



Second Transatlantic Dialogue on Humanitarian Action

# Practitioners and Policymaking: Building Effective Transatlantic Action on Disaster Relief and Preparedness

Conference Report

Center for Transatlantic Relations  
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University  
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Raising the Bar: Enhancing transatlantic governance of disaster relief and preparedness

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Introduction.....	3
Day One: Themes from the Plenary Sessions.....	4
Panel I: Disaster Response and Foreign Policy .....	4
Panel II: Transatlantic Approaches to Preparedness and Disaster Response .....	6
Midday Discussion: “The Impact of Afghanistan Relief on International Humanitarian Assistance Cooperation” with Dr. George Rupp .....	8
Panel III: Organizational Innovation in Humanitarian Agencies .....	8
Day Two: Themes from Working Groups .....	10
Working Group I: Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) .....	10
Working Group II: Improving humanitarian performance through monitoring and evaluation.....	16
Working Group III: Business engagement in humanitarian action .....	18
Working Group IV: Civil-military relations in disaster response.....	20
Conclusion and Questions for Future Research.....	21
Conference Agenda.....	23
List of Participants .....	34
Conference Organizers.....	38
Acknowledgements.....	40

**Practitioners and Policymaking:  
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Preparedness**

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## **Introduction**

On December 15-16, 2008, the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Transatlantic Relations and the Global Public Policy Institute co-hosted a Second Humanitarian Dialogue. The Dialogue is part of a series of three conducted under the auspices of the project entitled "Raising the Bar: Enhancing Transatlantic Governance of Disaster Relief and Preparedness." The December Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C. The previous one had been held in Berlin in June 2008. The conference brought together European and American experts to compare and contrast the approaches of the European Union and the United States to providing international help to address major disasters.

Large scale disasters can have wide ranging impacts from pandemics to rapid migration flows. Whether a classic natural disaster or a complex emergency spurred by human action, catastrophe can create human needs that demand an international response. Currently the international community is debating how to reform the humanitarian sector to be able respond better to such challenges. As the two biggest donors of international humanitarian aid, the EU and the US could spearhead the humanitarian policy debate by enhancing transatlantic approaches to managing disasters, and by promoting reform both at the bilateral and the multilateral levels.

The project entails an eighteen-month effort to combine policy-oriented research with opportunities to exchange ideas among researchers and practitioners from several countries. The project connects research examining examples from the field with policy-making issues. The project divides the work into four areas:

- Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)
- Improving humanitarian performance through monitoring and evaluation
- Business engagement in humanitarian action
- Civil-military relations in disaster response

In each of the four project areas four case studies have been researched and written. These will be published on the project website <http://www.disastergovernance.net>. The report of the first conference is also posted there. The first Dialogue in Berlin provided a chance for participants to discuss the challenges of international support for disaster

management from the perspectives of the field. The second Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C. and offered a venue for experts and practitioners to add their insights into the project. Discussions considered differences and similarities in policy doctrine, programming principles and priorities between the U.S. and EU.

The conference spanned two days. The event was a private meeting under Chatham House rules with a separate session open to media and the public. On the first day participants considered policy related questions in plenary sessions. At midday, Dr. George Rupp, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee offered remarks in the public session. On the second day the participants divided into working groups to explore the four research sectors more deeply. The participants reconvened at the end of the second day in a concluding plenary session.

This report will present the major themes raised at the conference and describe how these ideas advance the development of the project's analyses and recommendations. The report will also highlight questions for the next stage of the project. The agenda and participants' list appear at the end of the report.

## **Day One: Themes from the Plenary Sessions**

### **Panel I: Disaster Response and Foreign Policy**

The opening session asked four questions:

1. What are the connections between disaster response and foreign policy priorities?
2. How do policymakers view disaster relief?
3. How do they balance humanitarian, strategic and economic concerns?
4. How does the interplay of these concerns affect the effectiveness of disaster response?

In this session participants discussed how disaster response relates to foreign policy. Genuine compassion can propel the urge to help after a disaster strikes. Yet, international action by governments will have some political element; governments are political entities. For example, international security concerns could affect the degree of interest in providing relief to a given area. Humanitarian assistance may be an act of benevolence, doing good for others that also benefits oneself; rather than altruism, wholly disinterested action. For example, policy-makers may want to provide relief and restore stability more quickly in areas of security concern or build goodwill with political partners. As one participant noted, no policy makers are free from these concerns. Indeed as one speaker commented, relief flows tended to follow aid flows to places where donors may already have a connection with the recipients. On reflection this connection is not surprising, nor is it necessarily detrimental to human well-being. In a crisis recipients are likely to turn to existing supporters; while donors may feel especially drawn to help a country to which they already give aid. Humanitarian aid could be used to advance public image of the donor, but it may also deepen positive connections among

countries. Relations between Greece and Turkey warmed after they helped each other recover from their respective earthquakes in 1999. Observers dubbed the phenomenon “disaster diplomacy.”

Participants commented on the wide range of agencies involved in relief, divergent approaches to civil-military relations, and the impact of the media. A recurring theme was the fragmentation of agencies and organizations dealing with humanitarian response. During a crisis non-governmental groups may form and persist even after the crisis concludes. Within government many offices are part of the policy-making. In the United States, several civilian agencies could be involved including the State Department’s Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration, the Agency for International Development’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), and the Department of Agriculture which handles food aid. European Union actions may be led by the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), by the European Council or by member states.

Acknowledging this fragmentation, some participants focused on ways to improve cooperation among offices. Other participants contended that this multiplicity of agencies failed the beneficiaries because people tend to do what is comfortable and familiar, but which may not be the most useful for disaster victims. Views on the impact of this fragmentation informed participants’ views on whether new institutions were needed or whether existing ones could be reshaped to meet more complex needs.

Another speaker countered that the fragmentation of agencies may help adherence to humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. The EU stresses the theoretical separation of humanitarian aid from foreign policy. In the European context the EU and member states provide relief. The EU itself is better insulated from political pressures and able to provide aid for more benevolent reasons. Still, sixty percent of EU aid goes to Africa, a region which is close to Europe and with which there are many connections.

