

# HUMANITARIAN CRISES, COOPERATION AND THE ROLE OF BRAZIL



# **HUMANITARIAN CRISES, COOPERATION AND THE ROLE OF BRAZIL**

**Translation**

Karen Lang  
Karina Teixeira



Rio de Janeiro/RJ – Brazil  
2016



Humanitarian Crises, Cooperation and the Role of Brazil is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported license.

The information contained in the articles of this publication are the sole responsibility of their respective authors and may not reflect the views of MSF Brazil.

### **Doctors Without Borders – Brazil**

Rua do Catete, 84 – Catete

Rio de Janeiro – RJ

CEP: 22220-000 – Brazil

Tel.: (21) 3527-3636

E-mail: comunicacao@rio.msf.org

Website: <http://www.msf.org.br>

**EDITORS:** Susana de Deus and Renata Reis

**ASSISTANT EDITORS:** Amanda Guarino and Yago Almeida

**COORDINATION OF EDITORIAL PRODUCTION:** Wilma Ferraz

**TRANSLATION, EDITING AND PROOFREADING:** Karen Lang

**COVER AND GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Roberta Rangé

**LAYOUT:** Roberta Rangé

**COPY-EDITING AND PROOFREADING:** Débora de Castro Barros

**PHOTOS:** Andre Quillien (p. 113); Andrea Vallerani (p. 58); Benno Neeleman (p. 128); Didier Lefevre (p. 134); Gael Turine (capa); Gijs Van Gassen (p. 127); Hospitals of Aleppo (p. 66); Joffrey Monnier (p. 156); Kjell Gunnar Beraas (p. 35); Martina Bacigalupo (p.133); MSF (p. 3); Paolo Pellegrin (contracapa); Pep Bonet (p. 6-7 e 36); Robin Hammond (p. 10); Sayuri Ohkawa (p. 102); Tristan Pfund (p. 114)

Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação [CIP]  
(Câmara Brasileira do Livro, SP, Brazil)

Humanitarian crises, cooperation and the role of Brazil [livro eletrônico] / translation Karen Lang, Karina Teixeira. -- Rio de Janeiro : Médicos Sem Fronteiras, 2016. 6.948 Kb ; ePDF

Título original: Crises humanitárias, cooperação e o papel do Brasil

Vários autores.

Bibliografia

ISBN: 978-85-93320-01-9

1. Assistência humanitária – Estudo de casos 2. Assistência médica – Estudos de casos 3. Crises – Aspectos sociais 4. Crises humanitárias – Cooperação internacional 5. Médicos Sem Fronteiras – (Organização)

16-00038

CDD-361.2681

### **Índices para catálogo sistemático:**

1. Brasil : Médicos Sem Fronteiras : Crises humanitárias : Cooperação : Relações internacionais 361.2681

The texts in this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part provided that the source and the respective authors are cited.



## SUMMARY

7

### Forward

Susana de Deus

11

### What not to do: how manipulated aid undermines the effectiveness of emergency response

Jonathan Whittall • Renata Reis • Susana de Deus

37

### Foreign policy: a tool for Brazil's international leadership in human rights and humanitarian issues

Camila Lissa Asano

59

### The challenges and paradoxes of protecting humanitarian facilities and workers

Simone Rocha

67

### Brazil in the field of humanitarian aid: mapping out its role in the Syrian conflict

Adriana Abdenur • Monique Sochaczewski

103

### Humanitarian cooperation in Brazil: testimonies and reflections

Celso Amorim

115

### Comments on MSF's article "What not to do: how manipulated aid

129

**undermines the effectiveness of emergency response”**

Andrés Ramírez

135

**Humanitarian crises, cooperation and the role of Brazil: the experience of CGFome**

Milton Rondó Filho

157

**Humanitarian cooperation in the world today: how can Brazil best contribute?**

Cynthia Jones

#### **INTERVIEWS**

168

**Global South tries to create its own concepts for international cooperation**

Carlos Milani

182

**The concept of resilience and the stripping of rights from the international agenda**

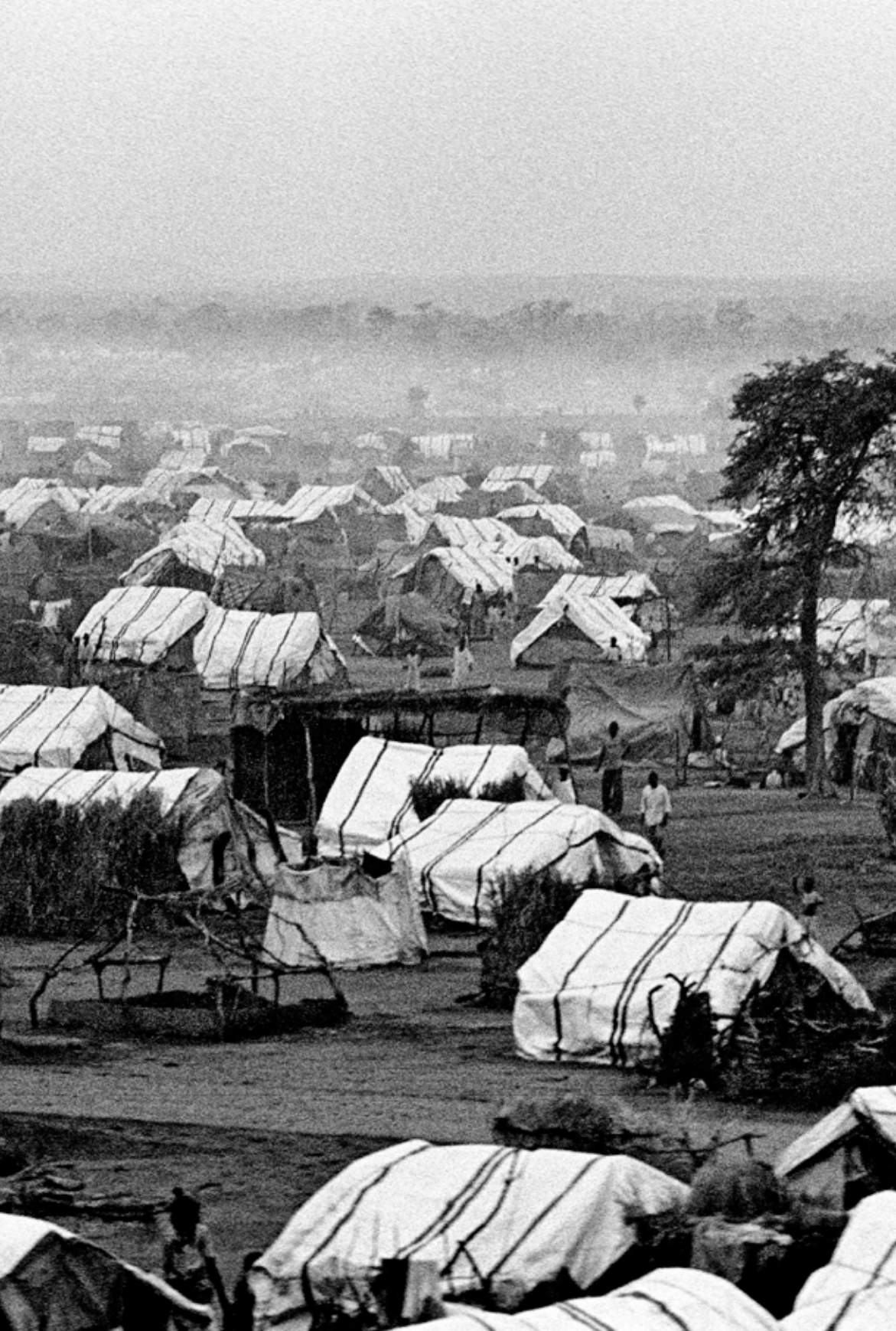
Paulo Esteves

192

**Ebola exposed the failure of state-building programmes**

Deisy Ventura

**About the authors**



## Forward

Susana de Deus

In a world as turbulent as ours, the most basic needs of millions of people still go unmet. From birth to death, their experience of life on this planet is marked by tragedy and suffering.

When we compare the life experience of these people to that of many other millions of ordinary citizens – often within the same country or in neighbouring countries – we find a gap that is difficult to describe and impossible to ignore.

In the history of nations, however, various initiatives have led to the design and implementation of cooperation policies geared towards these populations, which include agreements and efforts to coordinate between countries, and between countries and civil society organizations.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the second half, the number of civil society meetings held in the middle of humanitarian crises grew. There, relations were not only between states, but between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mainly European ones, which had gone out to connect with other citizens, normally from the South, to mitigate suffering together. In the homes and offices of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) today, people from a growing variety of nationalities sit together and discuss work. While a few years ago, the majority of them was basically European, the people MSF now takes to Afghanistan are from South Africa, Brazil, Japan... In countries where MSF workers are involved in humanitarian aid, they come across



several other organizations that, like MSF, work in the field with funding for humanitarian cooperation and for the development of many other nations.

Brazilians working with MSF in the field still do not find humanitarian cooperation efforts conducted by Brazilian organizations, or at least not as part of a humanitarian cooperation policy of the Brazilian government. In Brazil, however, MSF has found opportunities to dialogue with many national actors and is even involved in debates on how to structure Brazilian cooperation efforts better. We have also discovered several ad hoc initiatives that support populations in crisis situations, such as the 25 million BRL in financial support that Brazil provided for the response to the Ebola outbreak.

Under the *Coordenação-Geral de Cooperação Humanitária e Combate à Fome* (CGFome or the General Coordination of International Action Against Hunger in English), before it was eliminated in 2016, humanitarian cooperation was concentrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it combined emergency response with development. We now ask ourselves what the future holds. Should we expect a sound policy with a new legal, procedural and professional framework providing clear direction to be adopted?

Over the past decade, our experience and contacts with several government and civil society representatives in Brazil gave us hope that, with the will Brazil had been showing and the actions it was undertaking, the country would soon build a solid humanitarian cooperation policy with an annual budget, training for professionals assigned specifically to this area and organized civil society as its main guide. It would coordinate actions with other peoples, identify needs independently from political-economic interests and put forth proposals of action that would be heard. We still have hope that Brazil will bring to the world a creative, innovative humanitarian cooperation policy guided by

the humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality, in which the population's needs are at the heart of the decisions made. A foreign aid recipient until recently, Brazil now has a very strong civil society movement that has acquired valuable experience in conducting exchanges with other populations. Cooperation is also a guiding principle of its foreign policy. These elements can make a difference in the world and influence the way humanitarian cooperation is carried out to ensure that it is centred on people and their immediate needs for survival.

The participation of civil society in the construction of this policy is fundamental. This publication aims to stimulate other initiatives that engage Brazilian civil society and state actors on this issue.

I hope readers will enjoy this publication and that it will serve as inspiration for new proposals.



# **What not to do: how manipulated aid undermines the effectiveness of emergency response**

Jonathan Whittall • Renata Reis • Susana de Deus

As emerging donors and civil society movements from the Global South become increasingly engaged with international humanitarian assistance, it is important to ensure that the negative experiences of western donor and NGO approaches to aid delivery are not replicated. This reflection paper is intended to provide insights on the negative implications of humanitarian aid that is entirely tied to the foreign policy interests of a donor government. It also raises questions about whether NGOs that seek to advance the objectives of donor governments are effective in the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The purpose of this paper is to present the case for a humanitarian system where emerging donors protect the independence of humanitarian actors, and where those involved in the direct provision of assistance refuse to act as extensions of government foreign policy. This requires a global humanitarian civil society movement committed to the provision of assistance regardless of the political considerations of donor governments.

## **What is humanitarian aid?**

‘Humanitarianism’ can be simply defined as acting to save lives and alleviate suffering during conflicts, social unrest, disasters and social exclusion (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2012). Institutional humanitarian action – represented primarily by large NGOs from the Global North and United Na-

tions (UN) humanitarian agencies – is distinguished by three principles: impartiality, neutrality and independence. According to the Good Humanitarian Donor principles, ‘neutrality’ can be defined as “the provision of humanitarian assistance without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature”; ‘impartiality’ as “the provision of humanitarian assistance without discrimination among recipients and guided solely by needs, with priority given to the most urgent cases of distress”; and ‘independence’ as “the provision of humanitarian assistance based on policies formulated and implemented independently from parties involved in the conflict or parties that have a stake in the outcome” (Featherstone, 2012, p. 4). These principles have become a kind of moral code for humanitarian actors. However, there is also an element of defiance inherent to the core of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism, as Bouchet-Saulnier et al. put it, is “the deed of individuals protesting the established order” (Bouchet-Saulnier et al., 2007, p. xxii).

## **Brazil and humanitarian cooperation**

Brazil’s experience in international aid and cooperation has primarily been as a recipient, and not a provider, of aid. However, over time, Brazil has evolved towards a dual model in which it both receives and provides aid in the form of humanitarian and development assistance. Although Brazil has made important contributions to the field of international cooperation since the 1960s, it was in the 2000s that the country began to play a more prominent role, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Brazil lacks a well-structured national field of public actors that identify themselves as “humanitarians” (Ferreira and Schuch, 2010). However, the contributions from civil society organizations to developing a culture of rights and solidarity is a clear

indicator of what lies at the foundation of Brazil's humanitarian ethos. In recent decades, especially at the end of the 1980s, the emergence and growth of non-profit non-governmental organizations and the expansion and strengthening of various social movements – in urban and rural areas – redefined Brazilian civil society. The active and plural agendas of civil society were, and still are, diverse, and give prominence to projects that aim to fight exclusion and social inequality, defend rights and build citizenship – including access to the broad spectrum of economic, social and cultural rights, which includes the right to health. In this area, Brazilian movements and organizations were able to influence national politics to the point where the state incorporated in the Constitution access to health care as a responsibility of the state and the right of all (regardless of nationality and without reservations). It also pioneered the promotion of universal access to antiretroviral therapies for the treatment of HIV and AIDS, during a period of history where the dissemination of this kind of treatment was still contested in numerous countries and among multilateral organizations.

