The Basics of Managing Emergencies

Markus Moke and Thomas Pfeiffer

1 Introduction

The current challenges in humanitarian action are diverse, plentiful and sometimes daunting in nature. In many cases, only parts of needs and their root causes can be addressed. This includes the provision of drinking water in a water-scarce area, where the team leader of a humanitarian mission tolerates water tankering as a temporary solution. A well-communicated goal and an action-oriented approach contribute to optimising the outcome (in the case above, lower mortality) of actions taken. Managing emergencies further requires special organisational arrangements. For example, in flood-prone areas where the establishment of special water-borne equipment (boats for rescue and relief purposes) is crucial, the provision of adequate staff, team composition and specially trained personnel are necessary. This, in turn, will have positive implications for aid organisations both in regard to availability of resources (time, personnel and finances) and organisational set-up.[1]

This first part of our chapter deals with the challenges and fundamentals of emergency management, as well as with the principal methodological approaches underpinning it, reflecting on how needs are to be managed and what challenges might be encountered. Management is illustrated through the needs in humanitarian aid and the goals a manager sets to respond to those needs.

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[1]Carter (2008), p. 126.

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The chapter's second part aims at showing how the project cycle management (PCM) approach may act as a universal response method to an initially unclear situation.

Supporting this method, the third part discusses the individual competencies, behaviour and role with regard to organisation, country or donor strategy. For cases where others are directed during emergencies, tools are presented such as team building and communication to help guide managers in their positions of authority, paving the way for the following sections on project design and human resource management.

The East African drought of 2011 exemplifies that natural disasters are on the rise, with a growing proportion related to climate change. Conflict-related protracted emergencies, such as those in Syria, Sudan/South Sudan and Somalia, are also occurring more frequently. During conflicts, safety and security measures require a high level of attention that does not always allow for full concentration on humanitarian needs. Besides protracted or chronic crises, a notable proportion of disasters are of a slow-onset nature, which tends to render the recognition of needs both by the broader public and institutional donors increasingly difficult. Admittedly, as challenges are growing, donors have stepped up their demands in formal aspects, namely in reporting mechanisms and accounting. Private donors have gone from a shrinking group of retired contributors to a growing pool of rich donors invested in the projects. At the same time, humanitarian aid agencies have been challenged by donor requirements vis-à-vis the need to invest in long-term organisational development, such as human resources, which may not be seen as an attractive contribution to a concrete project.

As regards humanitarian policies, the Paris-Accra-Busan process has initiated important discussions that are also relevant for humanitarian aid, such as the notion of participation. However, this policy process has not been developed further since the last high-level donor meeting in Busan in 2011. Many developing countries have become middle-income countries, and the world's population has grown to over seven billion people, creating densely inhabited cities, which are increasingly vulnerable to disasters. These contexts influence the appropriateness of responses from aid agencies and call for a change in the way programmes are developed and executed.[2] Although management expertise may seem to be of peripheral importance for an aid worker, the opposite is true as

> ... political, bureaucratic and resource constraints often characterize field missions, good management and the people involved, can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure. Sound management is essential to achieving the goals of any organization, regardless of the context, and UN field missions are no exception. Its complexity and uniqueness should not be an excuse for bad management or poor results. In fact, if managed or handled well, environmental complexity can increase the resilience of an organization and enhance its ability to adapt, learn, and thrive in changing contexts.[3]

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[2]OECD (2011).

[3]International Peace Institute (2012), p. 3.

While systematic management methods offer significant potential for handling emergencies and humanitarian interventions, instinctive actions and reactions are often more appropriate and timely. The more complex a context is, the less likely comprehensive systematic decision-making processes will be feasible or efficient. High mortality rates, for example, render swift intervention an imperative. Therefore, instead of rejecting intuitive decision-making processes right away, it is recommended to explore how to appropriately make decisions while remaining flexible. Management, in its broadest sense, can be understood as the act of aiming to fulfil objectives while organising and directing a set of resources to accomplish clearly defined goals and targets.[4]

