a joint political strategy towards humanitarian aid was found to be a particular issue when it comes to the question of what implementing agencies are used to deliver aid in the field. Are UN agencies to be the main body through which aid is delivered, or will NGOs, the private sector or perhaps the military have a larger role to play in delivering aid in future crises? In this context participants wondered how much authority individual nation-states are willing to cede to supranational actors such as the UN. The answer determines whether bilateral or multilateral aid will be of greater importance and the consequences greatly affect the ability of the international community to coordinate aid efforts. There are some voices calling for increased multilateral aid, as mechanisms such as multi-donor trust funds and the CERF allow the international community to optimize aid delivery by supporting those initiatives most in need of funding versus those that are politically important. If nation-states are unwilling to cede authority over their aid budgets to multilateral bodies, different mechanisms for the coordination of funding and strategy will need to be created, and there is no guarantee that these new mechanisms will be successful. Most participants called for greater support of already existing structures and organizations such as OCHA, the CERF, and multi-donor trust funds.

Panelists also warned that as a consequence of the current emphasis on international actors, international donors, and international organizations, the role of local actors has largely been ignored. Recent analysis of the state of humanitarian affairs has shown that local actors play a vital role in disaster response, and increasing support for such actors is an effective means to mitigate the effects of disasters. As the tsunami evaluation illustrated, local actors, because of their geographic proximity to the disaster zone, are usually the first to respond to a disaster and as such are most important in saving lives. They are also in a better position to support preparedness efforts. In areas where international access is denied, or slowed for political or other reasons, such as in Myanmar, their role becomes even more important. For example, as a result of their established roots in the community the national Red Cross movement in Myanmar was able to immediately provide aid to local people affected by Cyclone Nargis, while international actors were unable to gain access to the country.

The recent experiences in Myanmar were also used as an example to demonstrate that the perception of aid and those who give it has great consequence for those suffering in the wake of a major disaster. Although aid waiting on war-ships off the coast of the country was meant to support cyclone victims, and was given in a show of solidarity with those people, it was viewed by the Myanmar Government with great suspicion, indeed as a military threat. Their very presence undermined talks between the UN and government authorities to accelerate any kind of international aid and access to the severely affected Irrawaddy Delta. If aid is seen as being linked to a political agenda, even if in reality it is neutral and independent, its entire purpose is threatened. The perceptions of aid by local authorities and people affect not only the aid mission itself but also the security of aid workers on the ground. Ensuring there is not even the suggestion of a political agenda behind humanitarian aid also has ramifications for the integration of new humanitarian actors such as the military and the private sector.

Accordingly, the single most important point raised in the first discussion was the need to reaffirm and stick to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence. These humanitarian principles are at the core of humanitarian interventions and without them the entire system will be compromised. Recently these principles have been sidelined in favor of security or other national interests, to the detriment of all international actors. Participants were adamant that these principles are the path to ensuring the success of not only individual humanitarian actions but for the field as a whole.

2.2 Field perspectives on transatlantic roles in humanitarian aid; operational principles and priorities

The larger philosophical and policy discussions about the role of aid, the mechanisms through which it is disbursed, and the principles it follows are informed by what happens in the field. The second panel discussion focused on lessons from the field seeking to determine what successful humanitarian operations look like and what policies and priorities create such operations.

The continent of Africa suffers more than its fair share of disasters. Accordingly, when discussing lessons from the field, panelists focused strongly on Africa. The emergencies in Africa range from those caused by natural disasters to long standing complex emergencies such as the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Africa's citizens are also amongst the poorest in the world, and thus considerably more vulnerable than populations elsewhere. African countries have also served as a testing ground for new ideas on the governance and implementation of aid. Thus, many lessons can be drawn from experiences there. When examining these disasters and contending with the realities on the ground, the first lesson that emerged is that coordination is not an end in and of itself. Panelists repeatedly pointed out that coordination must be about achieving outcomes and increasing the impact of aid. For panelists, coordination of aid helps ensure that the humanitarian action plan for a country is able to address what is in the country's best interest not what each aid agency and or its sponsors want to do.

Coordinating aid is difficult to do. For example, integrated missions, such as the one found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, require that every party is involved from the military to the political to civil society and require support that can be linked to the country's long term goals and help solve the crisis. This can mean working with groups that major donors are politically reluctant to acknowledge and that may be disinclined to work with each other. It also means prioritizing some issues over others. The Democratic Republic of Congo is a guinea pig for many of the new approaches to humanitarian aid. In increasing the coordination of aid and thus the effectiveness of outcomes, aid in the DRC has moved away from the consolidated appeals process and towards pooled funding such as the CERF¹. This move was portrayed as vital to allowing aid workers to respond in real time to problems on the ground as funding from the CERF

¹ The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established by the United Nations in 2005. Funded by governments, private sectors organizations, individuals and NGOs, the CERF was designed to pre-position funding for humanitarian action so that humanitarian crises can be responded to in a timely manner, reducing loss of life, and so to support humanitarian response in otherwise under funded crises.

<http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/WhatistheCERF/tabid/3534/Default.aspx>, last access July 28th, 2008



to the field comes faster than when a consolidated appeal must be done. CERF funding also supports the de-politicizing of aid as aid can be directed to where it is actually needed not to where donors want it to go.

In addition to the CERF, participants felt that the international community could do more to strengthen and reaffirm the principles of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, which have been sidelined recently. Transatlantic cooperation in humanitarian aid will succeed only if both parties agree to follow these internationally recognized benchmarks for good donorship. When creating guidelines, or initiatives to govern the implementation of aid such as the cluster approach, participants were quick to point out that these guidelines must be viewed as just that – guidelines, aid programs need to be tailored to the realities on the ground, and a cookie cutter approach to aid is bound to fail.

One issue that arose in the second panel was the importance of the media in determining donor priorities. Colloquially known as the “CNN effect”, many participants pointed out that harnessing the power of the media would go a long way towards promoting better and more effective aid. A recent study was cited which shows that the level of funding for a humanitarian crisis is not correlated to the scope of the problem, but closely correlated to media coverage. Participants therefore felt that the media’s importance cannot be overstated. In order to successfully lobby for a humanitarian mission to first world donors and their citizens the human dimension provided by news coverage proves much more powerful than mere statistics. When people can relate to those suffering abroad they are more likely to support them. The role of the media was also seen as problematic in important respects. It can be used by governments and other parties intent on prioritizing aid along political lines as opposed to prioritizing aid towards those most at need. Participants also discussed the fleeting nature of media coverage. It can raise awareness of an issue or emergency, but it does often not create a sustained interest in an emergency. A sustained focus on a particular issue or emergency is only possible if organizations successfully use their “15 minutes of fame.” It was therefore felt that the media needs to be viewed as a valuable, but tricky resource and that aid agencies should capitalize on it.

Donors are not the only ones to prioritize their aid activities based on factors other than need. Individual aid organizations also prioritize where and how they operate, and the biases and information used to make these decisions were the subject of some discussion as well. Across the board, participants felt that the first and most important driver should be the humanitarian principles, but that just because a disaster occurs does not mean an organization should necessarily act. Delegates from implementing agencies spoke of an internal desire and push from stakeholders to act quickly and respond to all major disasters, whether or not there is a clear role for them to play. Unfortunately, when a large disaster occurs, such as the Tsunami in 2004, the lack of coordination means that organizations, because they are working individually and not in tandem, overlap and certain key parts of aid may be ignored, while other organizations and issues receive too much funding. One primary example of this is Doctors Without Borders, which received too much money during the 2004 Tsunami and had to ask people to stop donating. Humanitarian aid organizations are often driven by good intentions, but participants pointed out that good intentions are not enough, that the focus needs to be on results, and that organizations



must not act just because they feel the need to do something. Fewer players, effectively coordinated and applied, could be far more productive than many uncoordinated ones.

Discussion made clear that factors other than human solidarity effect the decisions of multilateral and international organizations regarding whether or not to engage in a humanitarian action or the field more generally. There are political reasons for wanting international agencies and organizations to intervene in lieu of bilateral actors and vice versa. This tension between national and international organizations is felt in many places, for example in NATO. Participants reported that the recent NATO summit saw pressure from some member nations to redesign the NATO strategy to reflect the realities of the post 9/11 world and carve out a bigger role for itself in humanitarian action. Other members felt that reopening the debate on NATO's strategy and purpose was a Pandora's box full of problems. From the perspective of international organizations such as NATO a set of common definitions for what humanitarian aid is and what it aims to achieve would be helpful in structuring these debates. The current lack of common definitions provides room for political positions which filter into the discussion and result in divergent views both between individual member states and between the international organization and member states. Common definitions are needed to reaffirm the humanitarian principles, ensure aid remains unpolitical and to facilitate increased cooperation and effectiveness of response.