Brazil's role in humanitarian cooperation grew in importance over the last decade, both in the increase in the volume of aid it provided and international expectations that it would have a more significant presence on international issues. Shifts in the field of humanitarian cooperation are expected to occur due to the recent change in the country's executive branch in 2016. However, at the time of the release of this article, it is still not possible to identify the steps that will be taken, since the government has still not defined its new structure. Therefore, we will briefly discuss how Brazil's cooperation was structured up until the first half of 2016, when the CGFome department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still existed. Decree nº 8,817 eliminated CGFome and it is still not entirely clear what structure will be set up in the ministry (and/or in other federal government bodies) to deal with this issue.

In the period immediately prior to these changes, Brazil would begin to provide aid when it received a request for support from an affected country or international organizations. The humanitarian cooperation Brazil provided includes financial resources, food products, medicines, shelter and rescue teams, amongst other activities.

Up-to-date data from May 2015 indicate that Brazil ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the list of contributors to the World Food Programme (WFP). It donated a total of US\$4,435,398 in 2014. This amount has been decreasing since 2012, which was when it reached US\$82,547,956 (World Food Programme, 2015). Although statistics from 2015 show that Brazil had consolidated its position as the biggest donor to UNCHR among the emergent powers, with its injection of US\$1 million to the agency in 2013, this amount actually reflects a reduction in Brazil's financial support, which had registered an average of US\$3.5 million between 2010 and 2012 (ACNUR, 2014). Even though Brazil's presence and importance in humanitarian cooperation has grown, the data above indicate that there is still a long way to go in order for Brazil to produce significant responses that effectively address the urgent needs of the international scene.

According to official documents, humanitarian assistance provided by Brazil up until the first half of 2016 was based on two dimensions: an emergency one and a structural one. In the emergency component, Brazil sought to help guarantee nutritional security, shelter and health to people who were suffering, especially through the donation of food, supplies for temporary shelters and health care, always upon the formal request and with the consent of the recipient state. The structural component, on the other hand, consisted of actions aimed at providing long-term solutions to food insecurity and low levels of social development and resilience to disasters. It sought to stimulate, at least through discourse, local purchases in affected or neighbouring countries,

and strengthen essential institutions, such as schools and hospitals. In regards to the nutritional security of vulnerable populations or ones affected by disasters, Brazil sought to promote its successful national socio-economic programmes, such as the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) and the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE). The “two-track strategic cooperation” – which incorporated both emergencies and structural issues – is described as “a guarantee for human rights in emergency situations that generate social, economic and environmentally sustainable development”. Thus, it is clear that there was a combination of concepts in the humanitarian cooperation framework, which included both a classical component of emergency humanitarian aid and goals related to the development agenda.

Humanitarian issues have recently appeared more regularly on the agendas of organizations and scholars in Brazil, as well as within the Brazilian government itself. For example, the Frente Parlamentar Mista para Refugiados e Ajuda Humanitária (FPMRAH, or Parliamentary Front for Refugees and Humanitarian Aid) was recently created with the signatures of over 200 senators and congressmen from different political groups. However, the debates tend to arise more from discussions on development cooperation. Institutions must still be strengthened and national legal frameworks adapted in order for Brazil to become a more active and influential player in the international humanitarian field. To achieve this, there needs to be a deeper understanding of humanitarian cooperation and the role that Brazil could play in this field.

Brazilian humanitarian cooperation does not have to reproduce the models and approaches implemented by a humanitarian system that came largely from the Global North. Brazil has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the large donors to the humanitarian system and adapt its approach accordingly based on its own domestic experiences. Humanitarian concerns



have been used by donor governments from the North as a justification for intervention, and the delivery of humanitarian aid – by a variety of actors, including the military, private sector and various NGOs – has been used as a tool for advancing the political and military goals of some of the biggest donors to humanitarian organizations. Large NGOs have often allowed themselves to become extensions of donor governments' foreign policies. This co-optation of humanitarianism vocabulary and of the organizations providing humanitarian aid has had a negative impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid and on its ability to access certain conflict zones.

Based on MSF's 45 years of experience in defending independent humanitarian action, this paper will outline the ways in which the manipulation of humanitarian aid has, in certain places, reduced the capacity to respond to emergencies. It is important to first examine how the humanitarianism language has become associated with Western superpowers.

This issue should be explored as a way to fuel the debate on humanitarian cooperation in Brazil. The country could be an important agent of change by ensuring that the decisions that guide the conceptual and operational framework of its humanitarian cooperation policy take into consideration the many challenges faced today so as to better engage with populations under threat.

## **Humanitarian rhetoric**

'Humanitarian intervention' can be defined as "the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied (Holzgrefe, 2003, p. 18). The notion of

a 'humanitarian intervention' has therefore become synonymous with a military intervention.

The most commonly given examples of humanitarian intervention following the Cold War are those in the Balkans, Somalia and Sierra Leone (Jamison, 2011), with Rwanda cited as a failure in humanitarian intervention (Dallaire, 2012). The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine is arguably the latest evolution of the idea of humanitarian intervention. The notion of the R2P has come under severe criticism, most notably for its selective application.

Libya is a clear example of humanitarian concerns being incorporated into the rhetoric of intervention and articulated as a 'Responsibility to Protect'. Although the notion of the R2P had been used in previous Security Council Resolutions (Glanville, 2012), Resolution 1973 in the case of Libya marked the first time the Council had authorized force to protect a population against the wishes of a functioning state (Bellamy and Williams, 2011, p. 825). The Resolution was approved with the implicit backing – either through abstention or a positive vote – of all the non-permanent members of the Security Council (Domesticci-Met, 2011; Pomnier, 2011). When NATO began bombing the retreating columns of Ghadaffi's military (Evans, 2012), many of those who had initially supported the Resolution became wary, including prominent members of the BRICS group, who began publically criticizing NATO for overstepping the Security Council Resolution and conducting a campaign of regime change (Hasan, 2011). The experiences of Libya and the manner the R2P mandate was fulfilled will inform the future willingness of states to accept the R2P as a justification for intervention. In October 2011, Russia and China vetoed a Security Council Resolution on Syria that again made explicit reference to the R2P (Domesticci-Met, 2011).

The use of humanitarian language to justify military intervention can lead organizations providing humanitarian aid to be

considered part of a political or military strategy. This is made even more complicated by the fact that many humanitarian organizations receive funds from the same governments carrying out ‘humanitarian’ interventions. However, the risk goes beyond mere association. Humanitarian organizations have – in a number of contexts – allowed their activities to form part of their donor government’s foreign policy or military strategies.

## **Humanitarianism as a tool**

It is not only the terminology of humanitarianism that has been used as a justification for intervention; the very act of saving lives and alleviating suffering has also been used as military and political tools of donor governments.

The starkest demonstration of this use was in the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. In 2011, a group of Navy SEALs stormed a large compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan and assassinated Bin Laden. According to media reports, the CIA had been monitoring the house for some time but had only received confirmation that Bin Laden was inside the compound through a vaccination campaign that was able to gain a DNA sample from the children in the house (Shah, 2011).

At the time, MSF denounced the US army for ‘hiding behind health’. MSF stated that, “Using medical aid as a camouflage for military advantage threatens the lives of patients in the most precarious and embattled places worldwide” (MSF, 2011, online).

However, there are other more structural ways in which humanitarian aid has been used as a tool for Western governments’ foreign policy. It is possible to divide how humanitarian aid is used by Western powers into the following themes: linking relief to

development and security; post-9/11 stabilization; and, finally, the denial of aid.

### **Linking relief to development and security**

Development aid is a form of assistance that focuses on longer term processes of alleviating poverty, as opposed to the short-term humanitarian response of saving lives. Aid practitioners have often questioned the effectiveness of repeatedly providing the same kind of relief assistance to the same population caught up in protracted crises and have sought to better link relief and development – the logic being, especially in conflict-affected states, that development could prevent conflict by tackling the economic and governance-related root causes of discontent or by helping to alleviate poverty and therefore decrease the risk of humanitarian crises re-occurring.

During the 1990s, most thinking about the need to link relief and development focused on managerial issues with the aim of improving the effectiveness of aid delivery. Organizations with ‘multi-mandates’ emerged that provided both humanitarian and development assistance.

In 1997, the UN system introduced the term ‘integration’, which later evolved into a formal policy of maximizing the impact of the UN by creating coherence between the different elements of its response. Practically, integration in the UN means: “closely aligned or integrated planning; a set of agreed results, timelines and responsibility for the delivery of tasks critical to consolidating peace; and agreed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation among UN actors” (Metcalf, Giffen and Elhawary, 2011, p. 1).

This kind of integration aims to align political, military and aid objectives. This process of integration resonated with the

approach of aid organizations who were attempting to bridge the gap between relief and development.

However, longer term development is a deeply political process of tackling structural inequalities and poverty that in the context of the post Cold War has come to represent a process of promoting liberal democracy for those organizations funded by governments from the Global North. Humanitarian aid, on the other hand, is concerned with the immediate ability to save lives. The principles that guide humanitarian assistance – impartiality, neutrality and independence – are intended to help preserve the ability of humanitarian organizations to work across frontlines and independently from government interests that may result in aid workers being seen as part of a conflict. Humanitarian and development aid are therefore often incompatible.

For donors, the integration of these different aspects of aid has become increasingly important in the post-9/11 era.

## **Post 9/11 and stabilization**

In the arenas of the War on Terror, the idea of stabilization has gained prominence. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) Stabilisation Unit has defined stabilization as: "...the process of establishing peace and security in countries affected by conflict and instability... [and]... the promotion of peaceful political settlement to produce a legitimate indigenous government, which can better serve its people" (Barakat et al., 2010, p. S298).

This definition demonstrates how stabilization seeks to address the root causes of violence. The means to attain such objectives include humanitarian and development aid.

It is based on this definition that stabilization in the post-9/11 era can be considered an evolution in the way humanitarian aid is used by donor governments. This has been facilitated by the existence of multi-mandated organizations and integrated approaches. Although the final objectives of a development organization and the military are different – the one aims to alleviate poverty and the other aims to secure its political interests – the means by which to obtain both goals have become indistinguishable. Incorporating humanitarian aid into this mix means that it can be considered part of a conflict effort, and therefore targeted.

How this merging of the activities of relief, development and military actors happens in practice is directly linked to the unified goal of wanting to build the capacity of local institutions often for the purposes of democratic state building. For the military, successful stabilization requires there to be a legitimate government, as articulated in the DFID's definition, which can carry out service delivery in the pursuit of stability. Humanitarian actors that conduct development – which has often become about increasing the capacity of the state to fulfill its responsibilities – inevitably involve themselves in a state-building processes.

This trend is clearly illustrated in the case of Afghanistan. Two MSF writers in 2010 pointed out that many aid groups welcomed the integrated approach in Afghanistan. “In June 2003, more than 80 organizations – including major US aid agencies – called on the international community to expand NATO's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) and provide the resources needed ‘so that democracy can flourish’... [and]... improve the prospect for peace and stability for the Afghan people and the world’ (Hofman and Delaunay, 2010, online).

However, a similar logic as that applied to the provision of aid for the purposes of boosting the legitimacy of the state has also

been applied to the denial of aid as a way to reduce legitimacy of armed groups that do not support Western interests.

## **The denial of aid**

The denial of aid can be considered a tactic to prevent certain groups from gaining legitimacy. The provision of humanitarian assistance to ‘enemies’ has been recently criminalized by counter-terror legislation. The denial of assistance through the criminalization of aid is directly linked to the process by which humanitarian aid is used to advance or, in this case, deny the legitimacy of a state or group that does or does not serve the interests of donor governments.

Counter-terror legislation seeks to sanction any form of support to ‘designated terrorists’ (Mackintosh, 2011). Donor regulations also exist to prevent humanitarian organizations from having direct contacts – and therefore negotiating – with such designated groups. This has implications on how aid is delivered in areas controlled by such designated groups. The strong arm of the US government and its European allies had sought to bring humanitarian assistance in line with its counter-terrorism thinking by controlling who receives assistance and criminalizing the material support provided to whoever was not considered an ally at the time. This made providing assistance to areas under their control complicated and less about need and more about whose legitimacy needs to be boosted.

This has implications for humanitarian aid in that it makes humanitarian objectives subordinate to political stipulations of who constitutes a ‘terrorist’.

Whether enforced or not, this legislation means humanitarian impartiality has become conditional on the considerations of

hegemonic power. This strikes at the very core of what humanitarian aid is about: provision of assistance based on need alone. The question, therefore, is not whether aid workers will be persecuted, but how the threat of persecution forces humanitarian actors to act in the arenas, as desired by donor governments, if they are to act at all. In this way, the criminalization of aid can set the outer limits of the humanitarian reach. MSF is often able to go beyond the confines set by the criminalization of aid due to its independence from donor governments. For example, in Syria, MSF is able to work in a more flexible way, whereas other organizations are confined by donors' rules that slow down emergency response and prevent aid from reaching certain areas.

### **Effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery**

What implications has this relationship between humanitarian aid and Western powers had on the delivery of humanitarian assistance? One of the key implications of this relationship identified by MSF has been the danger it poses for the recipients of assistance. "For sick or wounded Afghans, going to a NATO-run clinic or receiving assistance from groups affiliated with the NATO counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy risks retaliation from the opposition, be they Taliban or other militant groups. Civilians face the same risks from international and Afghan forces if they turn to the opposition for assistance. In this environment, seeking help amounts to choosing sides in the war. The result is a tragically absurd catch-22: People put off seeking assistance because doing so can endanger their lives" (Hofman, 2011, online).

