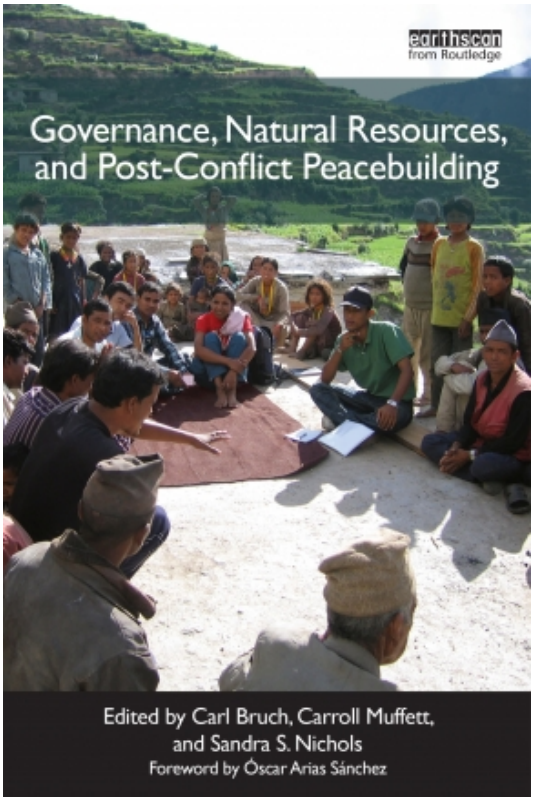

Natural Resource Management and Post-Conflict Settings: Programmatic Evolution in a Humanitarian Development Agency

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Natural resource management and post-conflict settings: Programmatic evolution in a humanitarian and development agency

Jim Jarvie

Humanitarian and development agencies (HDAs) are increasingly taking natural resource management (NRM) and the environment into account in their programming, including in post-conflict situations. Responding to the challenge of climate change is accelerating this process and fostering enhanced intra-agency and interagency dialogue and cooperation. Broader geographic programs are needed to help shield vulnerable communities from violence and natural disasters. Growing awareness of the impacts of climate change has revealed that its role as a threat multiplier can exacerbate risks posed by an eroded environment and natural resource base, particularly among fragile and failed states.

Humanitarian agencies save lives and protect those in acute need of life's essentials, including shelter, clean water, food, and security. Their interventions occur in a variety of contexts, such as in the immediate aftermath of natural disaster, during conflict, and in post-conflict recovery. The diverse and complementary approaches of HDAs working in a region represent a combination of visions and skills, and the types of needs being addressed. Some strictly humanitarian agencies focus on narrow yet essential aspects of immediate need and first response, including critical health care, in the days or weeks after violence or disaster. Other agencies stay longer, setting up transitional shelters and managing camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Complex humanitarian emergencies arising from conflict are increasingly the norm. They combine violence with broader issues such as poverty, land tenure, restricted access to resources, and ethnic and class division. These complicated crises require not only immediate response, but also interventions that transition toward long-term development programming focused on social and economic recovery. The desired objective is to ensure that interventions have sustainable outcomes, ones which can aid in better understanding the main reasons for the conflict and work to prevent further violence.

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However, for such interventions to be successful, long-term commitment on the part of HDAs is needed. For example, in 1999, as reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Indonesian province of Maluku experienced ethnic clashes between Christian and Muslim communities, which led to more than 2,500 deaths and 500,000 IDPs (OCHA 2000). Immediate interventions addressed meeting acute needs, stabilizing populations, and reestablishing essential services. Longer-term objectives looked toward reconciliation, resettlement, and income generation programs. But a warning by Malka Older has revealed that, even ten years later, unresolved tensions remain that could derail the current peaceful cohabitation.[1]

This chapter describes how Mercy Corps, an HDA, is setting a trend by moving into a stronger NRM and environmental role. Using the experience of Mercy Corps as an example, the chapter highlights the type of organizational evolution currently taking place in post-conflict Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It concludes with comments on how the continually growing area of NRM and environmental programming is merging with climate change response and now flourishes with recognition of the critical need for even wider cooperation in analysis and field action.