One of the final questions asked during the discussion was what observations do field workers have on humanitarian aid and its changes: Is the situation in the field changing for the better? Is assistance always a good thing, or has it had harmful consequences in some countries? Participants concluded that the system has improved immeasurably and that the continued move towards professionalization would help it to grow and be more effective. Aid has not always been entirely successful, but with the help of local staff, and improved coordination to ensure the effectiveness aid, it will be more successful in the future.

2.3 *Ways to improve transatlantic cooperation, lessons learned and next steps*

The final panel discussion of the conference brought together all delegates for a discussion on ways to improve transatlantic cooperation on humanitarian aid. Delegates from European states actively support transatlantic cooperation, not as a self-sufficient goal, but as an instrument to reach effectiveness in aid efforts. Participants pointed out that where there are concrete problems on the ground, the shared experiences on both sides have lead to consensus regarding practical issues and that this is a good starting point for discussion on issues at the policy level. In order to facilitate cooperation between the transatlantic partners, however, a common language is needed. Consensus on terminology and definitions are a prerequisite for consensus on principles and approaches.

One of the first issues raised was how the current state of affairs on humanitarian aid came to be and, more specifically, how to overcome the issues that divide the international community. The impetus for much of the transatlantic disagreement on humanitarian aid started with a dispute about food aid, specifically the way grain used in food aid is procured. Despite adamant and opposed opinions on either side of the Atlantic, and within the US, participants pointed out that



there is still dialogue on this issue and other divisive topics, the dialogue may be informal, but it is still meaningful. To that end, some participants felt this model could be used to facilitate discussion on other issues, and that by keeping the dialogue informal consensus would be easier to reach, as the informal nature left room for disagreement, and for living with contradictions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Regardless of where the discussion takes place though, participants felt strongly that the key issue to be dealt with is to find consensus on the *raison d'être* of humanitarian aid. Most felt that it should be human solidarity, but that this goal is often mixed with ulterior motives. The international community should use humanitarian aid strictly for humanitarian purposes; there should be no politicization of such actions. While entangling humanitarian aid and national interest may make it easier to gather public support for an issue, politicization will ultimately destroy trust, and the disadvantages of such a strategy will far outweigh the short term advantages. However, participants also asked if state interest could ever be fully subordinated to human solidarity across the board. The answer was a resounding maybe. Where the relief provided falls under its most narrow definition, i.e. the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and medicine after a natural disaster, these two issues can often be separated from each other. In complex emergencies, or conflict zones, however, this separation becomes more difficult. The recent “War on Terror”, has made this separation increasingly hard, and US foreign policy of recent years has caused tremendous reputational costs that are borne by all organizations perceived as Western, even the ICRC. Abandoning or ignoring the humanitarian principles has resulted in the targeting and killing of aid workers by militants. This increasing insecurity affects the ability of aid agencies to provide aid and has resulted in many closing down their operations. It is therefore clear that although it may be difficult to do, if humanitarianism is to survive humanitarian aid and political interests must be separated.

The humanitarian field is composed of more than just the two transatlantic partners, and is currently in a phase of tremendous change. This change again highlights the need for consensus on the key aims, definitions, and principles of humanitarian aid. The emergence of civil societies in developing countries as well as new donors will require major adaptations and the viewpoints of these other actors will need to be heard in any discussion about the governance of humanitarian aid. In particular, participants felt a further push to bring the NGOs’ arguments to the table is needed as the NGO, or implementing agency viewpoint allows for strong arguments in favor of increased EU-US cooperation.

Given the rapid changes the humanitarian field is undergoing, questions were raised about what the field would look like in the future. The increasing recognition of the role of local actors, coupled with the growing capabilities of civil societies around the world, caused participants to feel that NGOs and local groups would play a much larger role in the future. Local knowledge is essential to effective humanitarian aid. But before local actors can take on the larger role participants envisioned for them they, need to learn how to utilize and effectively coordinate their own local networks. The ultimate reason for an increased role for local actors, however, is that they are present before disasters occur and can work to reduce the impact of a disaster, both by being able to respond faster as a result of proximity and through prevention measures.

Increasing the role of local actors also requires that the international community reconsider its policies towards the sourcing of humanitarian aid supplies. Some participants hoped that increased consensus on the important role of local actors would lead to a recognition of the role proximity plays in disaster response. Sourcing aid supplies locally or regionally and creating response strategies around such a procurement policy would help to optimize aid delivery and effectiveness by reducing costs and stimulating local economies.

In the face of such rapid changes and divergent views about humanitarian principles, participants also wondered if the essential principles and moral basis of humanitarian aid would survive the changes the field is undergoing. They recognized that there is increasing confusion about what norms form the basis of humanitarian aid. Human solidarity is a moral and a political concept and should not be under dispute and again participants reiterated the need for all actors to adhere to the humanitarian principles. It was felt that within the NGO sector, the NGOs themselves need to clearly define what they are fighting for, and that there is responsibility within the sector to remind each other about the fundamental principles. Peer review mechanisms and NGO self-regulation are a good way to do this. Then, once the NGO sector has re-focused on these principles they can more effectively lobby major donors to follow them as well.

Participant's remarks revealed that German and European parliamentarians support transatlantic dialogue, cooperation and coordination in humanitarian aid and strongly support the independence of aid and the reaffirmation of the humanitarian principles, as well as creating a common definition for humanitarian aid that reflects these principles. To that end, it was proposed that that joint parliamentary discussions be held on these issues.

3. Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)

Aid agencies and donors have long struggled with how to structure the interplay of humanitarian aid and development assistance in ways that reduce the need for the former and effectively promote objectives of the latter. Such efforts are most commonly referred to by the term “linking relief, rehabilitation and development” (LRRD). The LRRD working groups sought to analyze the key issues surrounding the debate on LRRD; to explore how donors can effectively promote LRRD; and to identify opportunities and challenges in that regard. It focused on the challenges involved in donors aiming to promote LRRD objectives in protracted crises.

3.1 LRRD – conceptual challenges

The principle antecedents of LRRD thinking were developed in the 1980s, based on the understanding that humanitarian emergencies disrupted continuous economic development. The resulting idea was to develop procedures which would not only allow for a faster return from humanitarian assistance to development but also render development cooperation more sensitive to the need for strengthening resilience to crises. These objectives generally remain valid today. Yet as participants highlighted, this understanding of LRRD rests on a number of premises which by now appear problematic for a variety of reasons:

Firstly, there is hardly ever a linear and continuous move from humanitarian assistance to development aid. Conflict trajectories in particular are highly dynamic periodically shifting from periods in which transition appears possible back to full-fledged armed hostilities; this is sometimes referred to as a “pendulum situation”. As is largely accepted by now, this reality calls for a “contiguum” approach to LRRD, i.e. phases of, and needs for, relief, rehabilitation and development may actually co-exist and overlap. “Linking” RRD thus implies linkages across space (some regions of a country/crisis may need the whole set of RRD measures, in others only relief may be possible) *and* time. In some regions, RRD measures may be initiated at almost the same time, while in others a protracted crisis situation may imply longer periods of humanitarian and transitional aid.

A second set of observations revolved around the question of guiding principles for and the feasibility of LRRD objectives. Participants noted that the very *raison d’être* for LRRD is to promote development (or a return to it), and that any action taken under the umbrella of LRRD should advance developmental objectives as early and effectively as possible. Others agreed that humanitarian assistance should seek to never undermine existing development efforts. However, it was also pointed out that there are major differences between humanitarian and development approaches, and that the two are governed by different legal frameworks.

Differences in approach tend to be most evident in conflict-related emergencies and/or protracted crises. In such contexts, state structures which development aid usually seeks to reinforce are often non-existent. In turn, existing governmental authorities may lack the political will to engage in development-oriented measures for some population groups or in specific parts of a country. At the same time, engaging such authorities in developmental activities may lead to a loss of support by population groups which strongly oppose the government on political

grounds (for example those who are associated with independence or pro-autonomy movements). Thus, while development cooperation traditionally aims to support state structures, humanitarian aid is often needed in situations of state failure and/or protracted crises, such as those in Somalia and eastern DRC. All of these factors often render LRRD, in particular the partial integration of rehabilitation and development-oriented approaches into humanitarian assistance programs, challenging, or even undesirable, in protracted crisis contexts.