Many speakers noted commonalities in policy-makers’ considerations. The discussion did not degenerate into sparring matches with opponents charging “Americans think this way” and “Europeans think that way.” Instead participants tried to describe degrees of difference and shades of emphasis in policy-making. For example, one speaker noted that the U.S. in recent years had been disinclined to work through multilateral organizations. For example, the Bush Administration policy did not integrate the internationally accepted UN Millennium Development Goals. Still many participants agreed that there were greater cleavages between military and civilian actors within countries, than among national approaches across the Atlantic. Still policy differences existed. While the U.S. would fund projects led by NGOs, the EU was willing to provide direct budget support.

All agreed that the landscape for humanitarian response is being reshaped. Some participants argued that the principle of safeguarding the humanitarian space has failed. The incursion of political considerations and militaries as providers has encroached on the humanitarian sphere. Too often aid was being used as an element of crisis

management, not humanitarian response. Advocates of this position charged that if aid were programmed primarily for foreign policy interests then it would not be effective in the long run. Humanitarians might be denied access in the future because they were seen as political actors. Meanwhile, having militaries deliver aid diminished both the effectiveness of the military and of the relief. Militaries were distracted from their coercive mission and relief workers were tarred as parties to the conflict.

In the lively discussion that ensued, participants acknowledged the current debate in the U.S. about the degree to which the military should be involved in providing assistance. Yet humanitarian action alone could not solve the underlying conflict. Speakers noted the problem of providing humanitarian aid without a corresponding political program as initially happened in the Balkans in the early 1990s. Humanitarian aid was used as a substitute for political engagement. Now the other extreme prevailed with humanitarian response as an element in the political toolkit. In the rich discussion a range of other ideas were raised including:

- What is the military's mission? Policy-makers needed to clarify what the military was being asked to do. Was it being asked to lead humanitarian operations or support them?
- What role does media coverage play? Many agreed that pictures can help consolidate public support. Conversely cases of corruption can erode support for offering aid.
- How has the concept of neutral humanitarian aid been affected by new modes of delivery? This was also raised in the earlier Berlin Dialogue. The debates about the role of the military gained potency from the underlying concern that military actors could undermine, in fact and appearance, the neutrality of relief workers.
- Are the assumptions underpinning international humanitarian law western constructs? Some participants agreed that certain themes of common humanity could be found in all societies. Later, in the second session, a speaker remarked that it was not the values that were western, but the ways of implementing them.

Participants also wondered should some countries focus on aid to one area while another country sent aid elsewhere? Some asked whether we need to broaden the international framework even further? Rethinking the frameworks leads to thinking about preparedness not just recovery. How countries approach disaster response affects their policy choices. Approaches to disaster response were the subject of the second session.

## **Panel II: Transatlantic Approaches to Preparedness and Disaster Response**

The session questions were:

1. Which integrated approaches to preparedness and disaster response have been developed on both sides of the Atlantic?

2. What can be learned from domestic civil protection and homeland security mechanisms for emergency response in third countries?

In the second session, participants compared and contrasted emergency preparedness policies in the U.S. and Europe and how these affect approaches to international relief. The United States has a strong federal system. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was described as a conductor directing an orchestra of action. The U.S. National Response Framework included the state-level as well as Federal level. It categorized response efforts into fifteen segments such as transportation and shelter. Through the National Incident Management System, the Federal government provided a mechanism for developing standard terminology and standard qualifications. In this vision, FEMA's added value was the power of coordination and the ability to leverage others. This version of a FEMA framework with outsiders supporting local officials who remained in the lead could provide an interesting model for international structures. The idea of standardization of terms looked useful. Yet some noted that while standardization was helpful, what really mattered was flexibility and ability to deal with local customs when offering relief.

In the discussion a range of topics were raised including:

- Food Aid. Participants considered food aid and responses to food emergencies. Seventy percent of food aid is provided through multilateral means making this an international issue. Differences are noticeable across the Atlantic with European agencies giving cash, while the U.S. tends to provide commodities and in-kind food support. Participants observed that it was helpful to have multiple actors providing food aid.
- Preparedness and development. Participants argued that it was not possible to separate preparedness from development. Pre-existing conditions affect the outcome, the ability to provide timely aid to people in need.
- Cataloguing services and materials. Additional "mapping" of emergency response would help since there is no widely accepted baseline of what relief material exists where. Yet several respected websites already exist and could be enhanced.
- Security. Some noted that providing security was a legitimate aim for outside militaries, but asserted that such protection should not just be for humanitarian workers.
- Guidelines for civil-military cooperation. Picking up on a topic also raised at the Berlin Dialogue, participants again considered efforts to develop guidelines for civil-military relations in humanitarian response. The U.S. Institute for Peace worked with the U.S. Department of Defense to write the "Guidelines for

Relations between U.S. Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments.”<sup>1</sup> Many countries and international organizations have signed onto the “Oslo Guidelines” on “The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster Relief,” that were originally agreed in Norway in 1994 and which have been updated.

While the military’s logistical prowess was often called upon, its management systems might also offer lessons for humanitarian response. Military organizations can combine different assets, which could be a useful model when trying to bridge the fragmented stream of agencies involved in relief. Another commented that the military should be added value to the local and other actors on the ground. Participants noted that if the humanitarian mission is not clearly defined then the military outlook might dominate because militaries are well organized to present their views.

### **Midday Discussion: “The Impact of Afghanistan Relief on International Humanitarian Assistance Cooperation” with Dr. George Rupp**

In the midday session, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Rescue Committee, Dr. George Rupp reflected on the impact of the international humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan on the larger debate about the changing nature of international relief efforts. The IRC has provided relief in Afghanistan for two decades and has extensive experience in the country. Working in 1000 villages with a 100% Afghan staff, the IRC emphasizes local ownership of the relief process. Projects are identified by the villagers themselves. The IRC was willing to coordinate *with* the military, but not be coordinated *by* the military.

Many of the debates about humanitarian response coalesce in analyses of international engagement in Afghanistan. New and controversial models of humanitarian action have been tried there. The most salient of which are the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that combine civilian and military assets. The PRTs were raised in the Berlin Dialogue; in the Washington Dialogue participants developed the discussion further to differentiate among the PRTs which are organized by different countries using contrasting principles. While all the U.S. PRTs are led by the military, others have civilian leads. Dr. Rupp noted that transatlantic cooperation in Afghanistan began with the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. Donors have followed very different models. For example, although a NATO member, Norway has provided no assistance through the PRTs; other NATO member countries have led PRTs. An audio recording of the speech will be posted on the CTR website <http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu> and the project website <http://www.disastergovernance.net>.