POST-CONFLICT RESPONSE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Assisting communities in post-conflict situations to develop and maintain a sustainable, long-term recovery is a complex and difficult challenge. A sustainable natural resource base, and ready access to the environmental resources it provides, including water, fisheries, and stable soil, is a critical foundation for sustainable recovery and development. As Margie Buchanan-Smith and Brendan Bromwich recount in the case of Darfur, the HDA community has historically paid too little attention to the impact of its operations on natural resources, and the resulting implications for the long-term recovery of affected communities.[2]

Yet there are clear and important signs of progress in the mainstreaming of NRM considerations into HDA programming. HDAs are increasingly taking the environment into consideration during post-disaster and post-conflict response, in both short-term and long-term interventions. This integration is reflected in the Sphere Project, an initiative by HDAs to define common standards for humanitarian interventions, which supports stronger environmental principles in its guidelines (Sphere Project 2004, 2011). Still more detailed guidance is emerging with respect to specific HDA sectors and activities. For example, OCHA has issued a guide to post-disaster timber procurement intended, in part, to minimize the environmental impacts of procuring building supplies for post-disaster response and reconstruction (OCHA 2007). Similarly, the United Nations

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[1] Malka Older, director of programs, Mercy Corps, personal communication with the author, October 2009.

[2] Margie Buchanan-Smith and Brendan Bromwich, "Preparing for Peace: An Analysis of Darfur, Sudan," in this book.

Environment Programme (UNEP) has developed guidelines addressing short-term environmental concerns during immediate post-conflict response, integrating environmental safeguards into IDP camp establishment, site management, and operations (UNEP 2006).

Long-term planning focuses on strengthening peacebuilding through NRM, ensuring natural resource deficits do not regenerate old conflicts, or cause new reasons for violence to emerge. The UNEP guidelines focus strongly on societal reintegration with an environmental focus. When IDPs start to return home, development practitioners are advised to pay special heed to the natural resource base and environmental goods and services; a lack of these will undermine livelihoods, and ultimately reduce opportunity for lasting peace as new conflicts emerge over access to natural resources.

As discussed by Bromwich, Darfur highlights the need for a broader recognition of the role the environment plays in conflict and in peacebuilding (Bromwich 2008). There, it is necessary for post-conflict reconstruction to address environmental and livelihood discord from local to national and regional levels. It requires reestablishing rural environmental governance and protection against severe droughts; sustainable development that recognizes the need for a sustainable natural resource base; and humanitarian programming that takes environmental vulnerability into account.

An emerging and overwhelming theme among HDAs is the effect that climate change will have on these vulnerabilities, and a resulting awareness that protecting sustainable natural resource bases from climate change–induced degradation through appropriate adaptation measures must play an increasingly important role in HDA programming decisions. A growing body of expert opinion recognizes that climate change acts as a threat multiplier, which will compound risks to human security and political and economic stability in already fragile regions (CNA Corporation 2007; CNA Military Advisory Board 2014). It will exacerbate existing environmental challenges to sustainable development and introduce new challenges, such as sea-level rise, altered rainfall patterns, and more intense droughts and flood events. The influential *Stern Review* predicts various disasters, such as climate change–induced scarcities of food and water, mass migration from coasts, and land no longer suitable for agriculture (Stern 2006). With estimations of approximately 250 million forced migrations from increasingly marginal land, 50 percent falls in agricultural yields from sub-Saharan Africa, fish stocks migrating to cooler waters, and increased weather-related disasters, already vulnerable communities will find themselves at still greater risk (Brown 2007).

These impacts, as recognized by the United Nations General Assembly, will lead to new or intensified current conflict (UNGA 2009). The most vulnerable countries, those post-conflict or relying on degraded or limited natural resource bases, will be greatly impacted by climate change, accelerating the current effects of poor natural resource management. The most acute effects are likely to be felt among the one hundred countries identified as the most likely in the world to suffer conflict and be most vulnerable to climate change, a catchment for over 1 billion people (Huq and Ayers 2007).

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENT IN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES: A MERCY CORPS PERSPECTIVE

The trend toward recognizing natural resources and the environment as a key parameter in long-term peacebuilding has accelerated over the last few years. It has even led to HDAs recruiting climate and environmental experts who are able to integrate these sectors into more traditional programming areas. In the context of recovery in post-conflict situations, there has been an evolution in the programming approach. Historically, programming has focused on community-based, bottom-up approaches to development and security. Scale of planning was limited to program footprints, thus failing to take into account broader landscape issues, upstream environmental influences, and downstream impacts. More recently there has been incorporation of wider-scale planning aimed at mitigating environmental hazard and (wherever possible) integrating with broader government and development policies, ensuring impacts are sustainable. As noted above, growing recognition of how climate change will exacerbate current environmental and social challenges is widening scopes of planning even further.