At the same time it was agreed that there is a need to render development approaches more shock-sensitive, by, amongst other things, streamlining disaster risk reduction (DRR) into development aid – but also in humanitarian assistance. Indeed, DRR was seen to be closely linked to the LRRD concept. The importance of more proactively exploring opportunities for joint (periodic) analysis of needs and local capacity was also stressed. In sum, increased learning needs to go both ways: from humanitarians to development specialists and vice versa.

The third issue participants discussed was the operational plausibility of LRRD’s “phase linking” language. Some argued that LRRD is mostly a donor-driven concept, seeking to link “phases” of relief, rehabilitation and development which primarily relate to institutional setup and funding procedures by donors. This in turn would often necessitate rather artificial definition debates, with the aim of classifying complex field realities into particular phases, so that donor support can be mobilized for that particular phase from specific budget lines. Against that background, ensuing donor support was observed to often be limited in scope and quantity. It was also mentioned that phase-specific donor support was unlikely to adequately cater to a “contiguuum” situation in which relief and development needs may exist at the same time.

It was therefore suggested that a donor “LRRD approach” should start out by asking “what do people in a specific crisis context need to (again) become self-reliant and shock-resilient?” In other words, the starting point of any LRRD approach would be to understand complex (mostly overlapping) needs of affected populations. On that basis, interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability and strengthening livelihoods could be designed. These may have to borrow from traditional humanitarian, transition and development approaches to aid, which may be challenging, as there are conceptual divides on many issues. For example, the understanding of livelihood-strengthening differs in the development and humanitarian communities; the development community has traditionally aimed at reinforcing livelihoods through complementary support, whereas humanitarian actors may have a stronger immediate supply-side bias in this area.

Also mentioned as a conceptual starting point for LRRD was a rights-based approach to specific (external) aid measures transcending the classical humanitarian/development divide. Regarding “failed states” in particular, reference was made to the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee which has argued for a “whole-of-government” approach. This would entail a strong focus on building capacity, and thus on creating effective institutions and governance as a precondition for internal development, aided by external transition and development-oriented measures.

3.2 *Challenges for donors*

The main challenge for donors promoting a LRRD concept was seen to lie in their fragmented organizational structures and funding procedures. In most cases, separate budget lines, staff and sets of responsibilities are maintained to respond to either humanitarian assistance or development demands (and sometimes for transitional aid). Regarding the EC, it was pointed out that since its 2001 Communication, progress has been made in clarifying the sequencing of the EC's services, aiming to better promote LRRD. Part of this process is increasing joint field analysis between ECHO and AIDCo. Also, a new Communication on disaster risk reduction, drafted jointly by DG Dev, Relex and ECHO will be published in October 2008.

Better sequencing between different donor agencies, however, still appears to be heavily based on the logic of continuous crisis evolution from emergency to development, which is not common for most protracted crises. In general, many emergency relief contexts have seen previous development aid involvement. It was therefore suggested that the starting point of response in such cases should be to check whether existing development cooperation arrangements and instruments can be mobilized and used.

Sequencing may also lead to finger pointing between different donor agencies regarding responsibility for a certain "classified-as" situation. It was noted, for example, that ECHO's DRC 2008 work plan does not mention transition activities, "responsibility" for which may not be felt in or formally lie with ECHO.

One such case, which participants discussed at length, was the refugee situation in southern Chad. Given the volatile situation in their home country, refugees from the Central African Republic are unlikely to return to CAR any time soon. At the same time, the Chadian government has demonstrated limited capacity (and will) to provide for the well-being of the refugees. Therefore, their basic needs continue to be catered to by humanitarian agencies, despite the fact that on paper the situation would not classify as a humanitarian emergency. Yet, it could well turn into one (again) if humanitarian agencies were to stop current assistance programs. At the same time, the lack of any official government partner has so far prevented large-scale development efforts oriented towards a sustainable improvement of the refugee's living conditions and their self-reliance in the long term.

Attempts are nevertheless underway to increase the refugees' self-reliance, through various ventures including increased agricultural activities on land surrounding the camps. This raises a whole set of difficulties relating to the agricultural potential of the land and relations with the host community. ECHO's upcoming support of these initiatives was cited as an innovative and desirable donor approach promoting a context-specific LRRD logic. At the same time, the fact that it took the EC more than a year to approve the project exemplifies the difficulties involved in donors providing essential recovery and development-oriented support in protracted crises.

Deliberation on the case also sparked a discussion on the challenges involved in defining "exit strategies" both for humanitarian agencies and donor departments in protracted crises. Exit strategies in themselves do not improve the situation on the ground – but such improvement is what they rely on. Defining an exit strategy for humanitarian responses to natural disasters in



development-settings may be relatively straightforward, in particular when there is effective local response capacity. However, it is much less straightforward in protracted crises where a government may simply not exist or may not be willing to gradually accept responsibility for certain crisis-affected populations. In the absence of any comprehensive efforts to strengthen livelihoods and render populations more shock resilient, humanitarian indicators may even worsen over time. In short, any humanitarian exit strategy was seen to depend on the existence of official “docking points” for rehabilitation and development-oriented measures; a stable situation in which basic needs are met; and a mobilization of funds for development measures implemented alongside or after relief measures.

Another issue raised by participants relates to contracts. The current contracting mechanisms of major donors are not able to move as quickly as is needed in the run-up to or during a humanitarian crisis. It was therefore suggested that donors more actively develop and use stand-by contracts with implementing agencies, which can be activated quickly in times of crises. For this to work, however, a strong understanding and shared vision of work between donors and implementing agencies would be needed.

There are other political issues involved with LRRD, including what sort of “rehabilitation” projects donors should support. For example, is it appropriate to restore ten houses owned by someone who had multiple dwellings, or is it legitimate to engage in social engineering and promote equality by providing houses to the dispossessed? There are no clear answers, and as with most LRRD issues, flexibility, and context are key to ensuring aid is effective.

3.3 *The way forward*

Many participants felt that any LRRD approach that takes vulnerability reduction and livelihood strengthening for populations affected by protracted crises as its starting point, would strongly benefit from a blurring of lines between donor agencies’ responsibilities and response options. To that end, some suggested to increasingly use multi-donor trust funds, set up by the World Bank and the United Nations to support various recovery programs. Some participants felt that both the US and EC should explore more active participation in and support for these instruments.

It was also felt that government donors and UN agencies and funds need to be cautious about where and to which disasters they allocate funds, keeping in mind that there may be proportionally more private funding available (from NGOs and private charities) for so-called “celebrity disasters” such as the Tsunami. It was suggested that the international community should think of the UN and bilateral donors as donors of last resort in such contexts. Participants also suggested that this question may have to be separated from the question of, and need for, response coordination in such crises.

As humanitarian assistance may provide more than immediate life-saving support in protracted crises, the question arose of what is the politically desired mandate for humanitarian assistance. Should it have a narrow mandate and be limited to life-saving only? Or, should it be given a broader mandate, and the necessary donor support, to ensure the provision of basic services in situations in which state authorities are non-existent or very weak, and where traditional reha-



bilitation and development activities are unlikely to start/resume soon? These questions require further research before they can be answered.

4. Implementing Lessons Learned

The aim of these working groups was to brainstorm possible factors that contribute to or hinder the implementation of lessons learned at both the policy and the operational level. The importance of implementing lessons learned cannot be overstated, but too often knowledge is lost, not passed down, or never used. In this discussion participants highlighted two preconditions that must exist before any lesson can be implemented: common standards and political will. While there are existing common standards for humanitarian assistance, such as the Humanitarian Principles, the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and others, they do not always reflect what is done in the field. At the same time, participants observed a tremendous positive change within the humanitarian system in recent years. Many are convinced that humanitarian assistance has already improved significantly over the last decade. As a consequence, they believe that change is possible and that it is worthwhile to more closely examine the factors that might promote or hinder the implementation of lessons learned. The brainstorming on these factors focused on four crucial points: the role of evaluations, the nature of the lesson, the importance of communication, and donor policies

4.1 *Role of evaluations*

Evaluations are only one out of several sources for learning and while they are an important source participants were quick to point out the tension that exists between the different aims of evaluations, namely whether the evaluation is being done to gather knowledge for institutional learning or to be accountable to donors. If the aim of an evaluation is the latter, participants felt that evaluators and the organization may be less likely to fully explore and admit to issues and problems, which has obvious consequences for the quality of lessons learned from those evaluations.

However, much of the discussion concentrated on the implementation rather than the creation of lessons learned. In other words it focused on the *use* of evaluations. Broadly speaking evaluations can be used either to improve practice or change policy. If an evaluation is meant to inform policy decisions, it must be at the system or joint evaluation level. Participants also felt that the likelihood of evaluation results informing policy changes increases if decision-makers have ownership over the evaluation, if it is clear who is responsible for the implementation of results and if the responsible person also has the power to implement these changes.