Managing emergencies involves planning, organising, leading, staffing and controlling; therefore, a wide range of leadership and management competencies are required. According to McEntire and Dawson,[5] the goal of emergency management is '...to devise policy and to implement programs that will reduce vulnerability, limit the loss of life and property, protect the environment, and improve multi-organizational coordination in disasters'.[6] Policy and implementation skills and competencies are needed to be effective, especially in times of emergencies where situations change rapidly and a high level of uncertainty is the norm. James lists four key management tasks that are essential to handling emergencies[7]:

- *Authority:* managers are accorded a certain amount of authority, as documented in organisational charts and job descriptions.
- *Responsibility*: managers have a set of tasks for which they are responsible. In addition, to achieve objectives, managers have the responsibility of coaching and supervising staff. Likewise, team members act upon their responsibility towards the project in the humanitarian situation.
- *Accountability*: managers answer to the executive and/or the board while supporting their staff. Managers are accountable for their actions and those of their organisation to different stakeholders, notably to donors and beneficiaries. This often dominates aspects of accountability of the aid organisation.
- *Delegation*: managers are responsible for organising and assigning well-distributed and sustainable workloads for their staff. When staff encounters problems with their responsibilities, managers are expected to play a supporting and advocating role.

Emergency managers are often confronted with a number of challenges that have a direct implication on decision-making processes and on how effective or ineffective their management will be. Effective management requires networking, which

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[4]*Ibid*.

[5]McEntire and Dawson (2007), pp. 57–70.

[6]Demiroz and Kapucu (2012), pp. 91–101.

[7]James (2008).

helps aid workers in comprehending complex situations that they may not fully grasp on their own. According to Demiroz and Kapucu, emergency management

> ...involves [a] network of organizations from various fields including public, nonprofit, and private sectors as well as organizations from different levels of government. Emergency managers must use networks and relationships to develop uniform goals and strategies. The most important tool needed for a network to work effectively in the disaster response process is communication. It is communication that fosters success in coordinating efforts that are necessary in order to achieve and maintain common goals.[8]

2 Communication as a Management Tool

Communication, or the exchange of needs, ideas and information on the basis of common values, is a necessary condition for the effective handling of any emergency.

Be it participative, in order to acquire the views of beneficiaries and colleagues, or directive, by explaining commands, communication is key to qualitative work. Precision, timeliness and efficient and effective use of time are equally important in humanitarian situations with imminent danger of loss of life. Active listening is too often not recognised as a necessary tool. Especially in team situations, such as a coordination meeting, the focus is never on one single person as the team may otherwise miss out on the opinions and resources of the other members. To achieve the necessary balance, facilitation skills are equally important.

Effective and—where necessary—assertive communication is required when humanitarian organisations take a stance with authorities, where, for example, access to beneficiaries needs to be negotiated. The way communication is used needs to be adapted to the particular context that agencies are operating in. A pertinent example would be Darfur, where after 2008, access to beneficiaries was very restricted and had to be negotiated carefully between aid agencies and national as well as local authorities. The tense situation in combination with security incidents prevented aid workers from leaving their bases and hindered effective delivery of aid. Remote management has also occurred more often, where required by the security situation. Further, communication over distances has also become the norm as NGO headquarters discuss and negotiate the state of affairs, for example concerning budgets, with their field offices. In short, effective leadership communicates vision and finds ways to inspire.

Another challenge that managers of emergency programmes are confronted with is the permanent struggle with resource constraints with regard to time and financial means, in addition to handling the dilemma of balancing feasibility, accuracy and effectiveness. Especially in crisis situations, management is facing multiple problems deriving from the heterogeneous scope of tasks that need to be addressed simultaneously. In emergency situations, managers have to cope with different

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[8]Demiroz and Kapucu (2012), p. 94.

levels of experience, backgrounds and a diverse team of staff on the ground. Thus, clear rules for all team members must be in place, which can make the assignment of tasks and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities much easier.[9] Diversity within a team can enhance the process of understanding needs and contexts, yet time constraints, especially in acute emergency settings, can limit it. In a team setting, these specifics have to be communicated especially well and clearly.

