

Mass population movements occur because internally displaced people and refugees want to escape or gain access to food.

The economic system becomes dysfunctional which results in hyperinflation and the collapse of markets.

There is an overall decline in food security that may result in possible widespread starvation (Natsios 1997b, 7).

Why have so many complex emergencies emerged in the post-Cold War period? With the end of bipolarity, power vacuums and power shifts have exposed political ambitions of putative leaders in various locations. In turn, the mood in many societies seems to be that unless one group is dominant, it shall be dominated by others (Anderson 1996, 350). Most wars are now fought in the living space of civilians which helps to explain why about 85-90 percent of casualties today are civilians. The link between the military and civilians has become blurred. Indeed, the urgent nature of complex emergencies has made NGOs realise that their relief missions involve both peacemaking and peace-building activities (Aall 1996, 436). This shift comes as they examine how and under what conditions they will work with International Organisations, governments and military units that are also engaged in relief efforts. This blurring makes the work of NGOs and the international community, as a whole, very difficult.

As the nature of conflict has changed, so too has the reliance of the international community on NGOs. Why is this the case? One possible explanation is that the number of complex emergencies has ballooned to a level that reaches beyond the capacity of the existing response system. Whereas in the 1960s, there were about ten ongoing wars, in the mid-1990s, there were approximately fifty (Bennett 1995, xiii). Moreover, these conflicts in the 1990s were largely internal rather than interstate and their duration as well as intensity was greater. In the late 1980s the United Nations began to depart from its Cold War position of non-intervention and began accepting the principle of providing relief in conflict situations. However, due to the UN's lack of implementing capacity in relation to demand, NGOs were increasingly subcontracted to carry out humanitarian functions (1995, xvi). One also saw the rise of regional involvement in this capacity. For example, by 1994 the European Union's European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), had eighty NGOs sign framework agreements which were based on a sub-contractor approach (*ibid*). This new interest in NGOs reflects the search for viable approaches in conflict settings at a time when fiscal retraction of donors is combined with increased demands for involvement. In other words, "As part of a 'privatising' of world politics and the emergence of a global civil society, bilateral and multilateral organisations are increasingly relying upon NGOs." (Gordenker and Weiss 1997, 443).

Another reason for the increased involvement of NGOs is due to the change in the nature of conflict itself. Racial, religious, ethnic and tribal rivalries that have replaced the Cold War's ideological clashes are resistant to traditional diplomatic methods (Aall 1996, 434). NGOs by helping to address issues from the bottom-up may offer advantages compared to the top-down