However, in addition to this clear potential impact on the recipients of assistance, there are also implications for the effectiveness of aid delivery and the ability for aid organizations to



access areas of conflict as a result of this relationship between humanitarian aid and governments from the Global North.

As mentioned above, the merging of relief and development into a state-building or stabilization effort is often represented, in practice, in the form of an integrated UN mission – with only one UN official responsible for humanitarian aid, development, political affairs and peacekeeping. This ‘coherence’ approach means that coordination and funding – channeled through the UN – of humanitarian action falls under the same umbrella as political and military considerations. Tiller and Healy found in a review of case studies in Jordan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan that the triple-hatted UN coordinator often created confusion and slowed down emergency response, while NGOs often found it difficult to shift from development to emergency programming (Tiller and Healy, 2014).

The most recent evolution of the integration and coherence approaches is to find a way to create a unity of purpose between different actors. Increasingly, this is becoming about ‘building resilience’. The concept of ‘resilience’ as a goal of humanitarian aid was first articulated outside environmental sustainability and disaster-risk-reduction circles by the UK DFID in the release of their Humanitarian Emergency Response Review in 2011 (DFID, 2011).

In a review of the concept of resilience by MSF, the following was used as a working definition: “Resilience of a particular system (household, community) includes: Capacity to anticipate and prepare for a shock or stress; Capacity to absorb, accommodate stress or destructive forces through resistance or adaptation; Capacity to manage, or maintain certain basic functions and structures during disastrous events; Capacity to recover or ‘bounce back’ after a shock or stress (in a timely and efficient manner)” (Whittall et al., 2014, online).

Initially the concept of resilience was about recovering from shocks, ‘bouncing back’ and resisting future shocks. And as such, the notion of resilience has been touted as a concept that can bridge the gap between ‘humanitarian response’ and development aid.

However, development aid has increasingly become about supporting the state in the provision of services. As such, development aid is intended to build the capacity of the state. In many of the conflict environments in which MSF works, the state is a party to the conflict. If the idea in such an environment is to bring humanitarian aid and development aid closer together, this is not so different from the stabilization agenda in Afghanistan where humanitarian aid has been used as part of a military and political state-building strategy. Therefore, the question becomes, whose resilience will the aid community build? And who will be excluded? Will UK-funded organizations seek to build the resilience – and therefore the capacity of local authorities – in a Taliban controlled village of Afghanistan?

Humanitarian and development aid are often in contradiction, because humanitarian aid kicks in when there is no longer a system to develop or there are no conditions to develop a system. Bringing the two concepts closer together under the banner of resilience building is therefore problematic. Development is about the system, the long term and the greater good of all, while humanitarian aid is about the individual, the short term and the immediate good of the few.

In addition to this, the focus on resilience represents a shift in the aid community, at a time of financial crisis, towards a ‘value for money’ approach. But when a response becomes a mixture of ‘all things to everybody’, or about saving lives, building capacity, reducing vulnerability and ensuring sustainability, often the basics are overlooked, and there is a danger that ‘building

resilience’ will become an excuse for inaction on the basics of saving lives and alleviating suffering.

MSF has already experienced this tension between long-term health systems building and effective health interventions with direct impact on the population. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, suspending patient payment during malaria outbreaks is seen as undermining the community’s ability to take responsibility for their health. Rapid vaccination campaigns are frowned upon because support to local health structures could do the job instead, even if it means delays in epidemic control and generally less children protected.

The implications of the resilience building approach can be seen clearly in a context such as South Sudan.

## **Resilience through state building**

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the approach to aid delivery in South Sudan progressed from ensuring longer-term developmental peace dividends to building the foundation for an independent state to, ultimately in 2011, supporting the establishment of a new state. At each stage, aid delivery was subordinated to long-term political goals that superseded emergency response to ongoing crises.

The idea of building resilience in South Sudan was adopted in 2013 as a unifying goal, while the opposite, ‘fragility’, was used to frame the need for greater resilience (CAP, 2014). The very first section of the Consolidated Appeals Process document for 2014 explicitly includes humanitarian action as contributing toward the “New Deal Compact” (NDC). “The 2014–16 CAP links humanitarian action to the wider framework of South Sudan’s New Deal Compact, as one component of the effort

to move the country from fragility to resilience” (CAP, 2013, p. 3). According to the CAP document, in 2014, humanitarian aid would contribute to improvements for three targets of the NDC: economic foundations; revenue and services; and justice. These improvements would help achieve the NDC goal of developing resilience.

Even as this CAP document was being written, South Sudan was already facing multiple emergencies, including a local insurgency in Pibor resulting in population displacement and an influx into Maban county of refugees fleeing the ongoing conflict in the disputed border area of the Blue Nile (Belanger, 2012; Ocha, 2013). However, when it comes to emergency response, the CAP document was unambiguous: “Non-CAP organizations like ICRC and MSF will continue to provide the core surge capacity in times of need.” (CAP, 2013, p. 42) It is important to note that ICRC and MSF were not (nor are) part of the CAP process, which means that they receive no funds from the CAP appeals. Therefore, while the CAP raised funds based on saving lives, it outsourced the actual saving of life to organizations that do not receive money from these funds. This shows how the humanitarian project in South Sudan expanded into a state-building project and that organizations outside the system were relied upon to carry out the core function of humanitarian aid: emergency response.

In the case of South Sudan, the oligopoly of aid actors conceptualized their aid response in terms of building resilience for the ultimate purpose of state building. This was facilitated by an integrated aid architecture that was led by donors who promoted the creation of a liberal democracy. What went wrong in the case of South Sudan is that this architecture prioritized the building of a state at the expense of emergency-relief capacity. The political conceptualization of aid led to the failure of emergency response. Of the 3.8 million South Sudanese estimated to need

assistance in 2014, even a generous estimate of aid sees only half as having been reached by the end of 2014 (Maxwell and Santschi, 2014, p. 1).

Eliminating the distinction between relief and development in a conflict makes the ability to respond to emergencies dependent on the political acceptance of a liberal democratic state-building agenda.

### **How has MSF navigated the politics of aid?**

One of the primary ways in which MSF has largely managed to avoid the implications of the manipulation of humanitarian aid is to have taken the decision not to accept donor government funds in most conflict situations. The organization has invested extensively in raising funds from individuals in the 19 countries in which it has offices. These offices extend from Europe to the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, South Africa and Brazil, among others. Maintaining the vast majority of its funds from unrestricted private sources allows the organization to take decisions independently from donor government interests.

Financial independence also means that MSF is able to respond to emergencies quickly and without waiting for governments to release funding. However, MSF has also taken a firm decision to maintain a strong focus on emergency response. This commitment to maintain emergency response capacity, coupled with financial independence, has allowed the organization to avoid the pitfalls of multi-mandated approaches that often reduce emergency response capacity and are more likely to be manipulated by donor interests.

However, regardless of these decisions, MSF – as a large scale international NGO with its decision-making centres still con-

centrated in Europe – is often associated with a humanitarian system embroiled into Western power. However, the organization has taken steps to distance itself publically and proactively from the manipulation of humanitarian aid. MSF has, for example, spoken out against NATO’s reference to NGO as being part of its “soft power” in Afghanistan (MSF, 2010). However, the organization needs to still do more to internationalize its identity in a context of changing global power dynamics. Arguably, it is no longer enough to be a critical insider of the aid system. It is necessary for the organization to create links and alliances with a broader range of civil society organizations in the Global South, which will shape the future of humanitarian action.

## **Conclusion**

The humanitarian landscape is changing: a wider range of donors are funding humanitarian operations; new aid actors are getting involved in humanitarian assistance; and other aid actors that have existed for a long time are being recognized once again as key players in the humanitarian landscape.

Donors of humanitarian assistance such as Brazil must avoid adopting the same approach as that of donor governments from the Global North, which have largely co-opted institutional humanitarian aid to make it serve their political and military objectives. Guaranteeing that humanitarian actors can act independently will help to ensure that these organizations avoid acting out of political or economic interests.

Brazil has the potential to participate in international humanitarian efforts in an important and ambitious way. Brazil has the opportunity to put together a policy that does not reproduce models created in the North. Based on its extensive experience in formulating social policies in dialogue with civil

society, it can move towards a humanitarian cooperation policy that puts people's needs before political and economic interests, build a different narrative and act as a positive role model for other countries.

Of course, states are entitled to act with their own interests in mind. However, non-aligned states have an opportunity to help unlink humanitarian aid from Western political powers and ensure that assistance is delivered based on solidarity with the most marginalized to guarantee their survival, as an end in itself. This will not be achieved by strengthening state control over humanitarian assistance through the assertion of sovereignty, but rather by disassociating aid from hegemonic powers and protecting organizations' independence to act.

## Bibliography

ALTO COMISSARIADO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PARA REFUGIADOS (ACNUR). 2015. *Dados sobre refúgio no Brasil* [online]. Available from: <<http://www.acnur.org/t3/portugues/recursos/estatisticas/dados-sobre-refugio-no-brasil/>>. Accessed on: 20 May 2015.

BAKARAT, S.; DEELY, S.; ZYCK, S. A. "A tradition of forgetting": stabilisation and humanitarian action in historical perspective. *Disasters*, n. 34, p. S297-S319, 2010.

BELANGER, L. *Refugee crisis in South Sudan*: Oxfam calls for action. [online]. Huffington Post, 2012. Available from: <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/louis-belanger/refugee-crisis-in-southsb\\_1901623.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/louis-belanger/refugee-crisis-in-southsb_1901623.html)>. Accessed on: 20 Oct. 2014.

BELLAMY, A. J.; WILLIAMS, P. D. The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect. *International Affairs*, 87, n. 4, p. 825-850, 2011.

BOUCHET-SAULNIER, F. et al. *The practical guide to humanitarian law*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

CONSOLIDATED APPEALS PROCESS (CAP). *South Sudan: consolidated appeal 2014-2016*. [online]. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2013. Available from: <[https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/CAP\\_2014-2016\\_South\\_Sudan.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/CAP_2014-2016_South_Sudan.pdf)>. Accessed on: 10 Jan. 2015.

DALLAIRE, R. Forward. In DONINI, A. (Ed.). *The golden fleece: manipulation and independence in humanitarian action*. Virginia: Kumarian Press, 2012. p. xvii–xviii.

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID). *Humanitarian emergency response review* [online]. 2011. Available from: <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67579/HERR.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67579/HERR.pdf)>. Accessed on: 18 Jan. 2015.

DOMESTICI-MET, M. J. Protecting in Libya on behalf of the International Community. *Göttingen Journal of International Law*, v. 3, n. 3, p. 861-889, 2011.

EVANS, G. Responsibility while protecting [online]. 2012. *Project Syndicate*. Available from: <<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/responsibility-while-protecting>>. Accessed on: 16 May 2012.

FEATHERSTONE, A. Afghanistan: a case study – strengthening principled humanitarian response capacities. *Alnap*. [online]. 2012. Available from: <<http://www.alnap.org/resource/6337>>. Accessed on: 5 Jan. 2015.

FERREIRA, J.; SCHUCH, P. *Direitos e ajuda humanitária: perspectivas sobre família, gênero e saúde*. Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 2010.



GLANVILLE, L. The responsibility to protect beyond borders. *Human Rights Law Review*, v. 12, n. 1, p. 1-32, 2012.

GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. *Defining humanitarian assistance*. [online]. Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2012. Available from: <<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/dataguides/defining-humanitarian-aid>>. Accessed on: 5 Jan. 2015.

HASAN, M. Oh, what a liberal war: Mehdi Hasan explores the case for intervention in Libya. *New Statesman*, n. 5046, p. 20-22, 2011.

HOFMAN, M. Dangerous aid in Afghanistan. *AfPak Channel*. [online]. 2011. Available from: <[http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/12/dangerous\\_aid\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/12/dangerous_aid_in_afghanistan)>. Accessed on: 8 May 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_; DELAUNAY, S. *Afghanistan: a return to humanitarian action*. [online]. MSF USA, 2010. Available from: <<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/specialreport/afghanistan-return-humanitarian-action>>. Accessed on: 1 Oct. 2014.

HOLZGREFE, J. The humanitarian intervention debate. In HOLZGREFE, J. L.; KEOHANE, R. O. (Ed.). *Humanitarian intervention: ethical, legal, and political dilemmas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

JAMISON, M. Humanitarian intervention since 1990 and “liberal interventionism”. In: SIMMS, B.; TRIM, D., *Humanitarian intervention: a history*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2011. Available from: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511921292>>. Accessed on: 13 Nov., 2012.

MACKINTOSH, K. Holder v. humanitarian law project: implications for humanitarian action: a view from Médecins Sans Frontières. *Suffolk Transnational Law Review*, n. 3, p. 507, 2011.

MAXWELL, D.; SANTSCHI, M. *From post-conflict recovery and state building to a renewed humanitarian emergency*: a brief reflection on South Sudan. [online]. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, 2014. Available from: <[www.securelivelihoods.org/resources\\_download.aspx?resourceid=320](http://www.securelivelihoods.org/resources_download.aspx?resourceid=320)>. Accessed on: 18 Jan. 2015.

METCALFE, V.; GIFFEN, A.; ELHAWARY, S. UN integration and humanitarian space: an independent study commissioned by the UN Integration Steering Group. *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*. [online]. 2011. Available from: <<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/FINAL%20Integration%20humanitarian%20space%20study%20Dec11.pdf>>. Accessed on: 18 Dec. 2014.

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF). *NATO statement endangers patients in Afghanistan*. [online]. 2010. Available from: <<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/press-release/nato-statement-endangers-patients-afghanistan>>. Accessed on: 11 Jun. 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Hiding behind health*. 2011. Available from: <<http://www.msf.org/article/hiding-behind-health>>. Accessed on: 11 Jun. 2015.

OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA). *2014 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP)*. [online]. OCHA, 2013. Available from: <[https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/2014\\_Syria\\_SHARP.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/2014_Syria_SHARP.pdf)>. Accessed on: 20 Oct. 2014.

POMMIER, B. The use of force to protect civilians and humanitarian action: the case of Libya and beyond. *International Review of the Red Cross*, v. 93, n. 884, p. 1063-1083, 2011.

SHAH, S. CIA's fake vaccination programme criticised by Médecins Sans Frontières. *Guardian*. [online]. 2011. Available from: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/14/cia-fake-vaccination-medecins-frontieres>>. Accessed on: 7 Sept. 2012.

TILLER, S.; HEALY, S. Where is everyone? Responding to emergencies in the most difficult places. *MSF International*. [online]. 2014. Available from: <[http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/msf-whereiseveryone\\_-def-lr\\_-\\_july.pdf](http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/msf-whereiseveryone_-def-lr_-_july.pdf)>. Accessed on: 16 Sept. 2014.

WHITTALL, J.; PHILIPS, M.; HOFMAN, M. Building resilience by deconstructing humanitarian aid. *MSF.org.uk Opinion and Debate*. [online]. 2014. Available from: <<http://www.msf.org.uk/article/opinion-and-debate-building-resilience-deconstructing-humanitarian-aid>>. Accessed on: 11 Jun. 2015.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME. Contributions to WFP 2014. [online]. 2015. Available from: <<https://www.wfp.org/about/funding/year/2014>>. Accessed on: 21 May 2015.



CLASS 6.2  
RISQUE BIODANGEREUX CORTEX

Ref. CRYO4L  
CRYOPACK 6.2  
MOBILE ET MARQUE DÉPOSÉE  
PROVET BY 12.200

PROVET BY  
12.200

tychem  
C

CRYOPACK 6.2  
MOBILE ET MARQUE DÉPOSÉE



## **Foreign policy: a tool for Brazil's international leadership in human rights and humanitarian issues**

Camila Lissa Asano

It is common for both academics and activists to create a barrier between human rights and humanitarian law, as these two fields are constantly treated separately. The vocabulary, the sources of international law and the relationship between states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that guide human rights are seen as being distinct from those that govern the way in which humanitarian action is conducted. A critical analysis, however, makes us wonder whether this chasm in fact exists. After all, both human rights and humanitarian law aim at ensuring the dignity of human beings and are complementary areas of knowledge and action.

This article is part of a publication that aims to discuss Brazil's role in humanitarian crises. Based on Conectas Human Rights<sup>1</sup> experience of over a decade in monitoring and seeking to influence Brazilian foreign policy on human rights, this paper aims to reflect on possible parallels between the way Brazil operates internationally in relation to humanitarian issues and human rights. The discussions presented in the article "What not to do? How manipulated aid undermines the effectiveness of emergency response" by Doctors Without Borders (Witthall, Reis and Deus, 2016) are the starting point for this reflection. This article examines some objectives which, according to the author, should be

---

<sup>1</sup> The ideas expressed by the author in this article do not necessarily reflect the institutional position of Conectas Human Rights (Conectas Direitos Humanos).

present in Brazilian foreign policy on humanitarian issues. Finally, the article concludes with an invitation to both human rights groups and humanitarian organizations to work in synergy to build fruitful partnerships that respects their different forms of action, but that strengthen the – constantly converging – results that they pursue.

## **Parallels between Brazilian foreign policy on human rights and humanitarian cooperation**

### *a) Preference for cooperation*

Some parallels can be drawn between the humanitarian cooperation model propagated by Brazil in recent years and its foreign policy on human rights. The Brazilian government's affirmation during the Lula and Dilma administrations that it practices cooperation, and not humanitarian assistance, is an indication of the similarities between the two. Cooperation is used as a basic element for what it defines as structuring humanitarian action, which has received great attention from the Brazilian government, as explained by former Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota:

The Brazilian government adds another principle to the already internationally known ones of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Brazil adds the principle of sustainability: those who offer aid must contribute in a structural manner to the overcoming of problems that lead to crises, whether they are dams that break, absolute poverty or even the lack of trees to retain rainwater, as in the case of Haiti. (Inter-Ministry Working Group of International Humanitarian Aid, 2011)

Systematic monitoring done by Conectas on Brazil's international actions on human rights reveal that preference is given to the

approach of dialogue and cooperation with regimes that violate human rights worldwide. A common practice among The common practice of “naming and shaming”<sup>2</sup> among consolidated powers such as the United States or European countries is heavily criticized by the Brazilian government. For Celso Amorim, one of the creators of Brazil’s foreign policy on human rights during the Lula and Dilma administrations, Brazil advocated for an approach that “favors cooperation and the power of example as more effective methods than mere condemnation” (Amorim, 2009). Prior to the Michel Temer government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs viewed condemning or embarrassing governments for violating rights as being arrogant, as all countries have problems. Furthermore, this method has not proven to be effective, since improvements in the living conditions of people have not been observed. Also, it further isolates the regime that is committing violations which, once cornered, can become even more radical.

Speaking at the opening of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations (UN) in 2009, former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva presented the Brazilian view that remained in effect in the past few years:

I am sure that stronger emphasis on cooperation will produce tangible results. A positive agenda is more effective for improving the living conditions of the affected population and preventing new and systemic human rights violations. [...] It is essential to reach out to national governments and draw them to collaborate with the international community in an open and receptive manner. Cornered governments tend to resort to isolation and radicalism. It is not in anybody’s interest to have an environment that fuels resentment

---

<sup>2</sup> This is a strategy used to enforce international human rights laws, which consists of making countries’ violations public and urging for reform.



and intransigence. This Council should seek dialogue rather than imposition. This is the path to advancing the cause of human rights. (Silva, 2009)

An example of how this vision was present is the speech of the Brazilian delegation in Geneva at the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the UNHCR in March 2015, which states that “technical cooperation in human rights can develop a culture of peace, tolerance and mutual respect.”<sup>3</sup>

It may be observed, therefore, that the logic of cooperation is prevalent in both the humanitarian agenda and in Brazil’s foreign policy on human rights. There is no denying that criticism of the ineffectiveness of the strategy of “naming and shaming” is well founded. After all, regimes such as North Korea are the target of incessant condemnations and, unfortunately, its population continues to suffer unacceptable abuses, such as submission to labour camps. It is also pertinent to see cooperation as a way to collaborate with other governments on human rights issues. However, what Conectas and other human rights groups question is the idea that cooperation excludes the possibility of Brazil publicly recognizing systematic human rights violations committed by a given country. Silence in the face of serious abuses or abstaining in a vote on UN resolutions on violations committed in a country can be interpreted as a “carte blanche” from Brazil.

Brazil’s diplomatic capacity and its weight on the international scene should allow the country to position itself firmly against human rights violations in the world, to play a leading role in the dialogue with regimes committing violations and to provide technical cooperation in social areas where Brazil is considered a reference.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Available from: <[https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/28thSession/OralStatements/14\\_Brazil\\_ID2\\_11.pdf](https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/28thSession/OralStatements/14_Brazil_ID2_11.pdf)>.

<sup>4</sup> This reflection is developed further in other articles available from:

b) *Dual model*

Another possible parallel between Brazil's foreign policy on human rights and how the country works on humanitarian issues is related to Brazil's interventions in the area of international cooperation. According to Doctors Without Borders (Witthall, Reis and Deus, 2016):

Brazil's experience of international aid and cooperation has primarily been as a recipient, not a provider, of aid. However, over time Brazil has evolved towards a dual model in which it both receives and provides aid in the form of humanitarian and development assistance, or cooperation (term used among different governmental and non-governmental actors).

I have stated before that Brazil also plays a dual role in the international treatment given to human rights:

It is possible to state that every country has a dual role in this field [of human rights]. On one hand, countries are the "object" of the international system dedicated to the theme. This occurs when a country receives criticism or recommendations from others or international organizations, such as, for example, in the case of the OAS Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which recently issued an interim measure to curb violations in the Pedrinhas penitentiary in the state of Maranhao, Brazil. The second role of states is as "global players" players", which

---

<<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/camila-asano/o-brasil-tem-habilidade-de-apontar-problemas-mas-est%C3%A1-disposto-promove>> and <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/acoes/sur/educacao/19/1000469-politica-externa-e-direitos-humanos-em-paises-emergentes-reflexoes-a-partir-do-trabalho-de-uma-organizacao-do-sul-global>>. Accessed on: 30 Aug. 2015.

adopt positions on different issues and ongoing international negotiations on the human rights agenda: for example, the humanitarian crisis in Syria. (Asano, 2015)

Brazil has been consolidating in recent years its role as a “provider” of international cooperation and as a “global player” in the negotiations on human rights that are not necessarily related to the situation in Brazil. It is essential that Brazilian society as a whole, including non-governmental organizations, be vigilant to ensure that the position adopted by the government is consistent with constitutional obligations. It is always worth remembering that article 4, paragraph II, of our Federal Constitution state that Brazil’s international relations should be conducted to ensure the prevalence of human rights.<sup>5</sup>

c) *Potential vector of change of the status quo*

Finally, a third possible parallel is the common expectation that Brazil will promote changes to the status quo.

One of the key messages of MSF’s article is that countries like Brazil can adopt alternative approaches to that of Northern donors, which have “co-opted institutional humanitarian aid to make it serve their political and military objectives” (Witthall, Reis and Deus, 2016). This expectation is based on the fact that, according to

---

<sup>5</sup> “Article 4. The international relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil are governed by the following principles: I – national independence; II – prevalence of human rights; III – self-determination of the peoples; IV – non-intervention; V – equality among the state; VI – defense of peace; VII – peaceful settlement of conflicts; VIII – repudiation of terrorism and racism; IX – cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind; X – granting of political asylum. Sole paragraph. The Federative Republic of Brazil shall seek the economic, political, social and cultural integration of the peoples of Latin America, viewing the formation of a Latin-American community of nations.”

MSF, “Brazil has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the large donors to the humanitarian system and to adapt its approach accordingly based on its own domestic experiences.”

Similarly, I have argued that “Brazil’s foreign policy often questioned the international *status quo* characterized by the unequal relationship between the North and the South” (Asano, 2013). This is because the guiding principles of its foreign operations, such as non-interventionism and peaceful resolution of conflicts, ensure that Brazil is able to distance itself from the way Western powers deal with such issues. The predominant interventionist and selective way that the most powerful nations in the world deal with human rights issues is often criticized by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During a speech in August 2015 on the occasion of the Diplomat’s Day celebrations, President Dilma Rousseff said that in Brazil’s foreign relations, “we have been staunch defenders of human rights, acting to prevent their promotion from being done selectively and unduly politicized, which invariably penalizes developing and emerging countries”.

Brazil can – and should – take advantage of this window of opportunity and establish itself as a differentiated global leader of both the human rights and the humanitarian agendas. The following section presents some suggestions on how the Brazilian government could, through its foreign policy, move in this direction.

### **Proposals for Brazilian foreign policy: how to reaffirm its leadership in the humanitarian field**

The following list, which is by no means exhaustive, raises some elements that should guide Brazil’s actions in the humanitarian field.

**1) Use Brazilian diplomacy’s ability to negotiate to guarantee access to humanitarian aid in situations where restric-**

**tions exist.** A good example of this is the war in Syria, which has shocked the world since 2011 with its widespread violence, nearly 250,000 deaths according to the UN,<sup>6</sup> denunciations on the use of chemical weapons, over 4 million refugees and 6 million internally displaced people according to the UNHCR, as well as many other devastating aspects. A point that cannot be overlooked is the difficulty that different agencies and humanitarian organizations have faced in getting aid to people living in Syria.

Guaranteeing victims unrestricted and secure access to humanitarian assistance should be a permanent objective of Brazil's foreign policy. Brazil must firmly defend this point in negotiations in multilateral forums that deal with conflict situations and humanitarian crises, in its bilateral relations and in groups of countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). An example worth remembering was the inclusion of a paragraph in the final declaration of the BRICS Summit in March 2013 in Durban, South Africa, which called for immediate, safe, complete and unrestricted access for humanitarian organizations in Syria.<sup>7</sup> Different civil society organizations in the world requested that the BRICS position themselves in Durban on this matter.<sup>8</sup> Guaranteeing victims unrestricted and secure

---

<sup>6</sup> Available from: <<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/portuguese/2015/07/conflito-sirio-fez-quase-250-mil-mortos-segundo-a-onu/#.VfA8mB-Gqqkq>>. Accessed on: 7 Sept. 2015.

<sup>7</sup> The BRICS Summit Declaration state that "In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, we call upon all parties to allow and facilitate immediate, safe, full and unimpeded access to humanitarian organisations to all in need of assistance. We urge all parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers."

<sup>8</sup> For more information on concerning the actions of civil society, see: *The Washington Post*. Available from: <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/acoef/midia/noticia/conectas-na-midia-washington-post>> and *Notas da Conectas Direitos Humanos* <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/acoef/politica-externa/noticia/cupula-dos-brics-termina-com-avanco-sobre-a-siria-e-incertezas-sobre->

access to humanitarian assistance should be a permanent objective of Brazil's foreign policy. Brazil must firmly defend this point in negotiations in multilateral forums that deal with conflict situations and humanitarian crises, in its bilateral relations and in groups of countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The insertion of this appeal in the declaration of the meeting of the presidents of the BRICS countries was important in light of the obstacles that the Security Council was facing when dealing with the Syrian crisis, including the strong opposition from Russia and China, members of the BRICS. In February 2014, the Security Council finally adopted Resolution No. 2139, which demanded unrestricted and safe access to humanitarian assistance in Syria.<sup>9</sup> In addition to negotiating actions in collective spaces, as in the case of the BRICS summit, Brazil should also make use of its valuable ability to dialogue with different governments to ensure that texts such as the Resolution No. 2139 are, in fact, implemented.