The same holds true for participation. Asking target groups for advice on issues such as where to place a defecation zone to ensure safe excreta handling allows for culturally appropriate measures that are accepted by target groups and communities.[10] Yet highly participative and open attitudes may also lead to endless discussions. Finally, another aspect needs to be highlighted in the context of communication. Complex humanitarian situations, such as the 2015 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, require bold and creative decisions. Boldness is based on confidence, which a humanitarian manager needs to inspire within a given team. Team members only dare to develop initiative if they do not feel insecure. With apt communication skills, a manager therefore sets framework conditions for self-confidence and courage within his or her team. Encouraging communication styles are usually participatory in nature but also have other advantages, such as stimulating team members to be open with their ideas. Breeding an innovative atmosphere can create the necessary conditions for ingenious ideas, such as bringing food aid to malnourished people by boat in a hard-to-access territory like South Sudan during the rainy season.

3   Management Styles

Identifying the *right people* to ask is not always a trivial matter. Nevertheless, encouraging participation within a team is a question not only of directing colleagues and allocating responsibilities well but also of mobilising capacities within the team. Complementary participation and directive guidance interactions are key. For example, where a hostage situation is likely to occur, a given overheard team member with the most relevant experience may have the best ideas, offering the best chance to preserve health, safety and security to colleagues. Ensuring the effectiveness of humanitarian responses is one of the biggest challenges that aid organisations and supervisors are confronted with. Humanitarian organisations tend to have clear aims, but their set-up sometimes may be insufficiently developed to respond to acute emergencies. Without effective systems in place, management will most likely continue to remain a reaction to crisis. In addition, geographic distance between managers and staff considerably challenges how the work is carried out,

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[9]James (2008).

[10]The Sphere Project (2011).

especially when emergencies occur in remote areas. Where access is difficult or limited, the staff is often required to work from different localities and offices, which challenges the way the overall management is implemented.[11]

4   Reacting to the Unknown

In 2010, international aid workers responded to the Haiti earthquake. Relief goods from Europe and North America were shipped in while the full extent of needs on the ground was still unknown, leaving goods stalled at airports and harbours. This experience demonstrates how important it is for the entire humanitarian community to have clarity of a humanitarian crisis individually and organisationally before initiating a response. When the Kosovar refugees returned home after the cessation of hostilities in 1999, the humanitarian community, including donors, needed to swiftly shift attention from providing refugee accommodation to rehabilitation. Needs seldom remain the same over the course of a humanitarian crisis, unless a chronic situation develops. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that humanitarian aid practices maintain flexibility.

Emergencies such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide may serve as an example. The events in Rwanda not only left hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and moderate Hutu dead but also led to the subsequent displacement of hundreds of thousands of others, mostly Hutu, to neighbouring Zaire. A complex situation ensued, where murderers who had participated in the genocide entered the camps, mixing with other refugees and received aid. The extent of misuse of aid by the perpetrators, as well as them having been hosted in refugee camps, was only researched after the emergency ended. Aid workers who were confronted with the first hints of this misuse might not have been in a position to clearly make sense of what was happening. Due to their humanitarian mandate, these aid workers helped everyone irrespective of affiliation. However, during the course of events, the situation became more obvious, prompting aid workers to change their course of action.[12]

Constantly assessing and reassessing emergency situations is therefore imperative. In this vein, a sound network between organisations and staff, as well as among colleagues, is helpful to maximise the acquisition of contextual information. Participation also plays an important role. The level of participation has to be adjusted to the necessary top-down approach, where effective, secure and swift actions are needed.

According to James, effective management in emergencies combines aspects of both management and leadership qualities, which are highlighted below[13]:

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[11]James (2008).

[12]Ludlow (1999).

[13]James (2008), p. 91.

