

Research Report 1

The question of humanitarian aid and the role of NGOs to provide resources to conflict regions

The International Commission reported that “sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe—from mass murder and rape, from starvation— but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states” (Mahoney). This is where NGOs come in, to provide resources to conflict regions.

Humanitarian aid is understood as providing nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and education to conflict regions in times of need (“Humanitarian Aid”). It is founded on four principles, that of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO) already play key roles in delivering humanitarian aid to conflict regions (“Delivering Humanitarian”). Nonetheless, the role of non-governmental organizations in providing humanitarian assistance is yet to be determined.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often active in humanitarianism (Karns). Hence, it is of crucial importance to debate the extent to which NGOs are responsible for providing resources to conflict regions. Furthermore, it is important to establish clear guidelines to lay out the circumstances in which NGOs have an ethical responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance (Aall).

In 2022, the war between Ukraine and Russia has called for international support. Conflict regions such as Donetsk, Luhanska, and Kyiv have reported alarming civil casualties, mostly caused by explosive weapons (“Ukraine: Humanitarian”). In Kyiv, an explosion involving a missile cut off 300,000 Ukrainians from electricity on February 28th, 2022. The surge in COVID-19 has exacerbated the need for assistance in healthcare. Civilians lost their homes to shelling in areas such as Volnovakha, which lead to a water, food, and fuel shortage that affected 21,000 people and lasted three days. Though challenging, accessing these communities has proven extremely important.

To support Ukraine in these times of crisis, NGOs have provided humanitarian aid. For example, Station Kharkiv is an NGO that serves to provide internally displaced people with shelter, food, clothing, psychological support, and support in finding jobs. In constant danger of shelling and bombing, Station Kharkiv’s volunteers hand out food parcels near bomb shelters (Prokscha).

The NGO Development and Initiative has aided Ukraine by shedding light on the war crimes occurring in Ukraine to their international communities. This goal has been achieved by communicating this information in different languages. Spreading awareness through campaigns, this NGO also manages to gather humanitarian help for the army.

Afghanistan is also a conflict region in need of international support (“Ten Conflicts”). After the United States and its allies withdrew their forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban retook power and seized the capital, Kabul, on August 15th, 2021. Donors

dramatically reduced their aid to the country, regardless of 270,000 internally displaced people in the country ten days after Kabul fell (“Key events”).

Nonetheless, NGOs such as the Red Cross continued its work in Kandahar to provide healthcare to civilians. Doctors Without Borders also ran projects in the city and so did the World Food Program. Though it was a Taliban-controlled area, these NGOs managed to support Afghanistan by securing acceptance in Taliban-controlled regions. Humanitarian aid consisting of food, shelter, and non-food items are welcomed whereas aid such as education and contraception is not. These types of aid went against Taliban beliefs, but the extent to which NGOs should respect the Taliban’s wishes is also an issue for delegates to debate.

However, NGOs in Afghanistan struggled to provide resources as the country was seized by the Taliban, who could keep the resources and refuse to provide them to the civilians (McLaren). This would contradict the purpose of the NGO and waist resources that could be used for other purposes.

Another conflict region assisted by NGOs is Ethiopia, where support has been provided by NGOs such as Brave Hearts Ethiopia, which empowers vulnerable children such as orphans through nutrition and health support. This is achieved by providing nutrition packs to ensure children get three meals a day. They also provide microfinance services to ensure the children grow up in an environment of financial security (*Brave Hearts*).

In conclusion, the key role of NGOs is to provide humanitarian aid in the form of food, shelter, and medical supplies, to conflict regions. Local and international agencies collaborate to ensure these resources reach the conflict regions.

Delegates are urged to research their delegation’s opinion on the issue, specifically focusing on the second part of the issue, that is, the role of NGOs to provide humanitarian aid “in conflict regions”. Delegates should draft resolutions that lay out in what situations NGOs should provide humanitarian aid, what type of aid would be provided, and how much aid is enough. Initiatives from specific NGOs can be used as inspiration for solutions to this issue.

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