**2) Promote humanitarian contributions consistent with being one of the 10 largest economies in the world.** Even in the midst of a downturn in growth, Brazil's economy still ranks among the largest in the world. The amounts of Brazil's humanitarian donations are expected to correspond to its size. Brazilian society must remain vigilant on this, as there were moments in the past where Brazil's contributions were very small. Another example from the Syrian crisis was the announcement in January 2014 of the amount of Brazil's contribution to humanitarian assistance efforts to alleviate the suffering of the victims of the conflict.

---

novo-banco> and <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/acoes/politica-externa/noticia/hora-de-os-brics-fazerem-a-diferenca>>. Accessed on: 7 Sept. 2015.

<sup>9</sup> In October 2013, the Security Council released a statement requesting safe and unrestricted access to humanitarian aid in Syria. However a resolution had not yet been adopted.

During the Second International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria<sup>10</sup>, held in Kuwait on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Brazil announced it would make a contribution of US\$300,000 that year. At the same meeting, Mexico announced an investment 10 times greater than that of Brazil: US\$3 million. Here the commitments announced by the countries at the conference in Kuwait are used for comparison purposes, since it is extremely difficult to compare disbursements made by the countries due to the difficulties in obtaining these amounts, including challenges faced when comparing data provided by the UN and the figures released by the states. The Brazilian case is all the more challenging because the government does not have a public database containing the amounts spent on humanitarian cooperation. In contrast, Brazil's humanitarian contribution to the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in late 2014 amounted to R\$25 million<sup>11</sup>. This was a positive step in the sense that it showed that the country will not shy away from crises that require urgent support from the international community. It is expected that actions such as these will continue to be part of Brazil's foreign policy.

### **3) Continue welcoming refugees from humanitarian crises.**

The increase in the number of asylum applications in Brazil in recent years has made the headlines of major local newspapers. Brazil has a tradition of welcoming refugees, which has even brought international prestige to the country. According to BBC Brazil, more Syrians were given asylum in Brazil than in countries

---

<sup>10</sup> Information available from: <<http://www.unocha.org/syria-humanitarian-pledging-conference>>. Accessed on: 3 Sept 2015.

<sup>11</sup> This contribution was added to other donations that the Brazilian government had made for the Ebola epidemic, as explained in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement. Available from: <[www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6153:nota-a-imprensa-conjunta-dos-ministerios-das-relacoes-exteriores-e-da-saude-contribuicao-brasileira-ao-combate-internacional-ao-virus-do-cbola&catid=42&Itemid=280&lang=pt-BR](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6153:nota-a-imprensa-conjunta-dos-ministerios-das-relacoes-exteriores-e-da-saude-contribuicao-brasileira-ao-combate-internacional-ao-virus-do-cbola&catid=42&Itemid=280&lang=pt-BR)>.

such as the United States, Italy and Greece.<sup>12</sup> This important role is the result of the adoption of a resolution by the Ministry of Justice in September 2013 that created a ‘humanitarian visa’ for the Syrian population, which has allowed victims of the war to arrive in Brazil and request asylum here.

According to the National Committee for Refugees (Conare), there are currently more than 2,000 Syrian refugees living in Brazil. At a meeting held in 2014 in Switzerland on the war in Syria, the then Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eduardo dos Santos, while mentioning the visa policy, said, “My country believes that the principles of international solidarity and the division of responsibilities should guide us when it comes to Syrian asylum seekers in areas outside the immediate borders of Syria.”<sup>13</sup> At the time this article was written,

---

<sup>12</sup> “According to data from Conare (National Committee for Refugees), a body linked to the Ministry of Justice, 2,077 Syrians received asylum from the Brazilian government 2011 and August this year. This is the nationality with the highest number of official refugees in Brazil, ahead of nationals from Angola and Congo. The number is higher than in the US (1,243) and in countries in southern Europe that receive large numbers of illegal immigrants – not only Syrians, but also from the entire Middle East and Africa – who crossed the Mediterranean in search of asylum such as Greece (1,275), Spain (1,335), Italy (1,005) and Portugal (15). Data from Eurostat, the EU statistics agency, refer to the total number of Syrians who have received asylum, and not to those who applied for asylum”, BBC Brazil (*our translation*). Available from: <[http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/09/150904\\_brasil\\_refugiados\\_sirios\\_comparacao\\_internacional\\_lgb](http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/09/150904_brasil_refugiados_sirios_comparacao_internacional_lgb)>. Accessed on: 8 Sept. 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Speech by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Secretary General during the Geneva Conference on Syria on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. Available from: <[http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2375:conferencia-internacional-sobre-a-siria-genebra-ii-montreux-suica-22-de-janeiro-de-2014-intervencao-do-secretario-geral-das-relacoes-exteriores-embaxador-eduardo-dos-santos&catid=42&lang=pt-BR&Itemid=280](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2375:conferencia-internacional-sobre-a-siria-genebra-ii-montreux-suica-22-de-janeiro-de-2014-intervencao-do-secretario-geral-das-relacoes-exteriores-embaxador-eduardo-dos-santos&catid=42&lang=pt-BR&Itemid=280)>. Accessed on: 29 Aug. 2015.



the Ministry of Justice had not yet renewed the resolution to guarantee the continuation of this humanitarian policy.<sup>14</sup> It is worth remembering that the total number of refugees in Brazil – 8,400 from different nationalities<sup>15</sup> – is still small considering the size of the country's population and territory.

The Brazilian government must continue to open its doors in solidarity with victims of humanitarian crises in different parts of the world. A case in which the country could exercise its leadership as a consolidated power is raised by Eric Lewis and Laura Waisbich.<sup>16</sup> According to them, Brazil should “be part of the global pressure to resolve one of the most tragic and persistent humanitarian crises in our continent: the continued existence of the Guantanamo prison.” Undoubtedly, the closure of this abusive detention centre is the United States' responsibility, but, just as Uruguay did, Brazil could help speed up this process by receiving men who have never even been indicted or had a trial and were released by a committee composed of several US agencies, including the CIA. Currently, about 50 men are already in this situation, but many are nationals of countries in conflict and therefore cannot be sent there. As a result, they remain illegally imprisoned until a sympathetic country offers to receive them.

---

<sup>14</sup> Normative Resolution No. 17 of the Conare adopted on September 20th, 2013 for a duration of 2 years that can be extended. Available from: <<http://www.legisweb.com.br/legislacao/?id=258708>>. Accessed on: 24 Aug. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> This figure was cited in a document released by the Conare's press department in August 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Article published in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo*. Available from: <<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2015/06/1648736-por-que-o-brasil-deve-ajudar-a-fechar-guantanamo.shtml>>. Accessed on: 1 Sept. 2015.

**4) Promote a responsible arms trade policy that does not foster violations of human rights and humanitarian law.**

Brazil's role in the billion-dollar arms trade industry has grown and deserves attention. The country is already the fourth largest exporter of small weapons in the world, according to the Small Arms Survey. One urgent step is for Brazil to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The UN's adoption of the ATT in 2013 was a landmark in history, as it created the first global regulation on the purchase, sale and transfer of conventional arms between countries. One of the great achievements of the treaty is that it prohibits states from transferring weapons and ammunition to governments that might use them to commit crimes and atrocities against humanity, such as genocide. It also prohibits exporting them to countries that are under a multilateral arms embargo. The ATT also states that the exporting country must assess the risk of arms transfers fueling serious human rights violations and, if there is any reason for concern, they must not proceed with sending the shipment. The Brazilian government signed the ATT in June 2013, but the executive branch sent the text of the agreement to Congress for ratification only in November 2014.<sup>17</sup> It is expected that the Brazilian Congress will urgently ratify the treaty, which has more 70 members, including major arms producers such as Germany, the UK and France.

**5) Act in a responsible way to protect human rights in multilateral forums dedicated to the topic.** Bodies such as UNHRC should be part of the system for preventing atrocities and humanitarian emergencies. After all, many of today's humanitarian

---

<sup>17</sup> The progress of the ratification process in the Brazilian Congress can be followed by accessing: <[http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww2.camara.leg.br%2FproposicoesWeb%2Ffichadetramitacao%3FidProposicao%3D738321&sa=D&sntz=1&usq=AFQjCNHp29jH56VzO-SYePVSR\\_gzsMOlbQQ](http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww2.camara.leg.br%2FproposicoesWeb%2Ffichadetramitacao%3FidProposicao%3D738321&sa=D&sntz=1&usq=AFQjCNHp29jH56VzO-SYePVSR_gzsMOlbQQ)>. Accessed on: 8 Sept. 2015.

crises occur in places where there have been, for years, serious denunciations and systematic violations of human rights, whether they are civil, political, social, economic and/or cultural. UNHRC's various resolutions and supervision mechanisms must be used to protect the victims of violations, and this depends on the responsible actions of the Council's member states. Brazil is a candidate for the Council and shares this responsibility. Although it has led major initiatives in the HRC such as the adoption of a resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity and has also pushed for the creation of a special rapporteur on the right to privacy, Brazil defends positions that are inconsistent with its constitutional obligation to prioritize human rights in the country's international actions. Brazil's recent abstention in the vote on the resolution on human rights in Iran in March 2015 is on the list of its ambiguous positions. The Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi expressed her disappointment saying that "only measurable progress in the human rights situation in Iran would have justified the change of voting from Brazil, and this is something that Tehran so far has not shown that it is willing to do."<sup>18</sup> The announcement that the country will not submit its candidacy for re-election as HRC member in 2015 was also not well received by human rights organizations in Brazil, and they demanded that President Dilma Rousseff reconsider that decision.<sup>19</sup>

**6) Democratize Brazilian foreign policy.** Bringing Brazil's foreign policy closer in line with the principles that govern other public policies such as transparency, accountability and social

---

<sup>18</sup> Public opinion article published in the *Folha de S.Paulo*. Available from: <<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaio/2015/04/1621009-shirin-ebadi-dilma-rousseff-e-o-recuo-no-ira.shtml>>. Accessed on: 8 Sept. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Letter sent by the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights and Foreign Policy, available in Portuguese from: <<http://dhpoliticaexterna.org.br/?m=2015&cat=0>>. Accessed on: 3 Sept. 2015.

participation is a key step in the consolidation of the Brazilian democracy. The amount of information available on Brazil's international actions in human rights and humanitarian cooperation is far from ideal, and this is a point on which the government should make more effort. In 2012, Brazil's democracy got a major boost with the adoption of the Access to Public Information Act (LAI, Law No. 12.527), which establishes the obligation of public entities to promote active transparency – by proactively providing information – and passive transparency – which determines what information should be provided to citizens according to their requests. The culture of opacity that ruled Brazilian diplomacy for years has been an obstacle to the implementation of the LAI by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in different ways. Conectas Human Rights has made use of the LAI and, in different cases, has gone through the painstaking effort of presenting one appeal after another to get information on Brazil's international actions on human rights issues, but it has not always got all of the information requested. A case that illustrates this situation well is given below and may be of interest to researchers and activists who are concerned about how Brazilian public funds are used in international cooperation projects with other countries:

**Case Study: Conectas Human Rights' request for information on the IBSA fund<sup>20</sup> via the LAI**

In May 2013, Conectas requested access to information on the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Fund for the Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty. Created in 2004, the fund is the result of the partnership of three countries within the IBSA

---

<sup>20</sup> On the following webpage, there are links to the petitions sent by Conectas and the responses received from the Brazilian Ministry of

Forum. Although there is a list of projects that have been finalized or are in progress on the site of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Conectas filed a request for specific information on financial analysis processes and the tools for evaluating of the impact of the fund.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the government responded to Conectas. It said part of the request for access to information was “disproportionate or unreasonable” and forwarded the report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of 2011 on the fund – a document that was already available to the public and does not contain the information requested. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) also sent the organization foreign newspaper articles published in countries benefiting from the fund (such as the article published in the newspaper *No Pintcha*, from Guinea Bissau, in 2011). These materials describe some of the projects implemented with the help of IBSA.

Since the information received did not correspond to those requested, Conectas filed an appeal with the MRE. The document questioned the alleged unreasonableness of the initial petition that requested basic management information on only 16 projects. On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Ministry dismissed the appeal on the grounds that the information requested was information from the IBSA Fund’s board of directors and the ECSS and therefore was in the possession of another body. It also claimed that, as fund is tripartite, the information cannot be disclosed because Brazil has the legal obligation not to expose sensitive data of other countries or international organizations.

Conectas appealed again on June 20<sup>th</sup>, reminding the MRE that fund’s board is composed of the permanent representatives of

---

Foreign Affairs, the Comptroller General’s Office and the Mixed Committee for Reassessing Information.: <<http://conectas.org/pt/acoef/justica/leide-acesso-a-informacao/42-pedido-lai-sobre-fundo-ibas>>. Accessed on: 30 Aug. 2015.

the three countries (India, Brazil and South Africa) in New York. This includes a Brazilian representative (the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN in New York) that is part of the MRE. It contested the alleged ‘confidentiality’ of the information due to its nature: reports on the allocation of public funds. It also stated that if it was confidential, the Ministry should provide the justification for and the proof that this information had been previously treated as classified. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, Conectas received a letter signed by the third instance within the MRE, in this case the foreign minister, reaffirming that information would not be granted without the prior consent of the other countries and that, even if the governments of all three IBSA members gave their consent, the documents were in the possession of UNDP. As such, the Ministry would be exempted from giving additional information and tabling data concerning information that is not in its custody.

Not satisfied, Conectas then sent an appeal to the Comptroller General’s Office (CGU) in July 2013, arguing that sending information that was not requested is the same as denying information. It further stated that the arguments provided by the MRE showed its clear intention of denying information. The response of the CGU came only in December 2013. The decision of the CGU’s general ombudsman was to confirm the government’s arguments, even though it was accompanied by a 15-page technical report (prepared by a CGU technician), which was totally in favour of releasing the requested information.