- *Knowledge*: in emergencies, stress-inducing situations can stretch people in ways that may adversely affect programmes or even an entire organisation. Leaders ought to be aware of their own personalities, approach towards others and limitations. They should also understand their organisation and its culture before an emergency intervention and how to reach its objective with little contact from supervisors.
- *Skills*: proficiency in basic skills is important. Effective managers actively seek to improve and to familiarise themselves with skills and techniques in areas under their responsibility. Where members of their staff are more experienced or qualified to conduct certain tasks, the manager may need to hand over that particular area of responsibility to such persons. As skills required may vary, verbal and written communication skills and advanced knowledge of project cycle management are essential.
- *Attitude*: managing is leading by example, which others can follow. While management tasks may change depending on the situation, managers have to fulfil additional roles, including showing empathy, concrete action and presenting a professional and positive image externally, even where their personal opinion may diverge. Preparation and training to acquire the right mix of knowledge and skills can make assuming the right attitude easier. In emergency situations, managers are responsible not only for themselves but also for their staff. They must look beyond standard work issues and consider wider concerns such as staff welfare that may affect their motivation. Hence, many aid organisations find it helpful to organise frequent staff meetings to discuss employee welfare and like-minded issues.

5   Leadership and Management

While many well-known management methods have been established for the business sector, only few of these are directly applicable to aid organisations due to the complex humanitarian contexts. Nonetheless, several management methods and tools can be useful for organisations working in emergency aid, for example project cycle management and the logical framework analysis.[14] Different emergency situations will require a set of diverse management approaches.

Managing and leading can be considered complementary in terms of overlapping activities. While managers deal with the complexity of a crisis situation and the different parts of the organisation, leaders deal with change that may challenge the status quo. In many aid organisations, the leading staff assumes the role both of manager and leader. Generally, there is no single type of effective leader, appropriate for all situations. Instead, different leadership styles need to be

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[14]*Ibid.*

adapted to suit specific emergency situations and organisational set-ups.[15] The challenge for any manager is to understand which kind of leadership style is appropriate at what moment.

There are certain '[...] core areas where it is necessary that emergency managers be completely competent: (1) Leadership and team building, (2) networking and coordination, (3) political, bureaucratic, and social context'.[16] Above all, it is important to note that different situations require distinct approaches. Table 1 provides an overview of different leadership styles, indicating their characteristics, applicability and limitations.

Table 1 Leadership styles

Leadership styles	Characteristics	Contexts when useful	Weaknesses and limitations
Coercive/ directive	Leader gives orders and expects to be obeyed	In quick turnaround situations and crises and emergencies, security situations, dealing with insubordinate employees	Inhibits organization's flexibility, weakens employee morale, risks not utilizing available resources, makes the atmosphere suffer
Authoritative	Leader establishes overall goal/strategy and pushes people to follow	When organization is adrift or undisciplined and needs direction and supervision	Goal/strategy not informed by good ideas of staff, goal with little staff buy-in, risks of not being sustainable
Affiliative/ supportive	Leader listens, affirms and facilitates – 'people come first' attitude	In case of a need to build team cohesion, need to raise low morale, capacity building	May cause employees not to have a clear sense of direction or purpose
Democratic/ participative	Leader gives employees role in day-to-day decision-making	To build organizational flexibility, responsiveness and responsibility (helps building capacity in the team)	May result in indecision and a sense of confusion or, at worse, long decision-making process
Pacesetting/ achievement oriented	Leader sets ambitious goals and high performance standards	With highly motivated employees who work best independently	May feel overwhelming to employees who then feel resentful or give up
Coaching	Leader directs and supports: focuses on personal development	Where employees want and receive incentive to improve professionally and for personal growth; highly sustainable with the least necessary input	Not successful when employees are resistant to change; heavy time burden on leader; convincing processes needed

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[15]International Peace Institute (2012), p. 35.

[16]Patton (2007), pp. 71–84, 81; Demiroz and Kapucu (2012), p. 96.

Leadership characteristics for emergencies and disasters that are addressed by Kapucu and Van Wart[17] include the following:

- decisiveness;
- flexibility;
- informing;
- problem solving;
- managing innovation and creativity;
- planning and organising personnel;
- motivating;
- managing teams and team building;
- scanning the environment;
- strategic planning;
- networking and partnering; and
- decision-making.

