

paper: 1) NGOs and 2) complex humanitarian emergencies. While there are many variations of what constitutes an NGO, they are largely "...privately organised and privately financed agencies, formed to perform some philanthropic or other worthwhile task in response to a need that the organisers think is not adequately addressed by public, governmental or United Nations efforts." (Anderson 1996, 344). Some NGOs rely on funding from national governments but all NGOs receive private contributions or are founded with private funds. The NGOs that will be considered herein are non-profit and are private in form but public in purpose. While many NGOs act within their own borders (domestic NGOs), many have defined their mission as working with people in other countries as an alternative or adjunct to official foreign aid (1996, 344). As Andrew Natsios suggests,

NGOs, in a very tangible sense, have become the foot soldiers in the war against hunger and disease in complex humanitarian emergencies. NGO workers are the ones who manage the health clinics, the emergency child feeding centres, and the truck convoys that deliver food that sustains people in crisis. Although other instruments that form the structure of the response system – the UN, ICRC and the military – perform some of the same tasks themselves, the great bulk of the relief work comes from NGOs (1997b, 56).

Given the increased recognition that action in the sphere of international assistance is likely to have repercussions in the recipient society that go far beyond those foreseen and intended, it is necessary to understand the relationship between NGO involvement and the changing nature of conflicts themselves. This brings us to the second term, complex humanitarian emergencies.

The nature of war has changed significantly since the end of the Cold War. Post-Cold War conflicts have been characterised as being complex humanitarian emergencies that are usually intrastate as opposed to interstate and are compounded by several elements which include ethnic and religious conflict, terrorism, economic disarray, internally displaced people, organised crime and state collapse. Natsios outlines five principle characteristics that capture the nature of post-Cold War conflicts. They are as follows:

The most visible characteristic, civil conflict, is rooted in traditional ethnic, tribal, and religious animosities.

The authority of the national government deteriorates to the degree that public services disappear and the political control over the country passes to regional centres of power that include warlords and traditional authority figures.