From changing perceptions to changes in practice

HDAs, as with other organizations, have a range of internal communities. These reflect diverse foci and sectoral specialization in areas such as disaster response, agriculture, conflict, and governance. Different country programs within an agency will favor one or more thematic types of programming depending on local need and context. Mainstreaming the need for explicit environmental programming, integrated deeply with NRM and climate change, is thus a challenging process.

Mercy Corps, an HDA working in approximately forty countries with a staff of approximately 4,000 people, provides an example of the organizational behavior change involved when an HDA becomes more active in mainstreaming NRM into its programming.

Over three years, beginning in late 2006, mainstreaming developed through a series of integrated steps. The first step was growing recognition among Mercy Corps's senior leadership that sustainable NRM underpins the economic security of vulnerable communities, particularly those in fragile states or transitional circumstances. Over time, awareness grew and conversations with those working in field programs validated a need to develop more effective internal expertise. As resources were allocated to leading the theme forward, climate change awareness rose, particularly following release of the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*,[3] and consensus developed among a key focus group within Mercy Corps that NRM should include the environment and climate change as a natural cluster.

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[3] *An Inconvenient Truth* (Paramount Pictures 2006). The film, narrated by former U.S. vice president Al Gore, comprises a slide show that demonstrates the damage of climate change.

Agency-wide reception was mixed. Some development professionals with direct experience in the social and economic areas were hesitant, and questioned whether Mercy Corps was encroaching on the domain of conservation agencies and departing from its core mission to "alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities" (Mercy Corps n.d.). Others within the agency were immediately accepting. For those with grounding in environmental and climate issues, the floodgates were opened to their concerns that development indeed had to take the environment and sustainable natural resource management into account.

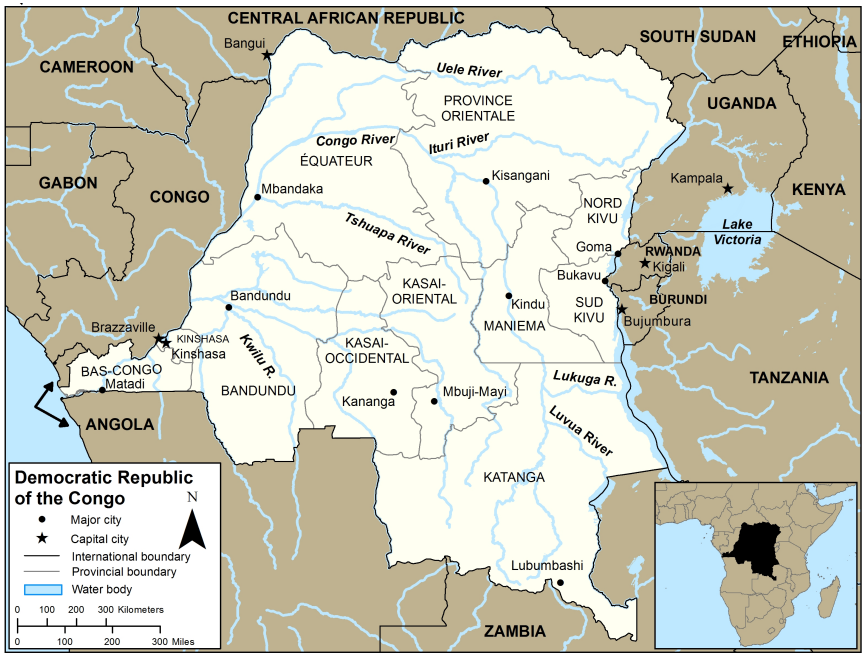
A survey was initiated to evaluate where the agency had been working environmentally. The findings showed that a portfolio of environmental and NRM programs had been developing in different countries at different times. However, results had been recorded via indicators common to development practices: livelihoods created, income generated, and other common indicators. The survey was sent to all countries, and responses highlighted an even greater plethora of NRM-related activities embedded in broader programming. Examples included tree nursery development, waste recycling, forestry, and agroforestry initiatives. These findings highlighted that the agency was not entering a new area of programming, but, as one senior manager commented, it was instead "[moving] from being an implicit to an explicit environmentalist." Many staff felt that a humanitarian approach to environmental, NRM, and climate concerns was now legitimized. Their consideration would be consistent with an underlying do-no-harm, humanitarian charter commitment (Sphere Project 2004, 2011).