6   Team Building

Team building is the selection and bringing together of different people and the development of skills within a group that aims to achieve certain goals. Team-building processes are found within many societal spheres, for example in the business and non-profit sectors, as well as in humanitarian organisations. Good team-building skills help team members focus on a common goal and to generate greater productivity. Team building can be understood as an ongoing process that contributes to forming a unified work unit. Therefore, the role of a team builder is to lead a team towards cohesiveness and productivity.[18]

According to the Tuckman model (1965), team building comprises four stages: forming, storming, norming and performing.[19]

Forming   At the first stage, roles and responsibilities of team members are not yet clear. Individuals are finding their role, and strong guidance and direction from the team manager are required as team members may not always know each other. The manager's role in this phase is to explain the team's objectives, purpose and relationships among the team members.

Storming   This is a critical stage as team members might encounter conflicts during decision-making processes within their group or team. Team members may adapt their positions during and after discussions with colleagues and the team manager. They might also be challenged by other team members with different agendas.

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[17]Kapucu and Van Wart (2008), pp. 711–740.

[18]UCSF Human Resources (2015).

[19]Chapman (2013), James (2008).

Hence, clarity of roles and objectives are indispensable as, otherwise, uncertainties may continue to persist. At this point, it is critical that team members are clear about their purpose and stay focused on their goals in order to avoid becoming distracted by different perceptions of these aims.

Norming At this stage, roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Team members develop an understanding of other group members. The team reaches a level of agreement and consensus. Decisions are usually made by group agreement. Cooperation and commitment contribute to the organisations' performance. There are a number of approaches that may help foster team spirit, for example social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader, and some level of leadership is shared among the team.

Performing At this final stage, the team is strategically settled and shares a common vision. The team is competent and begins to work together to achieve objectives. It makes the most of the decisions according to the criteria that have been agreed upon by the team leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Team members are taking care of each other. At this point, the team does not need to be instructed or assisted, but maintaining performance will become critical for success.

7 Needs, Goals and Effectiveness

In humanitarian action, the needs-based approach has made space for a rights-based approach as it is a necessary element of the right to life with dignity.[20] The right to health, for example, seems to be easier to turn into reality in times of natural catastrophes (for example, in the context of epidemics or when tackling high child mortality) than in other situations. In protracted crises or conflict settings, such as the Syrian civil war, a rights-based approach is often much more difficult to implement. Wounded non-combatants, for example, might have the right to be treated, but warring parties might not allow access to victims or even to treatment, although it is expressly guaranteed in international law.[21] Nevertheless, whichever approach humanitarian actors may select, humanitarian response essentially aims at lessening needs. This is why needs are seen to be at the forefront; they must be addressed in accordance with humanitarian principles while remaining realistic and meeting the expectations of the target group. It is worth mentioning that, in the context of human needs, health, food and shelter are often the focus of humanitarian aid. This is the case, for example, when addressing malnutrition of infants, maternal

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[20]The Sphere Project (2011).

[21]*Id.*, p. 22.

health or the ultimate goal of health through better water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter or protection.

Generally, needs are defined as the difference between a given situation or the degree of self-help capacity and an accepted level of satisfaction. For example, a population with a certain under-five mortality rate (U5MR) *needs* support to reach an *accepted* or *tolerated* child mortality rate.[22] Consider that the emergency threshold for the U5MR is defined as 0.8 deaths per day and per portion of a population of 10,000 children. In other words, if a sample population of 50,000 children suffers the loss of more than four children aged below five every day, an emergency is at hand. To intervene in a way that the U5MR shrinks becomes the main objective of many interventions. Figure 1 illustrates such relations.

Humanitarian need is a recognised requirement for survival in terms of food, water, shelter, nutrition, non-food items, medical treatment and protection; while taking into account self-help capacity, interventions correspond to needs with their output and outcome, both direct and indirect.:

We will briefly discuss the aims of humanitarian intervention since they are communicated to and within the response team. Target setting and the consciousness of the effects of humanitarian interventions are an integral part of management in humanitarian aid and therefore deserve more attention. In contrast to the
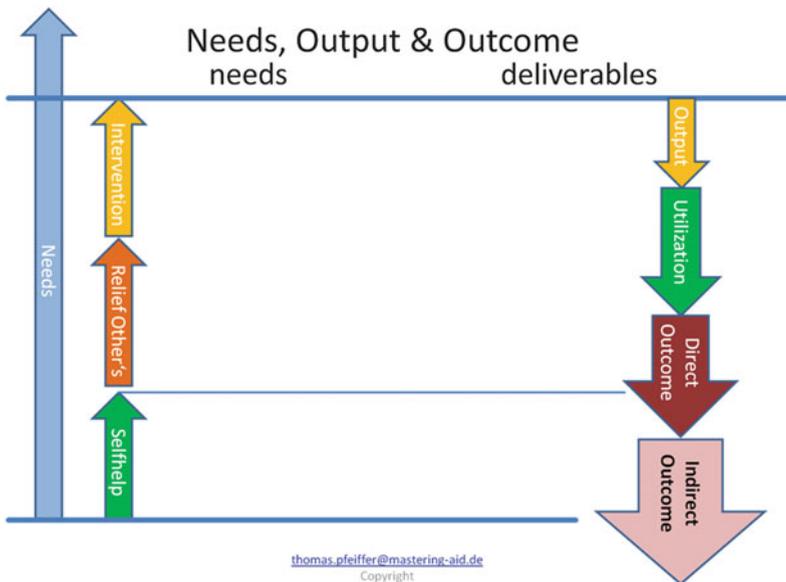
Fig. 1 Needs, output and outcome. Developed by the authors, Thomas Pfeiffer and Markus Moke, the figure expresses the degree of needs vis-à-vis the delivered performance of aid

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[22]*Id.*, p. 346.

humanitarian interventions of several decades ago, recent projects contain elements of accountability in among their sets of goals. This is especially helpful where an appropriate gain is achieved by the self-controlling accountability or where ineffective decisions need to be corrected. In order to measure accountability, the situation before the intervention is compared to the one present afterward. The needs usually exceed the agencies' response capacities or funds.

Two methods to lessen this effect of overwhelming needs shall be mentioned. First, differentiating acute from chronic needs is beneficial. Not only does it help to better utilise funds from developmental donors as opposed to humanitarian donors, but acute needs usually also require an immediate response. Second, in complex situations, the division of labour is crucial whereby organisations split responsibilities between sectors so that one organisation may take the lead in a particular sector, such as health, whereas the other one focuses on an issue, such as shelter. In this way, both separately account for their work while aiming to achieve compatible goals.

7.1   Setting Objectives

Based on the above definition of needs, it is possible to formulate objectives and introduce effective aid. When winter snows were imminent after the 2006 Pakistan earthquake, the goal to protect the victims of this disaster from cold temperatures or maintain public health was evident. Humanitarians thus had to decide at the beginning of winter to what degree populations were to be put up in winter-proof shelters. Indicators based on experience serve to describe the situations ex ante and ex post and by comparison often serve to account for individual, project, as well as organisational performances and self-reflection. Indicators, however, can often only hint at the degree of success of a project. Hereby the quality of work can be assessed alongside the five OECD-DAC criteria and shall be flanked by humanitarian-aid-specific six criteria[23]:

- appropriateness/relevance;
- effectiveness;
- efficiency;
- impact;
- sustainability; and
- connectedness.

Concerning these criteria, two general points must be made.

First, sustainability is relevant not only in the context of development but also in humanitarian aid, which is visible in the example of the large-scale disasters in Pakistan. When a major earthquake struck the country in 2006, sustainable

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[23]OECD (2015).

elements of humanitarian aid helped the population build resilience, which in turn had a positive impact during the responses to the 2010 floods. Fostering the resilience of populations affected by frequent disasters has gained priority in humanitarian aid and development work.

Second, impact needs to be well distinguished from effectiveness. Targeted populations need to utilise and access aid, like mothers bringing their malnourished children to feeding centres, in order for aid to accomplish a certain effect. Such a hopefully effective intervention then contributes to creating an intended impact. However, particularly after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where *genocidaires* utilised aid to sustain their criminal agenda, possible unintended impact must also be considered, and action must be taken to prevent it. Hence, impact is an indirect consequence of the direct aid delivered to beneficiaries. Aid workers fulfil their roles best when attentively, consciously and responsibly working in often confusing humanitarian contexts. As clear-cut as it may appear here, it should be noted that these quality criteria often contradict each other and need to be balanced, or reach certain compromises depending on the context. One interesting contradiction concerns participatory approaches that lead to higher degrees of sustainability but often sacrifice time. However, in order to optimise the quality of an outcome, one must strive to find the most appropriate solution and take the most standardised approach (see Fig. 2).