A first step to creating such evaluations is to have effective evaluation departments. Unfortunately, participants from all backgrounds reported that although they are an important source for learning, evaluation units often lack the necessary capacity and financial resources to produce quality evaluations, as well as to develop and implement a dissemination strategy for the lessons resulting from their work.

4.2 *The lesson itself: Gender and local capacity*

The case studies conducted for the study group on implementing lessons learned will focus on two lessons: Increasing the gender sensitivity of aid programs and drawing more strongly on local capacity. It goes without saying that the implementation of lessons learned depends on the lessons themselves; their quality, replicability in other contexts, support from donors and humanitarian agencies, and most importantly, the topic.

When it comes to implementing lessons learned some participants argued that improving the gender sensitivity of humanitarian programs is easier than involving and building local capacity. From their perspective, the issue was not that gender was a more desirable subject, but they were concerned about the quality of gender equality programming. Implementing lessons learned in this context requires the improvement of *existing* techniques for needs assessments and gender equality programming whereas the hurdles facing the implementation of lessons regarding local capacity were much bigger.

Implementing lessons about local capacity is much more difficult because the humanitarian system is supply driven. Therefore, involving local people into needs assessments and programming does not require the improvement of existing techniques but rather an overhaul of the whole system. Additionally, many aid workers lack the knowledge of who-is-who on the ground and have insufficient cultural and language skills to effectively work with local people. Furthermore, participants felt that capacity building cannot be done during an emergency, it is intrinsically linked to preparedness and preparedness is often not perceived as a humanitarian issue but rather as a development one. Therefore, even if there was the will to create new techniques and systems to integrate local capacity building into humanitarian aid programs there is a question as to whether or not humanitarian agencies have the mandate to work on these issues in the first place.

4.3 The importance of communication/ knowledge sharing

Participants agreed that for lessons to be implemented they have to be effectively communicated both horizontally and vertically within the humanitarian system. Horizontal communication occurs when lessons are shared between different donors and between different implementing agencies whereas vertical communication occurs when lessons are communicated upstream and downstream both within an organization, as well as between donors and implementing agencies.

Based on their own experiences, participants felt that within donor agencies and implementing agencies upstream communication (towards leadership and decision-makers) is usually less problematic than downstream communication (towards either programming or operational units). Effective downstream communication is often hindered by organizational disconnections. For example, evaluation units are usually separate from programming or operational units and often there are no established effective communication channels between donors and implementing agencies. Communication between beneficiaries and the implementing agencies and donors, the most important upstream communication, also often fails due to a dearth of systematic communication channels.

When participants discussed how to close those gaps it became clear that possible methods to improve vertical communication differ based on what type of organization was being examined, donors or implementing agencies. However, there are also a number of “rules for improved communication and knowledge sharing” that apply for donors and implementers alike:

Firstly, knowledge sharing has to be built into the existing system, as participants stated: “The death of all lessons learned is the creation of new or special channels to deal with them.” Secondly, dedicated capacity for knowledge management and sharing is a requirement for improved implementation of lessons learned. In other words, there need to be people and resources specifically assigned to these tasks. Thirdly, if lessons are to be implemented, the single most important method to get the lesson to the programming and operational levels is training.

Donor agencies can improve downstream communication/ knowledge sharing by integrating at least one evaluation officer into crucial programming departments or the department responsible for humanitarian assistance. Donors could also have their evaluation units organize workshops and debriefing sessions for programming units where the information gleaned from evaluations could be shared with the relevant people.

Implementing agencies face different dilemmas when seeking to improve downstream communication/ knowledge. For example, representatives of operational agencies reported that workshops have been less successful as a method of information sharing because the workshops failed to attract broad audiences, instead the same people attend workshops over and over again while the operational staff who are the target audience usually lack the time to participate in such endeavors.

For enhanced upstream communication between beneficiaries and humanitarian agencies as well as donors, participants suggested creating an easy feedback system, for example through the distribution of small post cards asking whether beneficiaries are satisfied with the service and what they feel is missing. Regardless of whether the communication of lessons learned is upstream, downstream, within an agency or between agencies, the availability and accessibility of information is a key issue. Information has to be simple, clear, and concise.

4.4 The role of donors

Participants also discussed options that donors have to support or incentivize humanitarian agencies to implement lessons learned. Essentially, donors were seen to have two options, sticks and carrots. Sticks include financial penalties, changing rules of the game (e.g. procurement rules), and changing doctrines for future programming. Carrots include supporting staff training in implementing agencies, providing positive financial incentives for learning measures and so on.

Donor representatives reported that the carrot approach is rarely used. They also stated that when it comes to financial incentives, there is often no coherent policy to support implementing agencies to implement lessons learned. The allocation of funds for humanitarian relief is often not based on performance but rather on national policies. In other words, funds are not withheld



in the case of underperformance of an agency because it is national policy “to be a good donor” and support humanitarian aid in some fashion.

Representatives from humanitarian agencies underlined that donors should also have a third option, which is to work more through existing mechanisms. These participants felt that donors should more strongly support the enforcement of United Nations General Assembly resolutions on humanitarian assistance and the current IASC² process of coordinating humanitarian assistance.

² The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners.
<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/default.asp>, last accessed July 18th, 2008

5. Business Engagement

Private sector engagement in the humanitarian field is a controversial topic, with strong opinions on both sides. Critics feel that the private sector is competing with traditional humanitarian actors, and that it is less likely to uphold humanitarian principles in its actions, while proponents believe that businesses may have skills that can contribute to more effective humanitarian responses. Regardless, business engagement in humanitarian aid has increased in recent years – both on a commercial and non-commercial basis. Given these strong and opposing viewpoints as well as the increasing presence of business actors in the field, these working groups sought to analyze the role of business in aid, both the challenges it presents and the possible value-add the private sector brings.

5.1 Organizational challenges

5.1.1 Donor Challenges

Donors face many challenges in engaging with businesses, not the least of which is their own legal and policy frameworks. There are fundamental legal/formal differences between the US and the EU approach towards for-profit business engagement in disaster relief. For example, in the US competitive bidding systems create incentives for for-profit engagement, while EU rules specifically preclude direct for-profit engagement. Recent statements by the Directorate General in charge of aid, as well as the ECHO 2008 strategy paper, suggest however that the EU is looking closely at the issue of business engagement and may be open to amending its policies.

Legal and budgetary hurdles such as these make utilizing some of the competitive advantages of business difficult. For example, a key challenge for donors is assuring that their aid money gets to people in need and does the most good and at times, utilizing the private sector can be more efficient than providing aid through traditional implementing agencies. In examining for-profit business engagement in disaster preparedness, participants discovered that investing in private insurance to save livelihoods versus saving lives after a disaster hit was much cheaper and efficient. For example in The World Food Program's livelihood insurance program through AXA Re, the cost ratio was 1:4 dollars. Despite numbers like these, policies preventing the use of for-profit actors remain active in part due to fears about the private sector's ability to uphold the humanitarian principles.

5.1.2 Challenges for Business

Taking part in humanitarian aid creates serious challenges for businesses as well. Businesses generally provide their value add by utilizing their knowledge and resources of their core function, for example logistics. However, although the work is similar to normal business procedures, businesses moving into humanitarian aid must overcome many hurdles before the engagement is successful regardless of whether a business is making profit or engaging on a non-commercial basis. For starters, specialized training for staff is needed. This is due to the fact that working in a disaster area requires many additional skills; practical skills like first aid; psychological preparedness to work in high-stress crisis situations; intercultural competencies and re-

gional expertise; knowledge about partner organizations etc. This special training takes time, and pulls employees out of their regular functions. Where a business is engaging in a non-commercial fashion, such as a partnership with an implementing agency or a donor, employees are also pulled out of regular business functions to participate in humanitarian activities. This requires restructuring human resource policies and can create real strain for the business.

To overcome the perception issues outlined below, participants felt that businesses which were serious about engaging in voluntary partnerships in this field also needed to create a strict separation of work-streams. Ensuring the independence of the corporate social responsibility department from all others, in particular the marketing department, is vital to ensuring that the motivations of business participation are fully understood and their engagement is not perceived purely as an expensive public relations campaign. This is often easier said than done, but has proven successful for companies such as DHL.