As a final administrative recourse, Conectas appealed to the Joint Commission (CMRI) on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. It argued that: 1) the Brazilian government has this information, since together with UNDP, it is on the fund’s board of directors. If for some reason this is not the case, it is the duty of the MRE – and not a Brazilian citizen – to request this information from UNDP; and 2) the MRE has repeatedly refused to provide information while evoking secrecy for which there are no legal grounds. Validating this interpretation would create an undesirable precedent in the current context of the expansion of

South-South cooperation for development in the framework of the country's international relations. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014, Conectas received the final decision of the Commission, which chose to uphold the dismissal, based on the arguments of the ombudsman of the CGU.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, one year after the LAI came into effect in the country, Conectas filed a claim at the Superior Court of Justice (STJ) to contest the decision to deny access to information. The constitutional mechanism included a request for a preliminary injunction, which was denied by the minister presiding over the case. The STJ's ruling on the case is pending.

**Source:** Conectas.

## Final considerations

While reflecting on its future steps, Doctors Without Borders, one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world, states in its article that it is necessary “to create links and alliances with a broader range of civil society organizations in the Global South, which will shape the future of humanitarian action.”

The brief reflections in this article on the parallels between Brazilian foreign policy on human rights and humanitarian cooperation promoted by the country show that there is a fertile field for sharing experiences among civil society organizations working on monitoring both areas. Moreover, human rights organizations could work even more collaboratively with humanitarian organizations, especially to push Brazilian foreign policy so that it always aims to protect and promote fundamental human rights.

## Bibliography

AMORIM, C. O Brasil e os direitos humanos: em busca de uma agenda positiva. *Revista Política Externa*, v. 18, n. 2, Sept./Oct./Nov. 2009. Available from: <<http://politicaexterna.com.br/revistas/vol-18-no-2/>>.

ASANO, C. L. Não é (só) a economia, chanceler. *Carta Capital*, 15 de Jan. 2015. Available from: <<http://www.cartacapital.com.br/blogs/blog-do-grri/nao-e-so-a-economia-chanceler-5164.html>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. O Brasil tem a habilidade de apontar problemas, mas está disposto a promover mudanças?. *Open Global Rights*, 2013. Available from: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/camila-asano/o-brasil-tem-habilidade-de-apontar-problemas-mas-est%C3%A1-disposto-promove>>.

BRAZIL. Ministério das Relações Exteriores. Coordenação Geral de Ações Internacionais de Combate à Fome (CGFome). *Brasil cooperação humanitária internacional: balanço 2006-2010*. Relatório. Brasília, 2011. Available from: <<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B07OJy2AgCEw-ZmZxMkZVREtkX0U/edit>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. Ministério das Relações Exteriores. Ministério da Saúde. *Nota à imprensa conjunta dos Ministérios das Relações Exteriores e da Saúde: contribuição brasileira ao combate internacional ao vírus do Ebola*. Brasília, 3 Dec. 2014. Available from: <[http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6153:nota-a-imprensa-conjunta-dos-ministerios-das-relacoes-exteriores-e-da-saude-contribuicao-brasileira-ao-combate-internacional-ao-virus-do-ebola&catid=42&Itemid=280&lang=pt-BR](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6153:nota-a-imprensa-conjunta-dos-ministerios-das-relacoes-exteriores-e-da-saude-contribuicao-brasileira-ao-combate-internacional-ao-virus-do-ebola&catid=42&Itemid=280&lang=pt-BR)>.

COSTA, C.; BARRUCHO, L. G. Brasil acolhe mais sírios que países na rota europeia de refugiados. *BBC Brasil*, São Paulo/Londres, 9 Sept. 2015. Available from: <[http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/09/150904\\_brasil\\_refugiados\\_sirios\\_comparacao\\_internacional\\_lgb](http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/09/150904_brasil_refugiados_sirios_comparacao_internacional_lgb)>.



EBADI, S. Dilma Rousseff e o recuo no Irã. *Folha de S.Paulo*, São Paulo, 26 Apr. 2015. Available from: <<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/opiniao/2015/04/1621009-shirin-ebadi-dilma-rousseff-e-o-recuo-no-ira.shtml>>.

GTI-AHI. *Cooperação humanitária internacional*. Brasília: Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2011.

LEWIS, E.; WAISBICH, L. T. Por que o Brasil deve ajudar a fechar Guantánamo. *Folha de S.Paulo*, São Paulo, 28 Jun. 2015. Available from: <<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2015/06/1648736-por-que-o-brasil-deve-ajudar-a-fechar-guantanamo.shtml>>.

NADER, L.; WAISBICH, L. T. The long march towards the democratization of Brazilian foreign policy. In: LINDERT, T. van; TROOST, L. van (Ed.). *Shifting power and human rights diplomacy*. Netherlands: Amnesty International, Nov. 2014. Available from: <[https://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/rising\\_power\\_brazil.pdf](https://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/rising_power_brazil.pdf)>.

ROUSSEFF, D. *Discurso da presidenta da República, Dilma Rousseff, por ocasião da cerimônia de formatura da turma Paulo Kol (2013-2015) do Instituto Rio Branco*. Brasília, 12 Aug. 2015. Available from: <[http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=10758:discurso-da-presidenta-da-republica-dilma-rousseff-por-ocasio-da-cerimonia-de-formatura-da-turma-paulo-kol-2013-2015-do-instituto-rio-branco-brasilia-12-de-agosto-de-2015&catid=197&Itemid=448&lang=pt-BR](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10758:discurso-da-presidenta-da-republica-dilma-rousseff-por-ocasio-da-cerimonia-de-formatura-da-turma-paulo-kol-2013-2015-do-instituto-rio-branco-brasilia-12-de-agosto-de-2015&catid=197&Itemid=448&lang=pt-BR)>.

SANTOS, E. dos. *Intervenção do secretário-geral das Relações Exteriores, embaixador Eduardo dos Santos, na Conferência Internacional sobre a Síria*. Montreux, 22 Jan. 2014. Speech given at the International Conference on Syria (Geneva II) in Montreux, Switzerland.. Available from: <[http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2375:conferencia-internacional-sobre-a-siria-genebra-ii-montreux-suica-22-de-janeiro-de-2014-intervencao-do-secretar](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2375:conferencia-internacional-sobre-a-siria-genebra-ii-montreux-suica-22-de-janeiro-de-2014-intervencao-do-secretar)>.

io-geral-das-relacoes-exteriores-embaixador-eduardo-dos-santos&catid=42&lang=pt-BR&Itemid=280>.

SILVA, L. I. L. da. *Discurso do presidente da República, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, durante sessão do Conselho de Direitos Humanos*. Geneva, 15 Jun. 2009. Available from: <<http://www.biblioteca.presidencia.gov.br/ex-presidentes/luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva/discursos/2o-mandato/2009/1o-semester/15-06-2009-discurso-do-presidente-da-republica-luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-durante-sessao-do-conselho-de-direitos-humanos/view>>.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. *Annual report*. Geneva: [no numb.], Mar. 2015. Speech by the Brazilian delegation during the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. Available from: <[https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/28thSession/OralStatements/14\\_Brazil\\_ID2\\_11.pdf](https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/28thSession/OralStatements/14_Brazil_ID2_11.pdf)>.

VIEIRA, M. L. I. *Discurso do ministro das Relações Exteriores, embaixador Mauro Vieira, por ocasião da cerimônia de transmissão do cargo de ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores*. Brasília: Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2 Jan. 2015. Speech given at the swearing-in ceremony as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Available from: <[http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6398:discurso-de-sua-excelencia-o-senhor-embaixador-mauro-luiz-iecker-vieira-por-ocasio-da-cerimonia-de-transmissao-do-cargo-de-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores&catid=194:discursos&Itemid=454&lang=pt-BR](http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6398:discurso-de-sua-excelencia-o-senhor-embaixador-mauro-luiz-iecker-vieira-por-ocasio-da-cerimonia-de-transmissao-do-cargo-de-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores&catid=194:discursos&Itemid=454&lang=pt-BR)>.

WHITTALL, J.; REIS, R.; DEUS, S. de. O que não fazer: como a manipulação da ajuda humanitária prejudica a eficácia da resposta a emergências. In: Médicos Sem Fronteiras (Ed.). *Crises humanitárias, cooperação e o papel do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Médicos Sem Fronteiras, 2016, p. 11-35.



## **The challenges and paradoxes of protecting humanitarian facilities and workers**

Simone Rocha

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 marked the history of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and international humanitarian aid forever. On that night, MSF's trauma hospital in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan was destroyed by more than an hour of airstrikes by the US army. During the attack, 42 civilians – including doctors, nurses, patients and their caregivers – perished on site. Some of the victims in the intensive care unit were burned to death in their beds, while others did not make it through the bombing despite doctors' attempts to save them. Civilians were shot to death as they attempted to leave the hospital building, which was clearly identified as such by signs on its roof. Furthermore, its GPS coordinates had been provided to US and Afghan forces a few days prior to the attack. The MSF hospital in Kunduz was the only medical facility offering trauma care in northern Afghanistan and it provided services to nearly one million Afghans.

The international visibility of this case and MSF's public calls for the establishment of an independent investigation were not enough, however, to stop attacks on the organization's medical facilities and those of other humanitarian agencies in other parts of the world. A few weeks after the attack on the Kunduz facility, MSF's hospital in Haydan, Yemen was bombed by the Saudi-led coalition, leaving 200,000 people without access to health care. By the end of 2015, MSF had registered 106 airstrikes on 75 hospitals and health facilities that the organization ran or supported in Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, Afghanistan and Sudan. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, between 2013

and 2015, humanitarian facilities and personnel were the target of 2,400 attacks in eleven countries.<sup>1</sup> Each time a health facility is closed during a conflict, dozens or hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children, are deprived of vital aid that ranges from support for childbirth to surgeries on war wounds and the prevention and treatment of endemic diseases.

The epidemic of attacks on the medical mission led the Security Council to unanimously approve Resolution No. 2286 in May 2016, which condemned assaults on health facilities, personnel and their means of transport in situations of armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> The text also demanded compliance with obligations under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and an end to the impunity of those responsible for these violations of international humanitarian law. This valid regulatory effort by the United Nations does not respond, however, to one fundamental question: how can one expect the international community to consider such demands when four of the five permanent members on the Council are involved in the coalitions responsible for the attacks? Be it the Syrian coalition supported by the Russians, the one under NATO command in Afghanistan or the one led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, the violations of international humanitarian law mentioned in the resolution have occurred under the direction or with the complicity of its main authors.

There was a time, not long ago, when humanitarian agencies would identify significant security risks related to armed groups whose lack of structure or rules for involvement had led to

---

<sup>1</sup> Briefing by Peter Mauer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross during the Security council session on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 in which Resolution No. 2286 was discussed and adopted. Available from: <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12347.doc.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. Available from: <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12347.doc.htm>>.

the ambushing, kidnapping and even deliberate assassination of their workers. Suffice it to recall the fear the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone and its tactic of mutilating civilians inspired, or the Lord Resistance Army from Uganda, Chechen separatist groups, clan leaders and Al-Shabaab from Somalia and the Taliban. The list is long, as were the negotiations held over several decades to obtain access to civilians under the rule of these and many other groups in situations of armed conflict. But, in the end, most of the time, MSF was capable of working alongside populations controlled by the armies of rebel or insurgent groups with reasonable guarantees for the safety of their teams and patients. Up until recently, hospitals and health centres were still treated with a certain amount of respect and they could be considered safe even in the midst of a war.

How, then, did we end up in a situation where currently, strong, ‘enlightened’ states rooted in democratic regimes allow themselves to override widely recognized and endorsed regulatory norms – such as the protection of civilians, ex-combatants and humanitarian personnel – and turn these people into casualties of armed conflicts? What leads the largest, best-equipped armies on the planet to treat civilians, humanitarian workers and health facilities in the same abusive and potentially criminal way they treat the groups they claim to fight? Where and when was it decided that the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols were no longer in effect and that war crimes such as bombing health facilities and assassinating medical personnel could be henceforth classified as tactical errors or collateral damage? The attacks on MSF hospitals in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria are the high point of the trend in recent decades whereby countries and leaderships that are fully aware of the letter of international humanitarian law and the consequences its disregard has on civilian and vulnerable populations disrespect and co-opt international humanitarian aid to subject it to political and military interests.

In the 1990s, international humanitarian aid took up both an unprecedented and disproportionate amount of space on the multilateral agenda of the states. Over the decade, the UN Security Council considered numerous humanitarian crises caused by conflicts or political repression as threats to peace and international security. This justified, then, the unilateral or multilateral use of force and ‘all necessary means’ against a member state. Therefore, several so-called humanitarian interventions backed by Chapter VII of the Charter were carried out in the name of creating humanitarian corridors, guaranteeing the distribution of aid or stopping serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.

Between the US-led intervention in Somalia in 1992 and NATO’s ‘humanitarian war’ against Serb forces in Kosovo in 1999, many were the times when humanitarian efforts filled the void left by the inaction or the international political incapacity to negotiate and agree on lasting solutions for certain conflicts. From serving as an alibi for the shameful international paralysis on the genocide in Rwanda to the integration of military rhetoric during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, international humanitarian aid began to be used as a business card and a statement of good intentions by certain states, especially those with a tradition of interventionism. The trend of co-opting humanitarian aid to advance political and military agendas – which was clearly consolidated in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 period – contributed significantly to aggravating what we are experiencing today as the biggest paradox of international humanitarian aid provided in the midst of a war: that of being disrespected the most precisely where it is needed the most.