When looking at the provision of humanitarian aid at the onset of the Darfur crisis in 2004, the textbook response was swift and effective. However, it was not
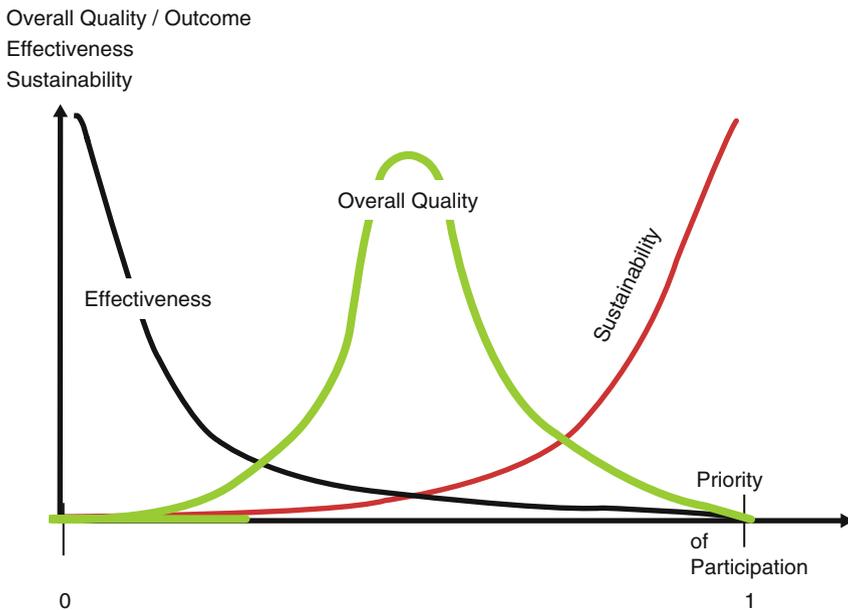
Fig. 2 Aid intensity over time. Developed by the authors, Thomas Pfeiffer and Markus Moke, the figure illustrates the intensity of aid over time after a disaster with the dominant DAC criteria

foreseeable that millions of displaced people would remain uprooted over 10 years later. The uncertainty that prevails in many humanitarian contexts requires careful consideration and a flexible approach allowing for compromises. Neither a rigid nor a dogmatic approach will enable aid workers or their organisations to respond appropriately to crises. After all, humanitarian aid deals with human beings, and it is for a good reason that humanity is one of the seven fundamental principles of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.[24] A case-by-case approach with an activity-focused attitude that follows good quality practices in terms of principles and standards helps to enrich the management of emergencies.

7.2 Strategic Management

In order to capture the concept of strategic management, we must first define the term strategy. A strategy, according to the working definition used by the UN Management Handbook, is a

> . . .way to achieve the comprehensive long-range goals of an organization. Strategic planning is the corresponding management function, focused on developing an overall direction for an organization within the context of the challenges and opportunities of the operating environment, as well as the organization's resources.[25]

Through planning, general strategies are broken down into workable units and thus translated into specific work programmes and finally converted into individual action. As strategies can emerge unpredictably, one should strive at all times to maintain flexibility, continuously review and, if necessary, update the strategy. A clear organisational structure is critical to effective management. It is not an end in itself but rather a requirement set out by donors and governments and is helpful in communicating with stakeholders. Staff working for an aid organisation must understand the place and relationship of the emergency programme within the broader context of the organisation.

7.3 Organisational Structure

James distinguishes between three organisational levels (see Fig. 3): (1) headquarters, (2) country offices and (3) project sites.[26] Each level is concerned with a different view of strategy, time span, level of detail and frequency of dealing with

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[24]The complete set of the seven fundamental principles can be accessed at: http://www.ifrc.org/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/the-seven-fundamental-principles/.

[25]International Peace Institute (2012), pp. 55–56.