5.2 Perception issues

All humanitarian aid is politically sensitive and participants felt that for businesses to operate successfully in this field they will need to address the perception that they lack the ability to uphold the humanitarian principles. This is an issue when integrating all new actors, not just businesses into humanitarian action. In general there is suspicion about business motivations towards being involved in this field in both a commercial and non-commercial sense and the way to overcome these issues vary depending on the type of engagement. Participants felt that these suspicions appear to be more prevalent in Europe than in the U.S. and that this may explain some of the reluctance there for donors to work with businesses in humanitarian aid.

Where it is a voluntary or non-commercial engagement, discussion revealed that the best way to mitigate the general suspicion about the true motives of business actors is openness. Donors and implementing agencies must encourage private sector partners to be transparent and up-front about what their motives are and what they expect to gain from their involvement. Where a business actor is aiming to make a profit this too needs to be stated up front. For-profit engagements also require transparency. Public consultation in beneficiary communities about what the business will do exactly may help assuage fears regarding for profit and voluntary business engagements.

Participants also warned that businesses engaging without doing the requisite groundwork can face significant reputational costs as they their efforts will be labeled as self-serving, or perhaps even damaging to the local community. These reputational costs affect not only the companies' relationships with their client base, but also with their employees. Part of the motivation behind many businesses entering into partnerships in this field is that creates a positive perception of the company amongst its employees, and serves as a way to motivate them. Implementing agencies and donors who work with businesses also risk their reputations when partnering with a business, or contracting out to one. Accordingly, many partnerships between business and traditional actors take a long time to set up and demand a great deal of work on both sides.

Success in this field also generally hinges on a strong knowledge of the local environment, customs and politics. Achieving local buy-in takes time. Businesses partnering with established implementing agencies can build on networks and knowledge that already exist in the implementing agency. For profit actors working on their own will have a more difficult time. Given its complex nature, in many cases, participants felt that for-profit actors ultimately decide that it is not worthwhile to enter the field of humanitarian aid.

5.3 *The role of business vis-à-vis traditional actors*

Businesses are not a traditional humanitarian actor and their integration poses many questions, in particular does business engagement represent competition to local alternatives/NGOs? The discussion looked at the issue in depth and found that for non-commercial business partnerships to work the business simply had to work in close cooperation with local partners as utilizing local capacity is very important to a successful partnership. In this case, businesses are not competing with NGOs, but rather working with them. For example, DHL works very closely with local partners and has memorandums of understanding with governments all over the world in order to assist them more quickly should a disaster arise.

On the other hand, where businesses are engaging on a for-profit basis, and applying to donors for contracts, then they are competing with traditional actors. Regardless, businesses are now actors in the humanitarian field and the general conclusion after this debate was that business engagement requires close cooperation with the humanitarian aid system. Naturally, businesses therefore need to be part of the coordinating processes and also be granted a degree of influence over these processes, a point which ruffles many feathers in the NGO community.

Participants did voice concerns over business engagement and cautioned that unless properly managed, business engagement could come at a great cost to the humanitarian field. Many felt that the humanitarian spirit, which drives humanitarian action, could be lost with the introduction of a business culture. Moreover, as the private sector engages on a for profit basis, some worried that businesses would be less willing to defend and maintain the humanitarian principles, as well as their independence of action to donors. In essence, many people are concerned that the business culture may not be compatible with humanitarian motives and principles. However, participants also recognized that in some situations, businesses are willing to go the extra mile to ensure that their for-profit engagement is successful on all fronts, and that in some cases aligning with the spirit and principles of the humanitarian field is good for business. An example provided by participants is AXA Re's engagement with the World Food Program on livelihood insurance in Ethiopia. While this was a for-profit engagement, setting up this scheme took much more work than a traditional contract for AXA Re, and both sides worked to create a product that benefited everyone. In the end, AXA Re was reported to have met its responsibilities to its shareholders and the World Food Program was able to create a groundbreaking insurance scheme to support livelihoods in Ethiopia.

In general it was felt that the role of for-profit business is much stronger and very different in rehabilitation than it is in preparedness. The private sector appears to have the competitive advan-

tage in the field of large-scale technical projects, such as infrastructure building, while NGOs have the advantage with projects in need of community involvement. But, given the concerns outlined above, the question remains, when, how, and if real partnerships with business partners can and should exist, i.e. under which circumstances they produce better outcomes than the public sector can provide? Most participants felt that typical instances for business engagement are capability gaps that the private sector can fill most effectively, for example private security, and that if these gaps become apparent, it is in fact the responsibility of governments/international organizations to bring in the private sector and create conditions that are of interest to for-profit partners in order to ensure that humanitarian aid is effective. Further along this line some participants postulated that with the advent of for-profit insurance schemes, managing risk of livelihood stress might actually serve as an incentive for business actors to support the development of good governance in these countries.

In all, participants felt that business can play a positive role in this field, but that integrating businesses into humanitarian aid posed major challenges which the transatlantic partners need to meet head on. Finding ways to integrate business means creating a framework that not only relieves the fears of other actors and critics about the potential for the private sector to undermine the humanitarian principles and drive traditional actors out of business, but also allows businesses and other actors to explore the potential value-add the private sector can bring.

6. Civil Military Relations

The Civil-Military Relations working groups focused on the relations among international military, humanitarian and civilian actors in disaster response. The issue of civil-military relations sparks heated debate on both sides of the Atlantic and has for some time. This debate is gaining importance as the military is increasingly being involved in disaster response. On the one hand many actors fear that the integration of the military represents a threat to the fundamental principles of humanitarian aid. On the other hand, some donors and agencies believe that the military has a value-add that makes it an indispensable part of disaster response around the globe. These working group waded into this long-standing debate to look at the challenges facing NGOs, donors and the military when integrating these two kinds of actors. The discussion can be broken into three main parts: the differing strategies and principles between these two sets of organizations, tactical issues related to strengthening civil-military relations, and possible ways to improve civil-military relations at a transatlantic level.

6.1 *Transatlantic perspectives*

There are different views on either side of the Atlantic on the ways to manage a disaster, and more specifically, on civil-military cooperation. These divergent viewpoints are found not only in the respective administrations, but also in the NGO communities. In the US for example, NGOs and other actors are beginning to meet with the military to draw up guidelines for increased cooperation between the military and civil society in disaster situations. However, such cooperation makes NGOs on the other side of the Atlantic increasingly nervous. EU agencies generally support maintaining distance between civil and military organizations in order to maintain the humanitarian space and principles.

The two bureaucratic offices responsible for disaster management in the US and the European Commission also have differing strategies which affect civil-military relations. In the United States for example, participants felt that USAID operates on a paradigm that overtly emphasizes freedom, the global war on terror and market-driven solutions. Such a strategy towards international aid requires integrating new actors into disaster response including the military and has been tested in the field with the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in places such as Afghanistan. ECHO on the other hand was seen as priding itself for its dedication to independent humanitarian decisions. European donors were perceived by participants as emphasizing poverty alleviation and social reform principles in their work. European donors also appear keener to have a genuine dialogue with the humanitarian community about issues of integrating new actors and when creating new strategies for aid delivery. Participants suggested that this difference in opinion and view may be a result of a possible greater sense of civil-society and NGOs' value-add in Europe.

As a result of these differing views much of the debate on civil-military relations is in regards to the potential “subversion” of humanitarian assistance to political/military objectives. Participants felt that although some European governments may be willing to link these objectives, this subversion of humanitarian ideals to political and military objectives is being pushed more force-

fully by the US administration. The establishment of AFRICOM, and “PRTzation” of Somalia or Pakistan may be worrying indicators of this trend.

6.2 Strategy and issues of principle.

NGOs and the military have different strategies and principles that guide their engagement in a disaster zone. For example, in a humanitarian crisis, NGOs and traditional aid actors want to provide not just high quality, or effective aid, they want this aid to reach the appropriate people; those most at need. As a result, NGOs have developed strategies for identifying the most vulnerable groups and targeting aid appropriately. Targeting aid means not just finding the appropriate people to give aid to, but also ensuring that the type of aid given is useful. Some participants felt that the military randomly distributes aid, and that their aid distribution methods collided with proper targeting of aid, as done by NGOs.

Another difference is the sourcing of supplies. Some participants felt that civilian organizations took more consideration of property rights, and the local customs that guide them. They also felt that NGOs were more likely to promote local ownership, and anchor their work to local institutions. It was felt by many that NGOs or civilian groups were also in a better position to use local materials, thus stimulating the local economy, whereas military groups often bring in their own experts, own materials and run their own operations. Accordingly, some participants argued that military engagement in humanitarian aid neither takes consideration of local customs, nor does it promote local ownership of the initiative or stimulate the local economy, making the military a less suitable option for humanitarian aid.