### **Panel III: Organizational Innovation in Humanitarian Agencies**

The session questions were:

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.usip.org/pubs/guidelines.html>

1. What types of organizational innovations are occurring in the humanitarian sector?
2. How have NGOs applied network concepts and other forms of organizational innovation?
3. What lessons from just-in-time manufacturing and other business logistics models could be applied to organizing humanitarian assistance?
4. What role do the transatlantic partners play in supporting and implementing organizational reforms?

In the third session participants considered some of the innovations that NGOs and governments have instituted. The complexities of disaster response have led to innovations by aid donors and aid deliverers alike. In this session speakers noted the difficulty of herding donors, but noted that many networks such as ALNAP exist to try to support donor cooperation. Participants agreed that coordination works best with those invested in results, not just coordination for its own sake.

The advent of aid delivery as a business has changed the response system and the evaluation framework. Business enterprises need to document tangible progress on a faster timeline than traditional aid organizations. This in turn can lead to businesses and NGOs measuring what is measurable in the short term rather than what is important in the long-term.

The information age has also changed humanitarian response with ReliefWeb and other mechanisms linking together various actors. Participants also discussed coalitions and organizations that bring together various NGOs. InterAction uses a cluster system to connect member NGOs with similar interests. Coalitions of NGOs can draw on their wide expertise to help establish standards of practice for their members. InterAction has endorsed the NGO-Department of Defense guidelines developed by USIP. European NGOs are also working on guidelines.

Even with guidelines for action and civil-military cooperation, NGOs and others face challenges when responding to disasters. How should the international community respond to different political conditions across a given country? One region may be stable while another is in crisis. Some aid agencies may need to allocate funds by country and not be able to differentiate programmatically among regions. They may need to offer crisis relief in one region, and be able to conduct normal development programs in another.

One of the most critical times might be when there are signs of peace, but there is little economic recovery aid available fast enough to give opponents a stake in a more peaceful future. This is a critical period; violence has ceased, but a peace accord has not yet been signed. The international community is not well set up to target this period. This might be an area for further work and enhanced transatlantic cooperation. Difference in program timetables may be a factor. Participants commented that the U.S. and the EU have different types of funding with U.S.'s OFDA able to provide funds fast for early

recovery programs and the EU able to provide longer-term sustainable recovery support. Some participants noted that there rarely is a neat handoff from conflict to peace, from relief to long-term development. The situation can deteriorate and slip back from development to relief.

The group also discussed differences in approaches among NGOs in the Euro-Atlantic region. Historically, in some countries in southern Europe NGOs had developed in opposition to the state and today are still less likely to work with state entities. In northern Europe and Nordic countries there were faith-based NGOs which were more comfortable working with the state. Moreover, the European NGO scene has expanded to include new NGOs from the new EU members.

Not only do NGOs have different origins; the very language they use may signify shades of difference in approach. In Brussels, “LRRD” is a key concept; in the UK many focus on early recovery while in recent years the U.S. policy-makers concentrated on “reconstruction and stabilization.” The gap in language reflects differences in policy priorities. It also may reflect a gap in response when the immediate, acute crisis has passed, but stability has not returned and sustainable recovery has not taken hold. The gap can appear in “natural” and “man-made” disasters.

In the first Dialogue participants considered finding common mechanisms; in the second they were interested finding common terminology to explain what was happening in the field. Acknowledging the special features of this gap period could enhance the quality and success of disaster response. In this phase respondents may do what can be counted, not what is needed. A participant argued that relief providers may focus on donor compliance standards rather than the needs or relief recipients.

## **Day Two: Themes from Working Groups**

On the second day of the conference participants met in working groups corresponding to the four project research clusters. Each group met twice on Tuesday, December 16. Each was led by the GPPi or CTR group manager who is coordinating the case studies. Each group leader serves as the intellectual bridge between the case study authors and the experts gathered at the Dialogue. Outside experts and some project case study authors attended.

### **Working Group I: Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)**

The central question posed in the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) working group was *to what extent the EC and the U.S., as the most important donors of humanitarian and development aid, could promote good LRRD outcomes at the field level?* The underlying hypothesis was that specifically for donors, adopting a LRRD focus, spanning both policy formulation and funding decisions, can increase the

effectiveness of donors assistance strategies—in the sense that livelihoods are more effectively protected, are made more resilient to future shock, and less dependent on foreign assistance.

The first session provided an overview of the research approach, key concepts and findings from four case studies on Chad, DRC, South-Sudan and Afghanistan. Afterwards, the session focused on operationalizing LRRD.

Among the commonalities found between the EC and the US was that ECHO and OFDA were in agreement on humanitarian principles and underlined that there was good cooperation at the field-level,. On both sides the crucial obstacle to LRRD-promotion was the relationship to the RELEX family and USAID.

After having briefly presented the different approaches of EC an US donors in the aforementioned case studies, the facilitator opened up discussion by asking the group *how development aid can be linked, if it at all, to humanitarian assistance* and to reflect on a quote from an EC official which stressed that knowledge of the local context is the main factor in assuring that the humanitarian and development aid systems are complementary.

### **Knowledge of the local context**

A participant set off the discussion by pointing out that unfortunately an overview of the existing local structures generally did not exist, leading to duplication of structures. Furthermore, situation analysis had to be subtle enough to differentiate between regions with various degrees of displacement. Whether or not there is a refugee camp in the area changes the situation. It is then important for partners to coordinate approaches, so that the local population will not develop preferences between them.

UNDP “early recovery” offers an interesting model in terms of humanitarian response and development linkages. The agency, once engaged in the field, starts off with primarily humanitarian activities. But from the onset there is a development fraction, which grows parallel to the diminishment of the initial humanitarian actions. According to the UNDP, this practice shows that it is possible to start some development activities

from the early stages of intervention and capitalize on knowledgeable staff on the ground to carry out later operations.

### **The role of technology and high humanitarian standards**

Another operational obstacle to LRRD-implementation perceived by the participants was that humanitarian actors came with complex technology at the onset of the situation and did not know how to shift from acute to protracted aid response. The inability to make the switch was primarily blamed on donors, who did not conceptualize this enough, or they did and then just switched from one to other all at once.. Nevertheless a humanitarian underlined: “We have to challenge our capacity for the switch. Once we do that the LRRD switch can be easier.”