Since the beginning of the occupation of Afghanistan by the US army and its coalition in late 2001, international humanitarian aid has been treated as just another tool for winning *hearts and minds*, an instrument to protect troops and a bargaining chip to

obtain intelligence information. To demonstrate the good intentions of the invaders, B-52 planes dropped bombs and packages with daily rations of food. Then, as part of the “Psychological Operations”, pamphlets were dropped over long stretches of the country’s territory informing people that the continuity of assistance depended on the transmission of intelligence information. This was clearly a distortion by US troops of the objectives and mission of organizations, such as MSF, that were trying to bring neutral humanitarian aid to the Afghan people.<sup>3</sup> On the ground, the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) doctrine adopted by the US and NATO did not reflect the specificities of humanitarian aid and its fundamental principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. On the contrary, “quick impact projects” or other types of assistance provided by civilian and military personnel of the armed forces preceded, complemented or disguised missions that were actually aimed at obtaining intelligence information. In addition to being biased, this aid was not based on professional assessments and, consequently, did not offer adequate responses to the population’s needs.

Non-governmental organizations, which have always been the main implementers of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, were seen by the US government as “force multipliers” of its war against terror effort.<sup>4</sup> As a result, international organizations operating in the country were pressured to be part of the coalition that aimed to control what they did, where and for whom. It came as no surprise, then, when two years later, during the planning of the US invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon unilaterally decided that all aid to the people of Iraq and all funding from the US government

---

<sup>3</sup> Available from: <<http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2004/may/may72004.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, Colin L. *Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Non-governmental Organizations*. Oct. 2001. Available from: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/sept11/powell\\_brief31.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/sept11/powell_brief31.asp)>.



for this purpose had to pass through its sieve. Once the invasion began, the funding of US organizations that were compelled to submit to such abuse was delayed and their activities were compromised. As for permission to enter and circulate in Iraqi territory, reality showed that even though the situation rapidly spun out of control and turmoil set in the country, it did not stop humanitarian workers from entering the country freely. It also did not restrict secular historical heritage from leaving, nor the contraband of other civilian and military artefacts.

States can get involved in the provision of aid and even use their military means and logistics as a way of supporting civilian activities. The problem is not the provision of aid *per se*, but rather that this is done in a selective, ad hoc, biased and unsustainable way based on interests rather than the population's needs. This way of operating is in blatant contradiction with the guiding principles of international humanitarian aid and the technical and professional standards that experienced humanitarian aid agencies have been developing and using for over a century. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the humanitarian community witnessed unprecedented levels of disregard for its principles and *modus operandi*. This irresponsible behaviour led to a deterioration in the perception of humanitarian workers and their intentions among the local population and security conditions, as well as an increase in the number of attacks on these workers in the following years in these and other countries, such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, that were added to the list of places where the war against terror is being waged.<sup>5</sup>

Humanitarian workers such as those working with MSF are fully aware of the danger inherent in certain situations in which they are involved. The risk of remaining in insecure zones such as

---

<sup>5</sup> For data on security incidents involving humanitarian workers, see: <<https://aidworkersecurity.org/>>.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen is constantly weighed against the population's needs. What makes their presence and operations in high risk situations possible is the daily and untiring management of security issues by the teams, dialogue with the parties in conflict and transparency about their actions, the location of their activities and their movements in the conflict zone. Moreover, the fact that the humanitarian work is based on the operational principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality allows the parties in conflict to offer guarantees for their security. It appears, however, that none of this was useful or enough to prevent the bombing of the MSF hospital in Kunduz by the US air force in October or the destruction of health facilities in other conflicts by other United Nations member states in the months that followed. By crossing the health facilities' protection barrier, these countries are contributing significantly to the erosion of what is still a neutral space for guaranteeing civilians the right to life and to medical care during an armed conflict. As long as impunity for these war crimes prevails, Security Council resolutions on this matter will be little more than a dead letter and symbolic, while humanitarian workers and civilians continue to suffer from the loss of their space for actions and survival.



## **Brazil in the field of humanitarian aid: mapping out its role in the Syrian conflict**

Adriana Erthal Abdenur<sup>1</sup> • Monique Sochaczewski<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This article maps out Brazil's role in the field of humanitarian aid since the turn of the century and its importance in one concrete case: the conflict in Syria. We identify three main areas of action: participation in regulatory debates and an attempt to mediate through the IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil and South Africa); the donation of funds, food and emergency supplies; and the granting of humanitarian visas to individuals affected by the crisis in Syria who seek asylum in Brazil. Development cooperation with other countries in the region, especially the ones receiving large refugee flows, contributes to "peace-building" in the area around Syria. However, Brazil's role in the humanitarian field is highly susceptible to economic fluctuations and political changes and the involvement of Brazilian civil society in humanitarian issues and initiatives is still at an early stage. This contributes to the relatively low level of institutionalization of Brazilian humanitarian aid.

**Keywords:** Brazil, Syria, humanitarian aid, cooperation, conflict, war.

---

<sup>1</sup>The author thanks the Programa de Bolsa em Produtividade em Pesquisa do CNPq (CNPq Research Productivity Scholarship Programme) for its support for the project. E-mail: [adriana@igarape.org.br](mailto:adriana@igarape.org.br)

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: [moniquesgoldfeld@gmail.com](mailto:moniquesgoldfeld@gmail.com).

## 1. Introduction<sup>3</sup>

Important transformations in the nature and geography of armed conflicts, as well as structural changes in the field of humanitarian aid have been prompting new inquiries into the role of “emerging powers” in this area. These countries defend that state sovereignty must be respected and they oppose the military interventionism promoted by the superpowers in the post-Cold War era, often in the name of humanitarianism. At the same time, they are attempting to expand their role in the humanitarian field. What is the importance of these countries in the humanitarian crises in the world today in regulatory and operational terms? Based on the analysis of the official documents of the Brazilian government and the United Nations (UN), media materials and interviews conducted in Brazil and Lebanon in July and August 2016<sup>4</sup>, we map out Brazil’s role in humanitarian aid and its importance in the case of the conflict in Syria. To do so, we examine both the official positions Brazil has been assuming in relation to the civil war and its concrete contributions in Syria and the surrounding area.

The study identifies Brazil’s three main areas of action in relation to the Syrian conflict: participation in regulatory debates, especially at the UN, and attempts to mediate the conflict via the IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil and South Africa); donations of financial resources and emergency supplies; and humanitarian visas granted to individuals affected by the crisis

---

<sup>3</sup> The authors thank João Antônio Lima for his comments and suggestions.

<sup>4</sup> In Lebanon, semi-structured interviews were carried out at the Brazilian embassy in Beirut and the Brazilian consulate in Syria, which was operating from Beirut. Representatives of organizations that seek to facilitate humanitarian access in Syria while working from Lebanon were interviewed, as were representatives of UNIFIL at its headquarters in Naqoura in the south of Lebanon. In Brazil, interviews were held with Syrian refugees and diplomats in Brasília.

in Syria. Furthermore, Brazil cooperates with other countries in the region, including the ones who have been receiving substantial flows of Syrian refugees, thereby contributing to the region's stability in certain ways.

There are, however, certain limitations on Brazil's role, which is subject to fluctuations brought on by changes in the economic and political context at home. Furthermore, the involvement of Brazilian civil society in humanitarian initiatives is still at an early stage. This, combined with the low level of institutionalization of Brazil's official humanitarian aid, restricts the scope of its efforts, including in the case of Syria.

The article begins with a discussion on the role of emerging powers in humanitarian aid, in which the main characteristics of Brazil's institutional arrangement for and discourse on humanitarian aid will be highlighted. This is followed by an analysis of the importance of this involvement in the case of Syria, not only in terms of the Brazilian government's official position on the war, but also the concrete initiatives it has implemented since the conflict erupted in 2012. The conclusion focuses on some of the repercussions of the case of Brazil for research on emerging powers in the field of humanitarian aid and identifies three elements to be explored in research in the future.

## **2. Emerging powers and humanitarian aid**

### **2.1 Emerging powers as players in the humanitarian field**

Humanitarian aid encompasses a diverse range of stakeholders, notably donor governments, non-governmental organizations (including some private ones) and UN agencies<sup>5</sup>. The large

---

<sup>5</sup> See the map of the main stakeholders in the field of humanitarian aid:

majority of traditional humanitarian NGOs, such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), originated in Western countries. While many were founded on Judeo Christian traditions, they present themselves today as secular and universalist organizations (Forsythe, 2005). Many are organized as networks with headquarters in high-income countries, but also have offices or affiliates in other regions. Moreover, there is an increasing number of state and non-state actors from other parts of the world offering humanitarian aid and their principles and practices do not always converge (Weiss, 2013). Indeed, the history of the humanitarian field is marked by visions that differ significantly, even among actors of the “Global North” (Foley, 2010). For example, the creation of MSF was partly due to divergences on the position of silence adopted by the employees of the French Red Cross who were working under the auspices of the ICRC during the Biafra War (1967-1970) (Brauman, 2012; Fox, 2014). These historical divergences, however, do not prevent the organizations from collaborating with one another in different contexts.

The increase in the complexity of the ecology of humanitarian stakeholders and the proliferation of humanitarian norms and principles that it brings coincide with the appearance of major controversies on the concept of humanitarianism in situations of armed conflict. More specifically, humanitarian discourse is being manipulated to justify certain coercive interventions (without the parties consent) that are being carried out in a highly selective way and are mostly motivated by the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of the world superpowers. Since the 2000s, the debate at the UN has revolved around the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) principle, which serves as the main regulatory framework for interventions in countries that the international community considers unstable (Walling, 2013). In the case of

Libya, both Russia and China, which are permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), and other countries occupying non-permanent seats abstained from the vote on the resolution on the intervention. Later on, they criticized the approach, which did not produce stability as expected. Some countries tried to soften R2P. For example, in 2011, Brazil proposed the “Responsibility while Protecting” (RwP) concept, but it ended up losing momentum in the debates on peace operations (Tourinho; Stuenkel; Brockheimer, 2016, p. 134-150).

These controversies and the politicization of humanitarian discourse led some organizations to attempt to revive the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality to distance themselves from actions that could be interpreted as the foreign imposition of a regime change. The emerging powers (defined here as countries that possess considerable regional influence and aspire to become global powers, but still have relatively few resources to do so) are important here, since – individually or through coalitions such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) – their leaders have been questioning norms on the use of force, even when the justification has been formulated in terms of a humanitarian crisis.

At the same time as they criticize certain norms perceived as being imposed by the “North”, some emerging powers are trying to intensify their humanitarian aid efforts, but in very different ways. Since 2011, for example, Turkey has increased its presence in Somalia by building hospitals in conflict zones and is keeping teams in the field despite the high level of instability (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Turkey also intensified its humanitarian aid to refugees and along the border with Syria, generally in collaboration with local NGOs (Binder, 2014). India offered aid for natural disasters, including in Pakistan (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2012), and technical cooperation to African countries on the incorporation of refugees (Price,



2005). Under President Xi Jinping, China appears more willing to accept international norms and to participate in multilateral humanitarian efforts. As of 2016, China had donated close to US\$106 million to Syria and neighbouring countries for their efforts to deal with the crisis (Xinhuanet, 2016). These examples show that the emerging countries have been expanding and diversifying their humanitarian efforts both by going through or working independently from traditional mechanisms such as the UN.

The expansion of South-South development cooperation, the number of soldiers and police officers assigned to the peace operations of the UN and the African Union and these humanitarian initiatives have raised the expectations of Western actors and international organizations vis-à-vis the emerging powers. On numerous occasions, these countries have been called on to increase their humanitarian involvement (financial, institutional and/or political) even further, either autonomously or in collaboration with traditional actors<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.2. Brazil as a player in the humanitarian field

In the 2000s, primarily during the Workers' Party (PT) administrations, Brazil began to play a more active role in the field of humanitarian aid. In 2004, the *Coordenação-Geral de Cooperação Humanitária e Combate à Fome* (CGFome, or General Coordination of International Action Against Hunger) was created as a division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE, for its acronym in Portuguese). It was responsible for the coordination of the humanitarian aid Brazil provided to other countries (a total

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Ozerdem (2014). “*In a conflict-riven world it’s increasingly important to find out ways in which the strengths of the rising powers can be harnessed to work either independently or with the more traditional powers*”.

of 95 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia [MRE, 2015a]). Since its inception, the department bore the fight against hunger – one of the main priorities of the PT government – in its name, thus promoting it on the international scene. With the creation of CGFome, Brazil adopted an official discourse that highlighted the principles of solidarity, humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence to promote humanitarian aid, in accordance with Resolutions No. 46/182 and 58/114 of the United Nations General Assembly and article 4 of the Federal Constitution. The latter cites human rights and cooperation in the list of principles that are to guide Brazilian foreign policy.

Far from limiting itself to the country's regional surroundings, Brazil also provides humanitarian aid to other parts of the world, such as the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up two channels for the provision of this aid. The first, which is more emergency-related, includes donations of food and other supplies to meet basic needs, as well as financial contributions that come from the ministry's budget (since 2007). It transfers resources via the UN's humanitarian aid structure, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The majority of financial contributions and donations go to providing housing, food and basic services to individuals, families and communities affected by crises such as armed conflicts or natural disasters. One example is the partnership between CGFome and the WFP on the "PAA África – Purchase from Africans for Africa" project, which promotes purchasing food for school meals locally in countries on the African continent.

In contrast, part of Brazil's involvement with WFP was described by MRE as being part of its "structuring humanitarian co-

operation” efforts, which were geared towards long-term socio-economic development. The concept was to be applied to “post-emergency” initiatives presented as proposals “that aimed to make the countries and their populations capable of overcoming their vulnerabilities in the long run” (MRE, 2015b). However, this differentiation remained essentially at the conceptual level; in 2016, when CGFome was eliminated, there were no structuring initiatives under implementation.