The security of aid workers is becoming an increasingly important topic in the debate surrounding civil-military relations. NGOs and the military alike feel a responsibility to protect their employees while maintaining the integrity of their mission. In high-risk situations NGOs and the military go about meeting these aims in different ways, which at times undermine the ability of the other to do the same. For example in Afghanistan US military personnel have deliberately gone around and engaged with local groups out of uniform, trying to look like NGOs. This endangered the entire humanitarian community as insurgents could no longer distinguish between a neutral humanitarian aid worker and the military. The fear is that every foreigner becomes a target in these situations. This perception was compounded by the fact that in Afghanistan the US would also commandeer NGO field offices, taking them for their own use. While there is currently no empirical evidence that military engagement in humanitarian aid has directly endangered aid workers, there are increasing amounts of anecdotal evidence.

Civilian actors face a particularly difficult problem in terms of protecting both their mission on the ground and their employees when they enter into areas with a peace enforcement mission. In these cases donors or NGOs become actors in the conflict, which further endangers the lives of their workers, as they may be working closely with the military when it is engaged in military activities. In unstable situations NGOs may need the military to be present in order for them to be able to gain access to beneficiaries, but many times, even the perception of a link between aid workers and military members can make civilians a target and prevent them from gaining access to at-risk communities.

6.3 *Tactical issues*

When determining how to respond to a disaster, donors are faced not only with ethical, procedural and diplomatic issues, they must also consider cost. On the one hand, the military has many capabilities that other humanitarian actors may not have. These capabilities are generally in the immediate response to a disaster such as search and rescue activities, and the provision and distribution of basic relief supplies. Some of these capabilities were highlighted in the recent disasters on American soil, namely Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita where military officials were responsible for organizing much of the response effort and were praised for their well-coordinated plans. These events have left some government officials with the opinion that the U.S. armed forces should take a more active role in responding to future disasters. However, despite these positive views towards the military, and the general belief that it may have a comparative advantage in certain components of disaster response, analysis has shown that a disaster response strategy that hinges on military engagement is significantly more expensive than using NGOs and civilian organizations to respond.

Another consideration when examining civil-military relations is the different professional communities and context each group has. Generally, professionals from different countries but the same professional community often work and communicate better than different national organizations because they share a common professional culture. In other words military organizations in the U.S. and Europe have an easier time communicating with each other than military and NGOs on either side of the Atlantic. Within national capitals, the ‘turf wars’ ensuring these communities remain separate are alive and well and can make duties for operational personnel very difficult.

In addition to making communication difficult, participants felt that the distance between these professional communities also creates a lack of conceptual common ground between civilian and military organizations, particularly when it comes to a planning perspective. Each community also has divergent liability structures with the military being primarily responsible for keeping their people alive and maintaining stability, while NGOs have different priorities related to the target communities of aid and meeting their needs. These fundamental differences make integrating operations difficult.

Accordingly, increasing communication between these two groups would have obvious benefits, but there is a low political incentive to enforce such a cooperative policy and when communication breaks down there are very few repercussions. When it comes to disaster response, participants felt that these organizations and other stakeholders tend to be very event driven, with each organization having its own separate focus, guiding its agenda. This coupled with the fact that disaster response is necessarily a very intense and stressful activity means that cooperating with other organizations, for the sake of cooperating, or communicating is not a high priority. Only when communication and collaboration are seen as integral to, or at the very least supportive of each organization’s end goal will it become a priority in these high stress situations.

A further issue is the content and mode of communication. Even if civil and military organizations could agree on the benefits of communication and seriously invest themselves in doing so, their communication networks are not compatible. A particular issue for the military is how to



move information and communicate effectively with non-military actors on sensitive topics where classified information is involved. The selective transfer of information from a classified network to an open source such as the internet where civil organizations can access it is difficult to do, and updating and maintaining such a source could potentially be resource intensive. Accordingly, the value-add of such cooperation would have to be large in order to justify integrating communications beyond a superficial level.

Last but not least, participants emphasized that there is sometimes a misunderstanding about the level of professionalism on both sides. Military organizations often consider non-governmental organization members as “do-gooders” who lack either experience or a long-term commitment, while NGOs view the military as incapable of seeing the bigger picture, and focused on short term goals to the detriment of longer term security and development.

6.4 The way forward

Many civil-military relationships, and debates, are driven by the question of security and how that impacts on the principles of NGOs. Given that climate change will likely increase the number and severity of crises around the world, these two communities are going to be interacting on a more regular basis, in increasingly difficult circumstances. Rather than reinventing the wheel and coming up with new strategies for each new disaster, participants felt that it may be more practical to start analyzing past instances of cooperation and create strategies for future disasters.

Potential future civil-military relations range from benign (or not so benign) neglect, to fully integrated operations similar to the provincial reconstruction teams being used in Afghanistan. Anything beyond benign neglect requires building an actual relationship between these two sets of actors. Before this can occur, some fundamental issues need to be addressed.

The first of these issues is the lack of confidence each group has in the other. Participants emphasized that trust building takes time and must be done prior to an operation. An obvious beginning for building a relationship and confidence is the creation of a common language. With a common language, communities could more easily understand each other's priorities and possible areas where these groups could support and complement each other could be found. Once this is done, NGOs and military organizations could come together and create organizational directives that were understandable to each set of actors and allowed for meaningful collaboration in the field.

Even if a common language is created, participants cautioned that the type of communication that occurs would need to change. Specifically, humanitarian organizations need to take heed of the fact that the military is task, not principle-driven, and that this means the humanitarians must be very specific when communicating with the military. The military in turn needs to frame its communications in a manner that allows civilian actors to understand the principles behind their engagement and actions. There must also be clarity about the role of each group of actors in any situation. For example, participants argued that in a Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) program, the military could take part in disarmament programming but organizing and supporting the reintegration of ex-combatants into society is likely best left to ci-

vilian organizations. Therefore, when asking the military and civilian actors to come together the division of tasks needs to be clear.

Among NGOs, participants noted some resistance towards cooperating with the military relating to fears about the subversion of the humanitarian principles and general security concerns. There is real anxiety about the model used in Afghanistan (Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs) becoming the model for military engagement in humanitarian aid everywhere. This model has been highly controversial not just for donors, implementing agencies and the military but also for beneficiaries. Afghanis felt that there was a great deal of money coming into the country but it was mainly going to expatriates, and not trickling down to local organizations. The problem, as seen by participants, is that PRTs are based on the principle of security and not on development. PRTs use development to support security issues, not as an end in and of itself. This viewpoint is highly problematic for many actors for obvious reasons.

Participants finished by coming up with four directions to strengthen transatlantic cooperation on the issue of civil-military relations:

The first was informal civil-military guidelines to shape the way these organization work in the field.

The second was creating, and then utilizing, platforms for exchanging information, both at a very high level and, if possible, in the field.

The third was the idea of a joint transatlantic exercise (mixing civil and military EU and U.S. organizations). Participants felt that an exercise at the U.S.-EU level could help to prepare the global community to respond to future disasters and promote civil-military cooperation.³

And the fourth was creating a common language that would allow these very different organizations to communicate (on that point, the creation of a dedicated Web portal may be an interesting idea).

³ The US 2006 Strong Angel III disaster response exercise may be a useful model here. Strong Angel III brought together more than 600 military members, Defense Department employees, first responders, non-governmental organizations and technologists to practice coordinating their disaster response efforts.



7. Conclusions

Given that emergencies and disasters caused by climate change are increasing in frequency and severity and that the EU and the U.S. provide over 50% of the world's humanitarian aid, transatlantic cooperation is vital to meeting the resulting humanitarian needs of the global community. The dialogues and outcomes presented in this report shed light upon some of the critical discussions about governing humanitarian aid. Within these discussions three key threads can be identified: the need (and current movement) to further professionalize the humanitarian aid sector (including creating a common language and definitions for key concepts); the emergence and integration of new actors; and maintaining and defining the humanitarian space.

At the moment, decisions determining which disaster receives aid and which does not are heavily influenced by politics. While the European Commission and some European States have enacted policies that provide funding to forgotten crises, or those most in need, much of the world's aid could likely be distributed more effectively. For example after the 2004 tsunami in Asia, organizations were turning away donations from private citizens after receiving too much money for this one disaster, while disasters in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo were, and remain, largely ignored.⁴ Efforts are now being made to professionalize this field, and the decision-making processes that guide humanitarian funding. One such effort is the creation of a classification system for humanitarian crises. This system would provide a transparent situation analysis of a crisis and would also allow for empirical comparisons of disasters across geography and time. Questions about whether or not donors would support such a system remain, but, if such a system is created, it could serve as a basis for donor allocations in relation to the severity of specific crises. Where donors chose to allocate resources based on political considerations, it could be used to harness the “CNN effect” and put pressure on donor governments to give aid where it is needed, not just to those nations who are geo-politically important.