Another participant pointed out that tension arises when standards of living in IDP or refugee camps are substantially higher than outside of them. In cases where camps had become proto-cities in which people had services available they have never seen before, people did not want to return to their villages where they did not have access to such services. The consequences of this can be dire. One participant noted: “We want to do everything perfect, we have a technical approach, but by doing something very well it may not be the quite the right thing.” In response, a participant underlined that the often higher level of services is driven by donor requests for deliverables over a very short time period. One is encouraged to propose the best one can do in order to get funding, and then was locked into providing it. A question was asked as to the necessity of such camps when dealing with a high concentration of people, which poses a whole new plethora of health risks. It was agreed that the need was there indeed, but it is crucial in those cases to contextualize the approach.

All in all participants agreed that a lot of aid agencies undertaking emergency assistance and development are increasingly trying to link and build on existing expertise. However, donors remain segmented, both in the US and the EC. Organizations thus try to be creative in filling the gap.

### **The role of the state**

While discussing local structures it became apparent that the role of the state as a partner or obstacle was crucial for the implementation of LRRD-activities. The most sustainable

way to implement these activities would be to make the existing government structures work. However, often donors' instincts are to bypass local state structures because of a lack of trust. In the case of the EC LRRD-program in Goma, it was pointed out that the program was long term and highly structural, making a transition from humanitarian to development assistance difficult. Humanitarian aid workers worked alone, separate from the national system, thus creating almost two parallel systems in the country. A further issue arises in conflict situations, where the state can be part of the conflict. In these cases it is obvious that cooperating with state structures is problematic.

Some members of the group underlined the importance of a pragmatic approach in certain situations. When a government is part of conflict you will not necessarily achieve results by ignoring them. The state must be differentiated between the governing entourage and what is below at the local level, where there are structures that are different than the central level. State capacity is never fully eroded. There is always a foundation to start recovery on somewhere.

A participant underlined that there were very few cases where NGOs did not interact with governments. It was pointed out that even in the most difficult environments like Burma aid workers were still present in the country because the government allowed them to be. Understanding these governments was important. Participants described the World Food Program's focuses on capacity strengthening at the household and community level, known as the livelihood strengthening approach, in case another disaster occurred. Often this type of programming happens in parallel to state structures. But in many of the areas of intervention there are no state structures per se. It was acknowledged that this might create problems in the long term but that there were few alternatives if the state was absent. In general, working through the government in the acute phase of a crisis was thus not what most agencies' prioritized. Instead, organizations often choose to work with national NGOs, agencies and similar bodies, as national structures to promote national ownership made sense and are a basis for sustainability.

### **Assuring the link and making it work**

In natural disasters aid supplies need to be on the ground within hours, in protracted crisis situations there is generally not the same sense of urgency. Participants mentioned there was no paradigm dealing with the latter situations and even in crisis response the paradigm was shaken in light of the tsunami crisis. As one participant noted "we need a change in thinking. We should get rid of the term capacity-building and replace it with

capacity-strengthening. Focus on existing capacity. Building is very western and arrogant. Mostly we would be lost without the local support.” However, others questioned this approach by saying that humanitarian aid should not be involved in capacity-building / strengthening.

Another participant argued that recent natural disasters underlined two things: firstly, the primary aid providers are the local actors/the neighbors; so aid needs to invest in that capacity to succeed. Secondly, western aid agencies arrive with tons of gadgets which are not always useful. It is thus advisable to take some time to analyze the situation in order to assess what and who is needed, and not to confuse urgency with precipitation. However, one should not bring about the reverse and plan too carefully. It remains an open question if it is better to waste some material rather than stalling the response.

A recent survey, called the *Global Study on Participation*, outlined three concepts that agencies use in approaching their field work and which can/does impede LRRD: no time, neutrality and medical-type thinking about saving individual lives. It found that participation is not a panacea. Linking humanitarian and development aid has to be the result of in-depth analysis of capacity and constraint.

There are cases where you can conceive how to strengthen livelihoods. In some NGOs’s experiences, there was a fundamental disagreement in how donors categorized crises. It was felt that many decisions were made arbitrarily and that inadequate communication between humanitarians and development structures further deteriorated the situation. In short, donors’ decisions were affected by both structural and political constraints, which can have a negative affect on LRRD. Two contexts to look at in the US were South-Sudan and North Uganda. Attempts were made to move programming to transition activities and do common planning. This has not yet been successful, even though all groups see it as critical. The problem is inherent structural impediments to a natural transition of funding streams and program continuation.

Commenting on this example, one participant stated that this was, nonetheless, a positive process. These issues were long-term and therefore patience was important. So while the humanitarian approach lends itself to fast-track thinking, capacity-building is long-term so it may take time to find a constructive alignment.

In the second session, participants focused on creating concrete proposals for donors to improve their work with regards to LRRD. Participants outlined and discussed their own particular procedures, as well as the challenges and opportunities they presented to LRRD, both on the European and the American side.

Participants agreed that it was important to clarify objectives and means. To this effect they offered some **suggestions** about how to move forward on LRRD:

- Current funding structures should be supplemented to accommodate transition processes, as opposed to funds being subverted from other areas.
- Multiple streams of funding for humanitarian aid should be maintained, because one blueprint for all cases is counter productive re activities in places such as Burma.
- Develop an early recovery office within USAID, because it is the best body to use on the U.S. side.
- Develop funding streams to preempt young people from becoming combatants and also pacify ex-combatants, by offering incentives to work not fight.
- Donors should specifically request analytical project proposals.
- Donors should keep strong presence in the field to monitor and conceptualize developments and possibilities re lost expertise by USAID has been counterproductive
- Question amount of earmarked funding by the U.S. Congress to address inflexibility of allocation.
- Rebuild USAID field presence.

Before concluding the session the moderator requested that all participants highlight one specific **recommendation** they would give to donor:

- The National Authorizing Officers, as in the case with the EC presence in Goma DRC, should not be the master who authorized all activities.
- Develop ad-hoc specialized mechanisms that allow for a proper transition funding.
- Develop more flexible mechanisms.
- Transparent adherence to good donor practices based on GDHI and Paris Declaration.
- Clearly delineate roles about who is responsible in early recovery both on the European and the American, as well as the UN side.
- Recognition of early response gap.