In self-selected "focus" Mercy Corps country programs, NRM-, environment-, and climate change–related proposal development and programming intensified, exploiting an increasing number of climate change–related proposals in areas as diverse as energy programming for communities suffering severe, off-grid energy poverty, and enhanced disaster risk reduction strategies in the face of climate change impacts in dense, urban environments.

There has been slower programming progress in countries facing immediate humanitarian concerns, particularly in conflict and post-conflict environments where donor opportunities often work in six-month project cycles, reflecting rapidly changing circumstances. This, however, may be changing as current programming in post-conflict, eastern DRC is starting to demonstrate.

NRM programming in post-conflict Nord Kivu, DRC

According to Benjamin Coghlan and colleagues, approximately 5.4 million people died between 1998 and 2006 as direct and indirect victims of DRC civil wars (Coghlan et al. 2006); and from 2006, the death toll continues to rise from persisting conflict, including rebel fighting in Nord Kivu (Saruk 2013). Similarly, human displacement has been on a massive scale. In 2009, in the province of Nord Kivu, for example, the total number of IDPs had exceeded 990,000 people (IDMC 2010).



Note: The DRC constitution, which was ratified in 2005 and came into effect in 2006, mandated that within three years the eleven provinces be redivided into twenty-six. As of March 2014, the redivision had not yet taken place.

IDP demand for fuelwood vastly exceeds affordable and locally available supply. Wood collectors, largely women and children, are put at risk by having to leave the relative safety of camps for the dangerous forest in order to search for supplies. Sexual assault and child abduction by various rebel groups and the army are common; 9 percent of women in camps report having been raped or otherwise assaulted, according to Mercy Corps surveys (Moore-Delate 2008).

In addressing the human security issue, Mercy Corps took an innovative approach by deciding to base the response on a long-term natural resource and environmental vision that would include helping IDPs develop sustainable livelihood options in the future, when they were able to return home. In this approach, a humanitarian agency recognizes NRM as a thematic framework in a humanitarian response, even in a post-conflict scenario as complex and unpredictable as that found in Nord Kivu Province.

The short- to medium-term programming currently being implemented involves installing fuel-efficient stoves and planting trees among six IDP camps located around Goma, a major city in Nord Kivu Province. Whereas the goal is to meet energy needs while increasing human security, project outcomes will

reduce demand for timber and provide a fuel source in safe areas, thus reducing exposure to areas infested with predatory forces. This promising endeavor has begun to lessen pressure on forests, and has gained cooperation from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

WWF had recognized that the majority of IDPs in Nord Kivu are located in various camps on the margins of Virunga National Park, one of the most important conservation sites in Africa. The park is one of the last remaining natural habitats of the mountain gorilla population.[4] As such, the park represents a significant prospect for contributing to the economic recovery of the eastern DRC via tourism and conservation (Maekawa et al. 2014). The presence of large IDP and Rwandan refugee populations has caused unprecedented concentrations of demand for water, forest products, and other natural resources. This overwhelming demand is damaging the ecology of the DRC and stunting future growth of the Congolese economy.

A more recent and brutal challenge is a burgeoning charcoal trade, run by military and rebel groups and dependent on forced labor. In 2008, the charcoal trade in Goma alone, much of which is connected to trade in Rwanda, was valued at US$30 million per year (National Geographic News 2007). The economic returns provided by this illegal industry present the greatest challenge to forest protection.

Efforts to address wood supply were started in the 1990s by WWF with an agroforestry program developing community and farm woodlots and small tree planting schemes to provide fuel and reduce pressure on Virunga National Park. The organization recently celebrated its 10 millionth planting.[5]

WWF's program had not been able to reach the scale needed to address massive refugee and IDP influxes, starting with Rwandans fleeing genocide just across the border from Goma in 1994, to the IDPs arising from DRC's more recent conflicts. The refugee camps had, and IDP camps currently have, substantial concentrated populations. Agroforestry holdings are small and scattered; organizing cost-effective logistics for supplying camps is challenging, especially given the poor road infrastructure in the Kivu area and the unpredictable security situation.