In addition to creating professional systems for comparing disasters, every discussion touched upon the need for a common language and definitions of key concepts within the humanitarian field. In order to fully integrate new actors, such as businesses, the military, local actors and staff from traditional development agencies, common definitions must be established and agreed upon by all stakeholders involved. Only when a common language is established will cooperation occur in an effective manner.

Part of professionalizing this field includes standardizing the way aid efforts are monitored and evaluated. In terms of increasing accountability, participants recommended creating field-wide standards for evaluating and implementing lessons learned, as well as rethinking job responsibilities and roles within organizations to ensure that the lessons learned are gathered and implemented. Such changes will require incentives and constraints from donors in order to push for more coherent, effective, and high-quality evaluating and monitoring procedures, which should lead to more consistent and coherent lessons learned.

Creating field-wide standards becomes more difficult as the field itself grows and welcomes new actors. The humanitarian field is expanding rapidly and must adapt to an evolving humanitarian

⁴ Since 2004 funding to the Democratic Republic of Congo has increased but remains well below requirements.



system that now includes new NGOs, the military, businesses, and donors from expanding regional players like the Middle East.

The integration of these new actors will also require changes in policy and decision-making processes, as well as changes on the part of current actors. Arguments against the engagement of some new actors will need to be examined empirically to determine, when, where, how and if the skills of these new actors can be best put to use. Clearly, the emergence of these new actors will create some strains, and again donors, in particular the transatlantic partners, will need to show leadership in creating the policies that will allow the international community to harness the skills these actors can bring, while mitigating the risks their presence may cause.

Regardless of who is undertaking the effort, the need to maintain, defend and define the humanitarian space remains paramount. The core principles of humanitarian aid, including humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality must be understood and maintained if the humanitarian community is to gain access to vulnerable groups and preserve the safety of its own workers in disaster zones. This is particularly an issue with regards to the inclusion of the military in humanitarian relief efforts. Where the military and civilian organizations collaborate on aid, including in the seemingly less problematic context of natural disasters, there needs to be an understanding on both sides of each other's priorities and role, and both must take great care not to compromise the mission of the other with their actions.

A similar concern arises when attempting to integrate businesses into humanitarian aid. Business actors which aim to make a profit in humanitarian aid are competing with NGOs and other traditional actors for contracts. However, participants felt that businesses and implementing agencies have different core skills and functions and the comparative advantages each actor group holds may in fact complement, rather than conflict with, each other. Where businesses partner with donors or implementing agencies, the ability of businesses to complement traditional actors is clearer, since they are, in effect, donating their knowledge and skills in their core functional areas of expertise. Donor policy towards business engagement, however, must ensure that, regardless of whether the firm is making a profit or not, its actions adhere to humanitarian principles and in no way undermine them. Transparency and effort are required from all actors if these new players are to be successfully integrated.

Maintaining and defining the humanitarian space affects the implementation of lessons learned as well. When evaluating projects, organizations must take care to ensure that the needs and issues of the beneficiaries of aid are taken into account, which is not always done. In order to maintain the principles of humanitarian aid, it is imperative to evaluate and monitor actions in relation to these beneficiaries, in addition to examining more traditional measures of effectiveness. Any training that is given must include information on humanitarian principles and how to maintain and comply with them.

For practitioners focused on LRRD, the issue of defining the humanitarian space is of particular importance. How does one define where humanitarian aid ends and development begins? How should one fund activities that fall in the grey zone of transition, and on what conditions? How does one integrate legal and policy frameworks in a manner that meets the needs of both communities, while maintaining the humanitarian and development space? If humanitarian and de-

velopment aid are to be linked through LRRD programming, special care must be taken to ensure that this linkage helps to address root causes of disaster and their long-term affects, while maintaining independence and impartiality in order to ensure efficient humanitarian assistance. These are issues that need to be researched and discussed by donors, implementing agencies and – ideally – beneficiaries alike.

Ultimately, the United States and Europe must work together to define humanitarian norms, develop joint strategies and perhaps create a division of labor based on each party's comparative advantage and sphere of influence. In addressing these challenges, actors in the humanitarian field must be engaged. It will be up to these two transatlantic partners to determine how and to what extent to include non-traditional actors, such as businesses and the military, in this process. What is certain is that policies and guidelines must be flexible, so that the realities on the ground can be taken into account and the risks associated with integrating these new actors are mitigated.

Both the new European Presidency and the current contenders for the White House are focused on international issues. With the global food crisis and many complex emergencies around the world taking up media coverage, discussions of the role and purpose of humanitarian aid are of increasing importance on either side of the Atlantic. Accordingly, the time has never been better to engage in a deep and meaningful dialogue about the governance of humanitarian aid. Regardless of who takes over from President Bush, the current shape of this dialogue will be altered and these changes provide an extraordinary opportunity to further this debate and create new partnerships in the field of humanitarian aid between the transatlantic partners.

In contemplating these issues, and to facilitate increased cooperation, more policy-oriented research and dialogue is necessary. The Global Public Policy Institute, in conjunction with the Centre for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University, is committed to pursuing this important research and dialogue agenda in the year ahead. This first dialogue session will be followed by two more sessions in Washington DC, and Brussels respectively. The next session, in December 2008, will be used as a platform to present and debate the findings from the research on the four topics of this project. A final conference in Brussels will be used to present the policy recommendations arising from the dialogue series and research components of the “Raising the Bar” project.

Thank you for providing your cooperation and insight. If you would like to learn more about the project's progress, or add to our discussion on these issues please visit our website www.disastergovernance.net. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

List of Participants

Manuel BESSLER

Deputy Chief of the Policy Development and Study Branch, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (UN OCHA)

Andrea BINDER

Research Associate Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Esther BRIMMER

Deputy Director, Director of Research, Center for Transatlantic Relations

Martin BUETTNER

Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Per BYMAN

Head of Division for Humanitarian Assistance, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

Dr. Fredrik BYANDER

Research Fellow, Uppsala University

Sandro CERRATO

Head of Sector, Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Preparedness, European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)

Björn CONRAD

Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Joanna CZAPLIKA

Evaluation Manager, Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid, *European Commission*

Herta DAEUBLER-GMELIN

German Member of Parliament, Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

James DARCY

Director, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

Frank DORNER

General Director Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF)

Wolf-Dieter EBERWEIN

Professor of Political Science, Institut d'Études Politiques de Grenoble

Sebastian ELISCHER

Graduate Student, Jacobs University

Maj Anne-Christine ERIKSSON

Deputy Regional Representative (Protection) for Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic/UNHCR Regional Representation in Germany, Berlin

Kerstin FAEHRMANN

Head of the Emergency and Transitional Aid Division, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Hugh GOYDER

Associate, INTRAC

François GRUNEWALD

Chairman, Urgence-Rehabilitation-Developpement (Groupe URD)

Nicholas HAAN

Executive Director, T-Ana International

Ulrich HESS

Chief of Business Risk Management, World Food Program

Kelly JOHNSON

Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Edward P. JOSEPH

Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University

Jenty KIRSCH-WOOD

Humanitarian Affairs Officer, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Kai KODDENBROCK

Research Assistant, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Jean-Luc MARRET

Senior Visiting Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University

Martin McCANN

Chief Executive RedR

Susanne MEIER

Director CSR Strategy and Policy, Deutsche Post World Net

Johanna MENDELSON FORMAN

Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Ross MOUNTAIN

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), United Nations

Tasneem MOWJEE

Senior Researcher, Development Initiatives

Ursula MÜLLER

Head of Division, Humanitarian Task Force and Mine Action, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Jeremy NATHAN

Economic Officer, US Embassy in Berlin, Germany

Benjamin PARRY

Rapporteur

Riccardo POLASTRO

Head of Evaluation Department, DARA

Katrin RADTKE

Advisor, Humanitarian Assistance and Development Policy, Welthungerhilfe

Anne C. RICHARD

Vice-President, Government Relations and Advocacy, International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Lothar RIETH

Research Associate, Institute of Political Science, Darmstadt University of Technology

Shinta SANDER

Desk Officer, GTZ

Gerhard SCHMALBRUCH

Managing Secretary EuronAID

Cortnie SHUPE

Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Justin SOSNE

Summer Fellow, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Julia STEETS

Project Manager, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)



Maike TRIBBELS

Political Adviser in the Private Office of NATO's Secretary General

Laurent VERNEUIL

AGREGATIV Professor of Universities at the Limousin Institute of Technology ENSOSP