## **Working Group II: Improving humanitarian performance through monitoring and evaluation**

Both sessions of the “Implementing Lessons Learned” working group were dedicated to discuss preliminary results of the study group’s research and to collectively develop recommendations. The working group benefited from the presence of two of the case study authors (one on gender and one on local capacity), policy makers and humanitarian experts.

The study group leader presented the preliminary findings of the case studies with the following caveat: there is still a considerable lack of information about the US’ policies with respect to the implementation of lessons learned. To date all case study authors and the study group leader have had difficulties gaining access to the US government. Therefore, results are biased towards multilateral and EU perspectives. The research has been organized into five categories that appear to have an impact on the implementation of lessons learned with respect to gender and local capacities in humanitarian aid:

1. **Institutional structure** of the EC and the US to collect and follow up on lessons learned both at the HQ and on the field level

2. **Priority** attached by the EC and the US to the respective policy area
3. **Policies** guiding the transatlantic donors' and their implementing partners' behavior with respect to gender and local capacity
4. **Know-how**: Know how of humanitarian staff with respect to gender and local capacity as well as their ability to implement the respective policies
5. **Mindset**: the relevant actors' mindset towards gender and local capacity in humanitarian action

There are two key issues that can **positively** affect the implementation of lessons learned: the internal structure and policies of an organization.

Case study authors observed that of the positive structural elements the integration of monitoring and evaluation into the entire project cycle and a firm with formalized follow up procedures can act as a lever for the implementation of lessons learned. Further positive structural elements are field presence of donors, a close interaction between donors and their partners, and the use of financial incentives to implement lessons learned/ change behavior.

When it comes to policy, clear policies on the donor level, effectively communicated to implementing agencies, both at the HQ and the field level are a precondition for the implementation of lessons learned. Additionally, the researchers found that a process for policy development (based on lessons learned) that includes all relevant implementing agencies, increases the likeliness that partners are willing and capable to subsequently implement policies.

Researchers also found a number of elements that actively **hamper** the implementation of lessons learned.

With regards to structure, as in all other areas of humanitarian response, high staff-turnover is an issue. Additionally, existing staff responsible for gender or local capacity often lack seniority and/or expertise. The researchers also found that in most instances evaluation results are not systematically linked to partner selection and financing strategies. Consequently, they lack impact.

Another issue negatively affecting the implementation of lessons learned is priority of the subject matter. Both issue areas examined here (gender and local capacity) do not enjoy high levels of political support. In other words, the most important factor hampering the implementation of lessons learned is a lack of priority given to these topics.

There are also policy and knowledge gaps that can negatively impact implementing lessons learned. Policies are often inconsistent suffering from unaddressed conflicts between the donors' normative framework and the actual humanitarian policy goals (e.g. providing neutral humanitarian aid vs. social engineering). Further, a lack of a consistent and efficient methodology for needs assessment is another hampering factor. Most needs assessments do not include a gender analysis or an analysis of existing local response capacities. This gap is the result of both a lack of time and a lack of knowledge on how to conduct better needs assessments.

Largely, the participants of the working group agreed with the presented results. The discussion raised additional points to consider with respect to the mindset of key actors,

priorities of donors, and the need to build know-how and adequate tools to address gender and local capacity.

More specifically, participants stressed that with respect to gender, the hampering mindset amongst relevant actors is that gender is considered an issue of political correctness rather than a question of effectiveness. Regarding local capacity, the mindset that impedes implementation is the presumption that donors have to build local capacities. However, often there are already existing capacities that could be used for the response but is not recognized because it often does not come in the shape and form donors expect it. Additionally, the diverse nature of local capacities makes it difficult for donors to apply their standard accountability mechanisms. As a consequence, donors, and the EC in particular, are reluctant to directly fund local partners.

When it comes to prioritizing gender and local capacity issues, participants stressed that donors do not address gender and local capacity because currently there is not enough external pressure, either from NGOs, experts or the larger public, to develop and implement related policies. Finally, all participants reiterated that past mistakes related to gender and local capacity are repeated because current frameworks for a situation analysis and needs assessments consistently fail to address gender and local capacity.

The participants brainstormed on possible recommendations to the transatlantic donors based on the background of the presented preliminary results and the discussion. These are policy recommendations and as such focus on policy not on technical issues. The points are unrelated and not necessarily compatible to each other. Instead they suggest the range of initial ideas that have to be further researched and substantiated:

- Go through the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative in order to enhance gender and local capacity development in humanitarian assistance
- Urge and enable your implementing partners to conduct a thorough analysis of all (relevant) sectors including the assessment of the different needs and capacities of local organizations as well as the women, girls, boys and men affected by the crisis.
- Agree on a geographically based division of labor on local capacity development and announce the year 2011 as the year of local capacity in order to give capacity development a push.

### **Working Group III: Business engagement in humanitarian action**

The project divides this topic into four categories: 1) Commercial business engagement in disaster preparedness, 2) Commercial engagement in disaster relief, focusing on direct provision of relief; 3) Non-commercial business engagement in disaster preparedness 4) Non-commercial business engagement in disaster relief. The capacity of businesses to support implementing agencies or donor governments, or to directly provide relief themselves has been shaped by different legal frameworks in the U.S. and the EU. Traditionally the EU has only funded non-profits, while the U.S. will work with, and fund, businesses to provide relief services.

Participants began by discussing the problems faced by implementing agencies and what motivates businesses to join this difficult field. Participants noted that where the business is not engaging on a commercial basis, they are more likely to provide help in areas that are either related to their core competencies, or where they have ties to the community in need. Businesses' employees often care deeply about their communities and customers. These relationships may form bonds of trust and compassion that compel disaster relief. Employees may help drive the commitment to help in cases when aid is a goodwill gesture. However, while some businesses may want to help wherever help is needed they must be able to protect their staff and in many crisis situations it is difficult for a business to obtain insurance and assure the safety of staff and equipment. Accordingly, while businesses may want to respond to where there is the most need, they may not be able to in the same way that traditional actors can.

In the discussion of how businesses should engage when supporting governments or NGOs participants considered whether businesses should contribute in-kind services based on their core competencies (logistics, telecommunication, etc.) or general support. Participants also noted that businesses can incorporate disaster response and preparedness considerations into their regular practices. For example, if located in fault zones, they can build buildings to high earthquake resistance standards.