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[4] Virunga National Park is located in the Virugna Volcanoes region, a transboundary area shared with Rwanda and Uganda. This region is the natural habitat for approximately one-half of the region's mountain gorilla population. The other half of the population is found in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda (Maekawa et al. 2014). For a discussion on collaborative conservation efforts in the Virunga Volcanoes region, see Johannes Refisch and Johann Jenson, "Transboundary Collaboration in the Greater Virunga Landscape: From Gorilla Conservation to Conflict-Sensitive Transboundary Landscape Management," in this book.

[5] See WWF (2007) for more details about the successful work to protect the Virunga National Park.

Looking ahead

As of 2010, Mercy Corps programming in Nord Kivu has resulted in the following: 20,000 IDP families have been provided with stoves, agroforests have been planted close to camps, and more than 1,500 tons of firewood have been distributed to the most vulnerable among the IDPs. As the post-conflict situation stabilizes, there is an increasing likelihood that IDPs will, at last, be able to return home. The intention now is to use financial incentives to motivate local communities to implement environmentally sustainable activities. By tying these incentives to market-based systems for environmental protection, including environmental credit markets, a permanent, sustainable system will be created to promote local community stewardship of natural resources, particularly forests, while increasing participating households' resiliency to shock following armed conflict.

A wider aspiration of Mercy Corps relates to proposed climate change–related funding streams for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). This is a new carbon market mechanism whose policies and operating mechanisms were actively being debated ahead of the December 2009 climate meetings in Copenhagen. Clarity was not, however, achieved and the conversation stalled. Nevertheless, individual countries may opt to work under their own rules or within various parallel programs for REDD. Carbon credits and markets to date have focused on generating revenue from lowering carbon emissions, for example by putting carbon dioxide (CO_2) scrubbers on factory chimneys. Forest-based carbon revenue generation is limited to capturing carbon by planting trees. Yet because deforestation causes up to one-fifth of CO_2 emissions (Baumert, Herzog, and Pershing 2005), countries with vast forest estates have been lobbying for carbon funds to protect their forests.

If Mercy Corps, or any other institution, were successful in securing REDD funds for application in Nord Kivu, the program would represent how REDD funds can reach those living on forest margins, and how communities can be incentivized to protect the natural assets that they, and the wider world depend on, even in one of the most vulnerable, post-conflict areas of the globe. In addition, there will still be a need to clarify international and national policies on movement of REDD funds, and to define clear standards to ensure projects benefit people and the environment alike.

CONCLUSION: CONTINUING EVOLUTION

Since 2006, Mercy Corps has explicitly recognized NRM and environmental programming as integral parts of the agency's mission, including in its work in post-conflict situations. During the ensuing years, NRM and the environment have become integrated with climate change response. Climate change–related famine and forced migration will undermine development activity and create more disasters. Mercy Corps faces the challenge of helping already vulnerable

communities adapt and prepare for climatic hazards that will exacerbate current environmental risks and further erode vital natural resource bases.

The need to meet this challenge has led to enhanced intra-agency planning. The impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable are recognized as one of the three biggest obstacles to successful humanitarian and development activity, along with the needs of youth and global food insecurity. Strategic planning now involves linking environmental, NRM, and climate change programming more clearly with areas as diverse as governance and agriculture, and conflict and disaster risk reduction.

This evolution is reflected more widely in interagency cooperation, inspired by the recognition that the speed and scale of climate change is going to worsen conflicts and unravel decades of humanitarian and development work. One example of this innovative interagency cooperation was the Emergency Capacity Building Project, a consortium of six international HDAs that combined knowledge on the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, which ran from 2004 to 2013 (ECB Project n.d.). As WWF explains, nongovernmental organizations involved with environment- and development-related issues share platforms, advocating together for sustainable management of critical natural resources like water to mitigate the humanitarian and environmental catastrophes that will happen unless natural resources are wisely managed (WWF 2009).

The challenge that climate change poses—the likelihood of worsened conflict and other human suffering climate change will cause as natural resource bases and landscapes are increasingly eroded—needs to engender even better cooperation. This is a critical time for practitioners, decision makers, donors, and academia to combine thinking and action on reducing conflict potential in a rapidly changing climate.

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