[26]James (2008).
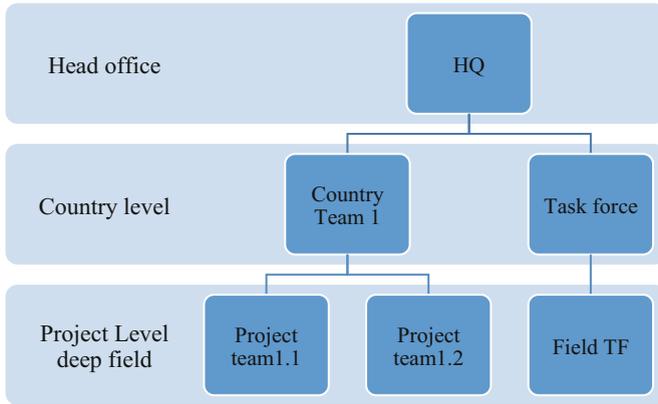
Fig. 3 Organisational levels. Reprinted by kind permission of the publisher from James, E. Managing Humanitarian Relief. An operational guide for NGOs (Practical Action Publishing Limited, Warwickshire 2008)

particular issues. When discussing the organisational design, it is useful to categorise types of staff working in an emergency, which includes programme and medical staff, trainers, community mobilisers, project managers and programme support staff, such as accountants, logisticians and drivers.

The organisational structure can be established along several lines, including by function, service users (for example, children and adults), programme (for example, shelter and water/sanitation), donor and geography. In emergencies, a pyramid structure is essential as it eases communications and assigns clear roles and responsibilities to staff. Some organisations form temporary task forces or crisis management teams. This brings together key decision-makers within an organisation and allows them to focus on a crisis.

However, no organisational structure is ideal or permanent, and so aid organisations must revisit their organisational charts periodically and make changes accordingly.[27] It is worth noting that, over the past decades, organisations have increasingly decentralised their structures, by placing operational and budgetary authority, resources and competencies closer to target areas as opposed to headquarters. As emergency programmes expand, transparency is indispensable, especially concerning the following:

- *Clarity of function* – all staff should be acquainted with their functions and roles, and those of other members, as sometimes duties that are not clearly defined can lead to misunderstandings and confusion.
- *Centralisation or decentralisation* – staff should be clear about what can and has to be managed in a decentralised way and which responsibilities are monitored and controlled from the top down.

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[27]*Id.*, p. 97.

- *Cross-departmental relationships* – most emergency programmes involve a country-level HQ office and one or more sub-offices. This can lead to a situation where staff reports to two levels. Such dual reporting can cause problems between staff, and it should be communicated and explained beforehand.
- *Deputy directors* – in emergency programmes, country directors need to share the workload of the programme's administration and management.

Ways to mitigate the potential for conflict are to set up terms of reference (TOR) that set out clear responsibilities for all partners involved. These TOR should be shared with all partners, staff and colleagues to prevent confusion. In addition, information and team-building measures are important to lessen the effect of the 'us against them' thinking that may develop in dual programmes.[28]

Various approaches for strategic management and planning are employed by different organisations, depending on their needs, capacities and resources. Strategy development and planning processes typically follow a sequence of steps.[29] One useful tool to start identifying strategic alternatives based on preliminary research is a SWOT analysis, which examines the strengths and weaknesses of concerned organisation and the opportunities and threats in the environment. As such, it is a tool for generating a summary of the strategic plan of an organisation:

- Strengths are capabilities that enable your organisation or unit to perform well—capabilities that need to be leveraged.
- Weaknesses are characteristics that prohibit your organisation or unit from performing well and need to be addressed quickly.
- Opportunities are trends, forces, events and ideas that your organisation or unit can capitalise on.
- Threats are possible events outside of your control that your organisation or unit needs to plan for or decide how to mitigate.

The main purpose of a SWOT analysis is to provide an analytical basis for strategies that reflect reality by guaranteeing a maximum fit between external, environmental factors and internal factors relative to the organisation. Strategies based on this analytical model ensure that outside opportunities are exploited by inside strengths, while threats are countered and weaknesses minimised.[30]

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[28]*Id.*, pp. 99–100.

[29]International Peace Institute (2012), p. 58.

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