Participants also discussed reasons why donors may or may not want to work with businesses when delivering aid. This exchange revealed that in the evaluation phase donors may score businesses differently than NGOs, making it difficult to compare which type of organization is best placed to do what type of work. Businesses' targets are usually more easily measured than those of NGOs. For example, A company might be contracted to build a road, but NGOs tasked with building civil society. Both are important, but the project with a tangible product is more likely to be deemed successful. Participants also debated whether businesses or NGOs had lower overhead costs and noted that it is difficult to compare such things given the different way the two types of organizations are structured, and the way they report their finances.

Planning ahead was deemed beneficial regardless of whether it was a donor government or an implementing agency that was partnering with a business. Discussants noted that establishing memoranda-of-understanding (MOUs) between businesses and aid agencies in advance worked well in the past; enabling policymakers to know what a given company could provide after disaster strikes. Planning ahead was deemed so important that participants stressed the need for donors and governments to spearhead initiatives to create planning matrices for business-donor and business-implementing agency engagements.

These discussions resulted in the following recommendations for governments and donors:

- (1) Enter into more active dialogue with business on the role of business in humanitarian assistance and the principles guiding their behaviour.

- (2) Supporting the development of common standards: of common standards of business in humanitarian action – (building perhaps on the OCHA – WEF principles.
- (3) Develop clear policies in an interactive process on when, whether and how to engage with the private sector in humanitarian assistance
- (4) Increased engagement with business in low risk, high benefit areas such as insurance, non commercial contributions leveraging core business competencies (technical expertise and logistics):
  - a. map out the highest priorities for humanitarians – gap in their capacity (tie in the policies into when and how you engage with business
  - b. matrix of tasks – clear delineation of who is best placed to do what tasks and when;
  - c. looking at the best areas – who would be best to do what and a timeline and that is the best way.

#### **Working Group IV: Civil-military relations in disaster response**

The differences between the U.S. and the EU approaches to disaster response may be most apparent in civil-military relations, but for subtle reasons. The U.S. is a unified national government with civilian and military assets under its control. In its structure it is similar to EU member states. The EU is a political system with supra-national elements, but is not a unified government. The European Council has to agree to deploy military forces under the European Security and Defense Policy. U.S. policy has changed over the past two decades and is profoundly affected by the ideology of the given Administration. It is likely to evolve further.

Yet, the EU approach is also evolving. During part of the session, the group discussed the impact of operations in the Congo on the evolution of the EU's approach to crisis and disaster management. The Congo is one of the four case study topics for this group. With both military and humanitarian missions on the ground in Congo, the EU has had developed further its mechanisms for cooperation with a civilian committee established to complement the military component.

Civil-military relations can cover a wide scope. The working group concentrated on relations among militaries and NGOs (not on official civilians such as diplomats or development agency officers). A speaker focused analysis on two levels: the highest political level determining the goals of the mission and the operational level delineating the doctrine for the mission's actions on the ground. There was an important gap between civil-military relations on both these levels. The speaker argued that the EU did not have doctrine of its own. Instead it relied on NATO doctrine which was shaped by the U.S. The speaker argued that the EU needed to develop its own doctrine; in that context it could refine its approach to civil-military relations.

Participants observed that there was greater cooperation among civilian and military elements in the U.S. context. In the U.S. there tends to be the view that the military and NGOs could share ultimate goals of stability, but have different means to get there. In

the U.S. there are efforts to increase dialogue among military and NGOs. Discussants asserted that the Defense Department recognizes the need to work with NGOs and third parties. The military has learned that acting independently is not effective in complex crises. Peacekeeping, stabilization and reconstruction are not accomplished solely by force. Other skills and assets are needed. The military needs the civilian experts to stabilize societies. In the U.S. there is a realization that civilian actions need to accompany military ones in stabilization operations, the question is how to provide them. Speakers remarked that the Defense Department has a large budget for humanitarian activities. The issue if the U.S. is whether these capacities should be housed in civilian or military agencies.

People noted that in some cases, in the early response phase the local response was more effective because it was more systematic. The international response might be quite varied in quality.

On the first day, participants had spent a portion of the plenary sessions debating civil-military issues and classic questions of neutrality and humanitarian action. On the second day the working group focused more on specific mechanisms and for civil-military cooperation at the operational level. Recommendations discussed included developing joint training sessions for U.S. and EU personnel.

## **Conclusion and Questions for Future Research**

The conference enabled practitioners and policymakers to discuss mechanisms for enhancing transatlantic cooperation in disaster relief with an emphasis on the operational level. Although many of the speakers were policy shapers they were intent on conveying how their organizations' policy choices were shaped by and guided their actions in the field.

Interestingly, in the discussions references included responses to both “natural” and “manmade” disasters. This old division was not salient in the discussions. Instead participants were focused on humanitarian relief after a catastrophe largely irrespective of its cause. This approach may reflect an understanding that this distinction is artificial and may distract from solving underlying problems. Some natural disasters, such as floods, may be affected by human action on water and soil management. Conversely, political unrest may be spurred by disagreements or environmental phenomena, such as desertification claiming farmland or shortages of rainfall and drinking water.

While the first Dialogue had considered the need for greater common action, the second Dialogue was more interested in finding common terminology. At the operational level common terminology helps practitioners know what materials they will have. At the policy level clear terminology clarifies policy choices. For example, the phrase “stabilization and reconstruction” implies actions in a specific point in a phased operation. However, humanitarian crises often are not neatly phased.

Conference participants acknowledged there is a bevy of contacts among U.S. and EU entities. NGOs based on different sides of the Atlantic and working in various regions already exchange ideas. The way ahead may not be creating more mechanisms, but infusing existing channels with more ideas.

In the course of the conference several issues were raised that should be addressed in the next stage of the project or future research:

- How might cross-sector agreements be negotiated in advance? (For example, more memoranda-of-understanding (MOUs) between businesses and international organizations or humanitarian agencies)
- What type of U.S.-EU joint training would be most useful now and why?
- Can common terminology be developed further?
- Should transatlantic policymakers look for new ways to bridge the gap between relief and development when tentative peace has emerged, but needs to be solidified?

