

- While activities in the field are essential, the risks for both children and staff must be assessed;
- Documentation, monitoring and evaluation are vital for learning how to work in new and challenging situations;
- It is important to share experiences, perhaps by organising consultations once the emergency is over.

### **?** *Questions to Nevena Vuckovic Sahovic*

In response to questions from the Tribunal and interventions from other witnesses, Ms. Vuckovic Sahovic replied that there are many NGOs in FRY which are frequently seen as anti-government and operate in a hostile environment. One reality that has to be dealt with is poverty, which impacts on armed conflict. It is ironic that human rights discourse is not able to advocate violence to remove a dictator from power.

### **H**elping the children of Bosnia: What works – and what doesn't work: *Testimony of Peggy Barry, Advocate for children's rights, USA*

Peggy Barry began her testimony by pointing to the inter-relationships between intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and questioning the existence of a separate NGO sector. She also stated that the existence of large numbers of NGOs working in Bosnia, where the concept of NGO was virtually unknown before the war, has 'caused problems, in duplication of services and in general confusion.' In 1998, 332 international NGOs were working in Bosnia, two thirds of which had been registered after the end of the war, dealing not only with the provisions of immediate basic needs but also with longer term consequences of conflict.

A crucial criterion for successful NGO work in post conflict situations, Ms. Barry told the Tribunal, is for international non-governmental organisations to seek and to create local, sustainable NGOs. This is best achieved through planning that includes a minimum number of external staff from the outset.

Ms. Barry gave examples of a number of local NGOs that have absorbed the goals of the parent INGOs, interpreting them according to local cultural norms and then becoming autonomous:

- The Paris-based organisation Médecins du Monde was already involved in Bosnia when the war began supplying medicines and medical services. Research carried out by Médecins du Monde psychologists in 1994 identified the adolescents of Sarajevo as a particularly vulnerable group in terms of mental health, and a local institutional response was put in place in the same year. The Duga (Rainbow) Centre was funded by the European community with 100 percent local staff and administered by a Bosnian board of directors that was trained to carry out its responsibilities by another international NGO, the New Bosnia Fund.

In partnership with UNICEF, Médecins du Monde has

### **A Separate NGO Sector?**

In Albania last year, much of the food delivered by the World Food Programme, a UN body, was distributed by NGOs. A quarter of Oxfam's 1998 budget was given by the British government. World Vision US, which advertises itself as being the world's 'largest privately funded Christian relief.....organisation,' collected \$55 million worth of goods in 1998 from the American government. Médecins Sans Frontières, the Nobel peace prize winner, received 46% of its income from government sources. And the Red Cross estimates that NGOs distribute more money than the World Bank.

### **Peggy Barry: Evidence to the Tribunal**

also developed sixteen projects serving a total of 250 children to respond to the problems of children with 'mental retardation'. Once again, international staff has provided training, and all of the caregivers and teachers are local.

- The Jesuit Refugee Service identified a need among the 800 children who have lost limbs due to landmines. Once a prosthetic limb is fitted the children have no aftercare or follow-up. Teams that are gradually becoming all Bosnian in composition now make regular home visits to 250 such children.
- 'Wings of Hope' has been carrying out successful work with war-affected children in areas of the country frequently neglected by NGOs. Ms. Barry stated that the reasons for their achievements include: Clearly stated, flexible goals; careful selection of local staff, with attention to ethnic sensitivity; not stigmatising traumatised children by separating them from their peers; paying particular attention to the readjustment needs of returnee children; and emphasising multi-ethnic values;
- Project Hope, an INGO with an office in Sarajevo, has used this as a springboard to start a variety of projects with partner organisations in other parts of the country, based on locally identified problems and solutions.

Ms. Barry used the experience of Save the Children UK to illustrate the obstacles that may be put in the way of an INGO and how to solve them. An initial approach to the authorities to establish training in children's rights for police was turned down. In response to this, Save the Children approached the Ombud office set up as a result of the Dayton Agreement.<sup>21</sup> With the intervention of this local institution a five-day training course was designed and held at a retreat outside Sarajevo. Working with local professionals, the police 'gradually lost the feeling that they were being told they were doing their job wrong, and began to realise that they were being empowered to provide help for their communities in new ways.'

Ms. Barry stated that the Ombud Office was a good

21. The Bosnian Peace Agreement was initialled in Dayton on 21 November 1995 and signed in Paris on 14 December 1995.