Ambassador Busso VON ALVENSLEBEN

Commissioner for Global Issues: Civilian Crisis Prevention, Human Rights, Humanitarian Aid and International Terrorism, German Federal Foreign Office

Sharon WIHARTA

Researcher, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Howard Roy WILLIAMS

President and CEO, Center for Humanitarian Cooperation

Jan Martin WITTE

Associate Director, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), Berlin

Agenda

JUNE 2ND

12:00pm **BUFFET - LUNCH**

01:00 pm **WELCOME**

- Julia Steets, Project Manager, GPPi
- Esther Brimmer, Deputy Director, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS

1.15pm **INTRODUCTORY KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

The changing landscape of humanitarian relief: Setting the agenda

Manuel Bessler, Deputy Director of Policy Development and Studies Branch, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Ambassador Busso von Alvensleben, Commissioner for Global Issues, Federal Foreign Office, Germany

Q&A

2.15pm **PANEL DISCUSSION I**

Transatlantic approaches to disaster preparedness and relief: setting the stage

Goals of this session: Introduce the “Raising the Bar”-Project; provide and discuss different perspectives on the current state of transatlantic cooperation in disaster relief and preparedness, the actual and potential impact of transatlantic cooperation on humanitarian aid, major differences and commonalities in transatlantic approaches to disaster relief and preparedness and realistic opportunities for future cooperation.

Introductory comments: Julia Steets, Project Manager, GPPi

Panel members:

- Anne C. Richard, Vice President, Government Relations & Advocacy, International Rescue Committee
- James Darcy, Director of Programmes, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute
- Per Byman, Head of Division for Humanitarian Assistance, SIDA

Q & A

3:45 pm **COFFEE BREAK**

4:15 pm **WORKING GROUPS SESSION I**

Goals of this working group session: In this working group session, the individual study groups will be introduced. Study group leaders will briefly introduce

the study group topic, additional resource persons will comment, provide EU and US perspectives and kick off the discussion. Working groups should provide feedback on study group setup, key hypotheses as well as preliminary outcomes and recommendations generated so far.

Working Group I: Linking relief, rehabilitation, and development

Both the EU and the US have declared LRRD as an essential concept guiding their disaster response. However, the implementation of LRRD remains a challenge. Building on four case studies, the LRRD study group compares the transatlantic partners' respective approaches to implementing LRRD and generates lessons learned and best practices. During this working group, the setup of the study group as well as preliminary findings will be discussed.

Quick introduction: Martin Büttner, Research Associate, GPPi

Resource persons:

- Tasneem Mowjee, Senior Researcher, Development Initiatives
- Sandro Cerrato, Policy Officer, Food Aid and Disaster Preparedness, ECHO, European Commission

Working Group II: Improving humanitarian performance through the implementation of lessons learned

The humanitarian community engages systematically in the collection of lessons learned, but there remains an important gap between agreed upon standards and actual practice. The study group on learning seeks to tackle the disconnect between knowledge and its use and hopes to promote mutual learning between the US and the EU on how donors can better adjust their programs and policies to existing lessons learned. During this working group, the setup of the study group as well as preliminary findings will be discussed.

Quick introduction: Andrea Binder, Research Associate, GPPi

Resource persons:

- Joanna Czaplicka, Evaluations Officer, DG ECHO, European Commission
- Riccardo Polastro, Head of Evaluation Department, DARA International

Working Group III: Business engagement in humanitarian action

In recent years, the role of business in humanitarian action has become a prominent topic in policy debates. Europeans and Americans have developed different approaches to engaging with the private sector in the humanitarian arena. This study group compares the different modes and evaluates their

strengths and weaknesses. During this working group, the setup of the study group as well as preliminary findings will be discussed.

Quick introduction: Kelly Johnson, Research Associate, GPPi

Resource persons:

- Susanne Meier, Director of Partnerships, Deutsche Post World Net

Working Group IV: Civil-military relations in disaster response

Whether in the context of natural disasters or complex emergencies, civil and military actors are increasingly working together. During this working group, the setup of the study group as well as preliminary findings will be discussed.

Quick introduction: Jean-Luc Marret, Senior Fellow, CTR

Resource persons:

- Katrin Radtke, Policy Officer Development Policy and Humanitarian Assistance, Welthungerhilfe
- Dr. Fredrik Byander, Scientific Coordinator, CRISMART

5:45 pm REPORTING BACK TO THE PLENARY

6:30 pm BREAK

7:30 pm DINNER

9:00 pm NIGHT CAP

Goal: Food for thought for the night and next day.

Speaker: Nick Haan, Executive Director T-Ana International, to speak on a common classification system for humanitarian situation analysis

JUNE 3RD

9:00 am PANEL DISCUSSION II

Key emerging trends for humanitarian disaster preparedness and response: Field and operational perspectives

Goals of this session: This session will discuss the core challenges of humanitarian action from a field perspective and provide an introduction to the practical responses and strategies developed by different actors in the humanitarian field.

Introductory keynote speaker: Ross Mountain, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UN Mission in the DR Congo

Panel members:

Maike Tribbels, Policy Planning Officer, Private Office of the Secretary-General, NATO

Ursula Müller, Head of Division, Humanitarian Task Force and Mine Action, Federal Foreign Office Germany

Roy Williams, President, Center for Humanitarian Cooperation

10:30 am COFFEE BREAK

11:00 am WORKING GROUPS SESSION II

Goals of this session: This working group session will again be structured around the four key study group themes. However, they will be focused on specific country cases and be introduced primarily by field-based perspectives. The idea is to complement the introductory working group sessions from day 1 of the conference with some hands-on discussion about actual experiences and lessons learned.

Working Group I: Linking relief, rehabilitation, and development: Experiences from the field

Resource persons:

- Hugh Goyder, Associate, INTRAC
- François Grunewald, Director, Groupe URD

Working Group II: Improving humanitarian performance through the implementation of lessons learned: Experiences from the field

Resource persons:

- Jenty Kirsch-Wood, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Policy Development, UNOCHA

Working Group III: Business engagement in humanitarian action: Experiences from the field

Resource persons:

- Ulrich Hess, Chief of Business Risk Planning, World Food Programme

Working Group IV: Civil-military relations in disaster response: Experiences from the field

Resource persons:

- Laurent Verneuil, AGREATIV Professor of Universities, the Limousin Institute of Technology ENSOSP
- Johanna Mendelson-Forman, Senior Associate, CSIS

12:30 pm **L U N C H**

2:00 pm **P A N E L D I S C U S S I O N I I I**

Enhancing coherence and cooperation in transatlantic governance of disaster relief and preparedness: Next steps

Goals of this session: Discuss the most important steps ahead for the transatlantic partners and other humanitarian actors in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster relief and preparedness.

Introductory keynote speaker: Herta Daeubler-Gmelin, Head of Humanitarian Aid Committee, German Parliament

Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dieter Eberwein, Social Science Research Centre, Berlin

Dr. Gerhard Schmalbruch, Managing Secretary, Euronaid

Francois Grunewald, Director, URD

3:30 pm **F A R E W E L L A N D N E X T S T E P S**

Goals of this session: This last session provides the RTB team with the opportunity to discuss how the project will proceed and what lessons will be taken on board as a result of the dialogue. Participants find out and discuss how they can remain involved and provide further input to the project.



Organizer Information

The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) is an independent think tank based in Berlin and Geneva. Our mission is to develop innovative strategies for effective and accountable governance and to achieve lasting impact at the interface of the public sector, business and civil society through research, consulting and debate.

Our approach:

- **We are an independent and non-profit institute.** We receive project funding from foundations as well as our project partners and clients from the public and private sectors. We re-invest profits from consulting activities into our research work.
- **We build bridges between research and practice.** Our international team combines research and public policy expertise with management consulting skills. We foster the exchange of knowledge and experience between researchers and practitioners.
- **We promote policy entrepreneurship.** Our work strengthens strategic communities around pressing policy challenges by bringing together the public sector, civil society and business.

The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Center for Transatlantic Relations, located in Washington DC, engages international scholars and students directly with government officials, journalists, business executives, and other opinion leaders from both sides of the Atlantic on issues facing Europe and North America. The goal of the Center is to strengthen and reorient transatlantic relations to the dynamics of the globalizing world.



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In addition, we would like to kindly thank the speakers as well as those participants who provided introductory presentations in the working group sessions. Lastly, a special thanks to the rapporteurs (Benjamin Parry, Justin Sosne, Bjorn Conrad and Kai Koddenbrock) without whom this conference report could not have been possible.