The Second Humanitarian Dialogue developed themes raised in First, raised new ideas and recommendations, and provided feedback for authors and project leaders as they complete the next phase of the research.

## Conference Agenda

**Raising the bar: Enhancing transatlantic  
governance of disaster relief and preparedness**



### **Raising the Bar**

**Practitioners and Policymaking: Building Effective Transatlantic Action on Disaster  
Relief and Preparedness**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Transatlantic Dialogue on Humanitarian Action**

**December 15-16, 2008**

### **Agenda**

**Location: Kenney Auditorium**

**The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS),**

**The Johns Hopkins University,**

**1740 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,**

**Washington, D.C. 20036**

This conference is the second in a series of three transatlantic dialogues. This event compares and contrasts policy approaches of the United States and the European Union with reference to doctrine, programming principles and sectoral priorities. Currently the international humanitarian community is debating how to reform the humanitarian sector in order to be able to respond effectively to these challenges. Being the two biggest donors of humanitarian aid, the EU and the U.S. should spearhead the humanitarian policy debate by developing a transatlantic vision of managing disasters, and by promoting reform both at the bilateral as well as at the multilateral levels.

**Monday, December 15, 2008**

**8:45am-9:00am**      **Welcome**

Location: Kenney

*Esther Brimmer*

*Deputy Director and Director of Research,  
Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS*

*Andrea Binder*

*Project Manager  
Global Public Policy Institute*

**9:00am-10:45am**      **Panel I: Disaster Response and Foreign Policy**

Location: Kenney

This panel considers the connections between disaster response and foreign policy priorities. How do policymakers view disaster relief? How do they balance humanitarian, strategic and economic concerns? How does the interplay of these concerns affect the effectiveness of disaster response?

*Carol Lancaster*

*Director, Mortara Center  
Georgetown University*

*Howard Roy Williams*

*Former Director, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*

*Johannes Luchner*

*Head of Unit for Policy and Evaluation  
European Commission Humanitarian Office - ECHO*

*Moderator: Johanna Mendelson-Forman*

*Senior Associate, Americas Program, Center for Strategic and  
International Studies*

**10:45am-11:00am**    **Coffee/Tea**

**11:00am-12:30pm**    **Panel II: Transatlantic Approaches to Preparedness and  
Disaster Response**

Location: Kenney

Which integrated approaches to preparedness and disaster response (like the vulnerabilities concept and an “all-hazards approach) have

been developed on both sides of the Atlantic? What can be learned from domestic civil protection and homeland security mechanisms for emergency response in third countries?

*Bob Powers*

*Deputy Assistant Administrator for Disaster Operations*

*Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

*Capt. Jeffrey Maclay*

*Military Fellow, International Security Program*

*Center for Strategic and International Studies*

*Allan Jury*

*Director, US Relations Office*

*World Food Program*

*LCL Bernard Tourneur*

*Allied Command Transformation, NATO*

*Moderator: Andrea Binder, Global Public Policy Institute*

**12:30pm-2:30pm    Buffet Lunch**

Buffet Lunch, Herter Room adjacent to Kenney Auditorium,  
12:30pm-1:05pm

1:05pm-1:10pm Conference participants walk to 1619  
Massachusetts Avenue for public event

PLEASE NOTE LOCATION OF DISCUSSION:

“The Impact of Afghanistan Relief on International Humanitarian  
Assistance Cooperation”

**Rome Auditorium, 1:15pm-2:30pm**

**Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)**

**The Johns Hopkins University,**

**1619 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.**

**Washington, D.C. 20036**

*George Rupp*

*CEO and President*

*International Rescue Committee*

*Moderator: Daniel Hamilton*

*Director, Center for Transatlantic Relations*

*Johns Hopkins University-SAIS*

**2:30pm-4:00pm**

**Panel III: Organizational Innovation in Humanitarian Agencies**

Location: Kenney

What types of organizational innovations are occurring in the humanitarian sector? How have NGOs applied network concepts and other forms of organizational innovation? What lessons from just-in-time manufacturing and other business logistics models could be applied to organizing humanitarian assistance? What role do the transatlantic partners play in supporting and implementing organizational reforms?

*Mia Beers*

*Humanitarian Policy Advisor, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)*

*USAID*

*Linda Poteat*

*Director, Disaster Response*

*InterAction*

*Stan Nkwain*

*Deputy Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention & Recovery  
United Nations Development Program*

*William A. Malfara*

*Director, Disaster Operations, Human Resources  
American Red Cross*

*Moderator: Daniel Hamilton, Director, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS*

**[4:15pm-5:15pm Steering Committee meeting ]**

Location: Herter Room (Adjacent to Kenney)

[7:00pm-9:00pm Buffet Dinner for Speakers at the Beacon Hotel Overlook/Patio  
1615 Rhode Island Ave, NW Washington, DC]

**Tuesday, December 16, 2008**

**9:00am-9:15am      Welcome to Day 2**

Location: Kenney Auditorium

*Andrea Binder*

*Esther Brimmer*

**9:30am-11:00am      Working Groups Meet**

Locations: Johns Hopkins University, seminar rooms

1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW; Rooms 500, 616, 714, 736

Raising the Bar Working Group Leaders each moderate a conference group and present interim case study results for comments by resource people and participants. The group leader will moderate a structured discussion around issues and recommendations they want to take up in their framework pieces.

Resource people are assigned to each group

Conference participants may sign up for a specific working group

**Group 1: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development**

**ROOM 500, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group Leader: Kai Koddenbrock, GPPI

Resource people:

Roberta Del Giudice, Consultant to the European Commission in  
Goma (DR Congo)

François Grünewald, Groupe Urgence, Réhabilitation,  
Développement (URD), France

Ned Olney, Save the Children

Group 2: Improving Humanitarian Performance Through the  
Implementation of Lessons Learned

**ROOM 616, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group Leader: Andrea Binder, GPPI

Resource people:

Inger Brodal, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UN OCHA

Silvia Hidalgo, Development Assistance Research Associates  
(DARA), Spain

Domitille Kauffmann, Groupe Urgence, Réhabilitation,  
Développement (URD), France

Johannes Luchner, European Commission Humanitarian Office,  
ECHO

Group 3: Business Engagement in Humanitarian Action

**ROOM 714, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group Leader: Kelly Johnson, GPPI

Resource people:

Ben Kauffeld, Global Development Alliances, USAID

Theresa Loar, CH2M Hill

Group: 4: Civil-Military Relations in Disaster Response

**ROOM 736, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group Leader: Jean-Luc Marret, CTR and Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique

Resource people:

Gudrun van Pottelbergh, Researcher

JL Samaan, French Ministry of Defense, Delegation aux Affaires Stratégiques, Paris

Howard Roy Williams, Former Director, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance

**11:00am-11:15am Coffee/tea**

**11:15am-12:45pm Working Groups Continue to Meet**

Locations: Johns Hopkins University, seminar rooms  
1717 Massachusetts Ave., Rooms 500, 714, 736, 616

Group 1: Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development

Group Leader: Kai Koddenbrock, GPPI

**ROOM 500, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group 2: Improving Humanitarian Performance Through the Implementation of Lessons Learned

Group Leader: Andrea Binder, GPPI

**ROOM 616, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group 3: Business Engagement in Humanitarian Action

Group Leader: Kelly Johnson, GPPI

**ROOM 714, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

Group: 4: Civil-Military Relations in Disaster Response

Group Leader: Jean-Luc Marret, CTR and Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique

**ROOM 736, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW**

**1:00pm-1:15pm**

**Concluding Remarks:**

**Themes for Action Papers and Next Steps**

Location: Kenney

*Kelly Johnson*

*Esther Brimmer*

**1:15pm-1:45pm**

**Buffet Lunch Available**

Location: Herter Room

**Raising the bar: Enhancing transatlantic  
governance of disaster relief and preparedness**



**Raising the Bar**

**Practitioners and Policymaking: Building Effective Transatlantic Action on Disaster Relief  
and Preparedness**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Transatlantic Dialogue on Humanitarian Action**

**December 15-16, 2008**

**List of Participants**

Spencer Abruzzese  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Mia Beers  
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance  
(OFDA),  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
(USAID)

Bill Belding  
Association of Small Foundations

Andrea Binder  
Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Jane Bloom  
International Catholic Migration  
Commission

Katrin Bornemann

Esther Brimmer  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Inger Brodal  
United Nations OCHA

Genevieve Chedeville-Murray  
Embassy of France

Roberta del Giudice  
University of Sassari

Nikolas Foster  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Langdon Greenhalgh  
Global Emergency Group LLC

Todd Greenwood  
House Oversight Committee

Brian Grzelkowski  
Mercy Corps

Francois Grunewald  
Group URD

Daniel Hamilton  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Jack Harrald  
Virginia Tech Center for Technology,  
Security and Policy  
NRC Disaster Roundtable

Michael Harsch  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Terri Hasdorff  
Center for Faith-based and Community  
Initiatives  
USAID

Silvia Hidalgo  
DARA

Hannes Hippacher

Kelly Johnson  
Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Allan Jury  
World Food Program

Ben Kauffeld  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
(USAID)

Domitille Kauffmann  
Group URD

Chelsea Kinsman  
International Rescue Committee

Kai Koddenbrock  
Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Erwan Lagadec  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Carol Lancaster  
Mortara Center  
Georgetown University

Roger Libby  
DHL Americas

Stephen Ling  
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and  
Recovery  
The World Bank Group

Theresa Loar  
CH2M Hill

Gretchen Losee  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Johannes Luchner  
European Commission, ECHO

Jeffrey Maclay  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies (CSIS)

Katrien Maes  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

William Malfara  
American Red Cross

Jean-Luc Marret  
Center for Transatlantic Relations and  
Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique

Gale Mattox  
U.S. Naval Academy and American Institute  
for Contemporary German Studies

Angela R. Mazer  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Johanna Mendelson-Forman  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies (CSIS)

Medlir Mema  
George Washington University

Stan Nkwain  
United Nations Development Program

Emily Nohner  
Bread for the World Institute

Ned Olney  
Save the Children

Angelie Petersen  
Air Serv International

Sasha Pippenger  
International Rescue Committee

Sandra Pogodda  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Wolfgang Pordzik  
DHL Americas

Linda Poteat  
InterAction

Bob Powers  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Kevin Quinlan  
RUSI US

Anne Richard  
International Rescue Committee

George Rupp  
International Rescue Committee

Jean-Loup Samaan  
French Ministry of Defense

Matt Shugert  
Association of Small Foundations

Bernard Tourneur  
Allied Command Transformation, NATO

Laura Turner  
World Food Program

Gudrun van Pottelbergh  
United Nations OCHA

Richard Weitz  
Hudson Institute

Howard Roy Williams  
Center for Humanitarian Cooperation

David Yang  
United Nations Development Program

## Conference Organizers

### **The Center for Transatlantic Relations**

The SAIS Center for Transatlantic Relations 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. Center activities include seminars and lectures; media programs and web-based activities; research projects and policy study groups. The Center is an integral part of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), one of America's leading graduate schools devoted to the study of international relations.

The Center has been recognized by the European Commission as one of a select number of EU Centers of Excellence in the United States. It serves as the coordinating office of the [American Consortium on EU Studies \(ACES\)](#), a partnership among five national/capital area universities-- American University, George Mason University, George Washington University, Georgetown University and The Johns Hopkins University-- to improve understanding of the European Union and US-EU relations.

The Center also leads the international policy work of the Johns Hopkins-led U.S. National Center of Excellence on Homeland Security – the Center for the Study of High Consequence Event Preparedness and Response.

### **The Global Public Policy Institute**

The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) is an independent think tank based in Berlin and Geneva. GPPi's 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](#).

- **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.

GPPi is committed to high-quality research on governance, focusing on five core issues: The changing architecture of global governance due to the rise of new powers and the new roles of business and civil society; the effectiveness and accountability of international organizations; innovation in international development and humanitarian action (including public-private partnerships and private donors); Europe's global role; and the future of transatlantic relations.

## Acknowledgements

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CTR would like to thank Steering Group member and CTR non-resident Fellow Anne Richard and Steering Group member Johanna Mendelson-Forman for their strong support and advice during the planning of the December Dialogue.

CTR would also like to thank Program Administrator Gretchen Losee and Program Coordinator Katrien Maes for their dedicated work organizing the logistics of the December event. CTR would also like to thank Nicole Goldstein, Nikolas Foster, and Oleg Svet for their work as rapporteurs