In theory, some of these projects were to be jointly conceived by and executed with the participation of civil society, government and UN bodies. However, in 2016, in the midst of political turmoil in Brazil, the CGFome-WFP initiative was suspended. This lack of continuity (Portal Brasil, 2012) demonstrates that in addition to the unpredictability of resources for the field (contributions have varied considerably, reaching BRL 284 million in 2012 [Matuski, 2013]), Brazilian humanitarian aid faces a series of institutional and political challenges. Not only is there a lack of experienced Brazilian professionals specialized in the field, but also of a legal framework that establishes a budget specifically for humanitarian work, which would ensure greater continuity, even in times of economic crisis at the domestic level.

In addition to these contributions, Brazil gained importance in the humanitarian field by participating more actively in regional and global meetings on both the prevention of and response to socio-natural disasters and discussions on armed conflicts. Through dialogue with organizations such as the Union of South American Nations (Unasur), Southern Common Market (Mercosul; for example: Mercosul, 2016) and various UN agencies, Brazil has been participating in some of the main discussions on how humanitarian aid should be funded, organized and implemented.

There are other initiatives of the Brazilian government that are not formally classified as humanitarian aid, but that are rele-

vant here. For instance, through its participation in UN peace missions, Brazil sometimes contributes to humanitarian efforts. After the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) troops – under Brazil’s command – participated in rescue and humanitarian aid operations and the rebuilding of the country. In some cases, this was done in collaboration with the Rio de Janeiro-based organization Viva Rio, which was already present in Port-au-Prince (Ministério da Defesa, 2015b). Similarly, in 2016, the Brazilian navy corvette that was part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) helped rescue 220 refugees who were attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea on an unsafe vessel (Ministério da Defesa, 2015a). What is more, as we will analyze shortly, Brazil takes in refugees from countries in humanitarian crises.

Three observations are worth making here. The first is that with the emergency aid/structuring cooperation binomial, it is not clear what the differences are between ‘structuring humanitarian cooperation’, which until recently was coordinated by CGFome, and ‘technical cooperation for development’, which is coordinated by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC for its acronym in Portuguese). There was little dialogue between CGFome and the ABC. By attempting to link emergency operations to “structuring” initiatives, the idea of humanitarian *cooperation* does not clearly distinguish between two key elements. One is the priorities that emerge from a severe crisis in which the primary concern is ensuring the most basic survival needs, well-being and dignity of the affected population. The other is activities to consolidate peace in a relatively stable context (which demands establishing partnerships that are not always conducive to neutrality and impartiality) that may have a more long-lasting impact on socio-economic and/or institutional development.

Secondly, with the exception of a few specific debates, the participation of Brazilian civil society in the field of humanitarian

aid is still at the early stages. Some large humanitarian organizations such as MSF and the ICRC have offices in Brazil, where they collaborate with some national institutions, such as Fiocruz (Fiocruz, 2015; Médicos Sem Fronteiras, 2014a). In addition to this, dozens of Brazilian professionals and volunteers work in their offices and in the field abroad, even in areas of conflict, such as, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Médicos Sem Fronteiras, 2014b). As for Brazilian civil society organizations, their involvement is still sporadic. Besides Viva Rio in Haiti mentioned above, some NGOs, such as São Paulo-based Conectas Human Rights, monitor human rights issues related to the humanitarian field, including how Brazil votes at the UN, among other things. For example, in February 2014, Conectas joined 17 organizations (none from Brazil) in releasing a statement in support of a Security Council resolution that demanded unhindered humanitarian access in the conflict in Syria (Conectas, 2014). In general, it has only been very recently that Brazilian civil society began to address the humanitarian agenda in a systematic way and the issue rarely appears in public debates on Brazilian foreign policy. This is the reflection of the view that humanitarian aid is led by actors from outside the region.

Thirdly, Brazilian humanitarian aid is sometimes questioned. While on one hand, Brazil is praised for making concrete contributions to international humanitarian efforts (Charleaux, 2016), on the other, these activities are sometimes the target of criticism. There are, for instance, people who claim that humanitarian donations are resources that should be used in the country. The expectations generated by Brazil's discourse on South-South cooperation has led some international actors to argue that Brazil should make greater contributions, especially in light of its size and its desire – as an emerging power – to become a global actor (Barba, 2014).

Though not specific to Brazil, these divergences help to explain the “arch” in the evolution of Brazil's humanitarian efforts.

Starting in 2003, they went through a phase of intensification, which was followed by a period of retraction and restructuring. The downward turn occurred in the context of the economic and political crisis that culminated in 2016 with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and certain changes to Brazilian foreign policy announced by the Michel Temer administration.

### **3. The Syrian conflict**

#### **3.1. Humanitarian aid and the Syrian conflict**

We will not attempt to provide here an exhaustive explanation of the origins and dynamics of the conflict in Syria. It is, however, important to highlight certain key points. First, the conflict erupted in 2011 in a context marked by the socio-political effervescence of the ‘Arab Spring’. Since then, the civil war in Syria has become much more complex. The parties involved in the conflict are not only the government of President Bashar Al-Assad, which responded to the protests with severe repression, and rebel groups (including the self-denominated Islamic State, commonly known as Daesh) that used force later on. Many regional and global actors have also got involved in the conflict. In September 2015, Russia began to intervene directly in support of the regime. The political alignments and territorial disputes between these actors form a tangled web of partnerships and rivalries that contribute to the escalation of violence, which includes war crimes such as attacks on hospitals and clinics. Also, regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the Hezbollah have formed alliances and are trying to advance their geopolitical interests. Proposals for multilateral action by the UN are blocked in the UNSC, especially by Russia and China. But the paralysis is due to much more than veto power within the Council: four of the five permanent members

are directly involved in the conflict and supply weapons to the different groups.

Furthermore, the peace negotiations have yet to produce significant results. Even though a partial ceasefire had been negotiated between the US and Russia in early 2016, with a second attempt in September 2016, the violence continues and is prolonging the humanitarian emergency in and outside the country. Some cities are in a state of siege and/or suffering severe bombing attacks (especially Aleppo) and the negotiations on humanitarian access have not led to any major changes.

As a result, the current conflict in Syria represents one of the largest humanitarian crisis of the modern world. In terms of the number of deaths and displaced persons, in five years, the violence killed approximately 470,000 people<sup>7</sup>. Close to 4.8 million Syrians are now refugees and another 6.6 million, internally displaced (UNHCR n.d.). At the same time, the funding deficit for humanitarian aid in the case of Syria is growing: while the demand is currently around \$4.54 billion, until November 2016, only \$2.54 billion had been raised, leaving a gap of \$1.99 billion (UNHCR, 2016).

The flow of refugees entering or trying to enter Europe through the Mediterranean drew a great amount of attention from Western media and became the subject of intense political debate in many of these countries. Even so, the countries receiving most of the refugees are Syria's neighbours or those in close proximity: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. As a result of the conflict, infrastructure is being destroyed and it has become impossible to offer basic services in a large part of Syria. The bombing of hospitals is causing enormous human and material losses and rendered it difficult to provide treatment.

---

<sup>7</sup> Syrian Centre for Policy Research. Available from: <<http://scpr-syria.org/en/>>.

In addition to the UN, international and non-governmental organizations from the region (such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the White Helmets of Syria) and abroad are participating in humanitarian efforts in Syria. Donor states are too (even though some of them are also supplying weapons to some of the armed groups). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) acts as the main coordinator of humanitarian efforts in Syria, whereas in the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees, the main coordinating body is the UNHCR. The latter is in charge of protecting and assisting Syrian refugees with voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement in third countries. Besides the obstacles arising from the politicization and the polarization of humanitarian aid in Syria (Whittall, 2014), the humanitarian community is met with a wide range of challenges when it attempts to reach the population under attack.

### **3.2. Brazil-Syria relations**

When the Arab Spring began, Brazil was already in the process of strengthening its cooperation with countries of the Middle East through bilateral initiatives in areas such as trade and investment, technical cooperation and, in some cases, defence cooperation. Brazil had also launched multilateral efforts, of which the Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA for its acronym in Portuguese) is worth highlighting. The first summit was held in Brasília in 2005 (MRE, n.d.). Brazil's ties to the region, though, date back hundreds of years to the migration of people from the Ottoman Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to Brazil. Later, during the Cold War, Brazilian corporations, especially building contractors, invested in some countries of the Middle East.



In the area of international security, Brazil has been contributing to peace operations in the region since the creation of the UN<sup>8</sup>. More recently, Brazil's efforts to bring countries together and its involvement in security issues were part of a broader attempt to strengthen South-South cooperation, especially under the Lula administration. In both the UN Security Council and General Assembly, Brazil took a stance on the main security issues in the region and participated in attempts to mediate conflicts. Brazil was the only Latin American country to participate in the Annapolis Conference held in November 2007 on the conflict between Palestine and Israel (Casarões and Vigevani, 2014). Brazilian diplomacy also got involved in security issues outside the UN. One example was its attempt to mediate tensions between the US and Iran over the Iranian nuclear programme. The principle outcome of this process was the 2010 Tehran Declaration (Amorim, 2015; Parsi, 2012).

In the case of Syria, more specifically, historical, demographic, political and economic ties exist between the countries. Bilateral relations date back to the creation of Syria as a modern political entity, while still under French control in 1920. A honorary consulate existed in Damascus between 1922 and 1924 (Pinto et al., 2013, p. 403). After a long period in which no major progress was made, Brazil attempted to build closer ties in the 1970s through the organization of a series of ministerial visits by then Chancellor Azeredo da Silveira. President Lula was the first Brazilian head of state to make an official visit to Syria in December 2003 (his chancellor also visited Damascus on six other occasions). Assad returned Lula's visit in July 2010 during his first trip across the Atlantic in ten years in power (Casarões, 2012).

---

<sup>8</sup> The Suez Battalion that was part of the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was active on the border between Israel and Egypt from 1957 to 1967.

These closer political ties had impacts on trade. In 2005, Brazil exports to Syria totalled US\$166.1 million and consisted mainly of sugar, textiles and automotive parts. This figure jumped to US\$547.4 million in 2010. Bilateral trade also diversified and Brazil began to export coffee, beef, poultry products, iron and steel (Pinto et al., 2013, p. 405). Imports, which had previously consisted mainly of oil and naphtha, started to include Syrian fruits and spices. In the area of investments, the main result of this quest for cooperation was the construction of a sugar refinery by the Brazilian company Crystalserv in Homs, which was meant to supply the markets of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (Anba, 2004). With the outbreak of the war, however, trade dropped significantly, with exports falling to US\$112.4 million in 2014 (MRE, 2015c).

Cultural, educational and scientific cooperation also began to intensify in 2005 when Bibliaspa (Arab, African and South American Library and Research Centre) was created during the First Summit of South American-Arab Countries. Syria played an important role in the centre's initial phase (Pinto et al., 2013). At its headquarters in São Paulo, Bibliaspa began to offer Arabic language courses and hold cultural events. It also coordinated and co-hosted the "Islam" exhibition, which was put on display at various Brazilian institutions. It brought works from the most important museums of Syria to Brazil for the first time, such as the National Museum of Damascus, the Azem Palace (Museum of Popular Traditions) and the Museum of Aleppo (Instituto da Cultura Árabe, 2010).

From 2006 on, several meetings between directors in the field of education were held. The Portuguese Language Centre at Damascus University began to offer Portuguese classes, which were given by an experienced Brazilian professor. In the area of science, cooperation in the medical field emerged in a somewhat unusual manner: it did not arise from direct government interests,

but rather from the Levantine Diaspora in Brazil. When Assad was in São Paulo in 2010, he visited the *Hospital Sírio-Libanês* (Syrian-Lebanese Hospital), where he discovered a project designed to allow Arab doctors improve their skills in areas such as plastic surgery, orthopaedics and cardiology. A few months later, an agreement was signed with the Syrian Ministry of Health and, according to the hospital, six Arab doctors were trained at its facilities (Montenegro, 2010).

In 2012, when the war intensified, close to 3,000 Brazilian citizens remained in Syria and a few hundred were evacuated with the support of the MRE. The Embassy in Damascus closed and was moved to Beirut, where employees continue to offer services to Brazilians who remain on Syrian soil - both from Beirut and while on visit to Damascus and other places in Syria. The Brazilian consulate in Damascus remained open, but without any resident diplomats. In July 2016, it began to offer consular services such as issuing passports and visas<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.3. The Brazilian government's positions on the Syrian conflict**

The Arab Spring arrived in Syria in March 2011, a few weeks after Dilma Rousseff assumed the presidency of Brazil. At first, the Rousseff administration proposed giving human rights a prominent role in Brazil's foreign policy (Casarões, 2012). In August 2011, it made an attempt to coordinate efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict through the IBSA Forum. At the time, the death toll had reached nearly 2.000 victims and the violence was spreading to various cities in the country<sup>10</sup>. That was when the UN, the US, the European Union and

---

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with Brazilian diplomats conducted in Beirut, Jul. 2016.

<sup>10</sup> *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 13, 9 Aug. 2011.

the Arab League raised the tone of their criticism of the Assad government due to the attacks on civilians and human rights violations (Reuters, 2011). The three IBSA countries, which were non-permanent members of UNSC, took a stance in the Council against the idea of military intervention in Syria. They had previously adopted a critical view on the intervention in Libya that was being justified based on the R2P principle.

The IBSA delegation was made up of Brazilian Ambassador and Vice-Secretary General for Africa and the Middle East Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto; Ambassador Dilip Sinha, Special Secretary for International Organizations of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs; and Ambassador Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa. IBSA expressed serious concern with the situation in Syria and the violence from all sides, lamented the humanitarian crisis, and demanded an immediate end to all violence and respect for human rights and international law<sup>11</sup>. Breaking with protocol, as the delegation would normally have officially met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Walid Al-Moualem, Assad met with the diplomats personally in Damascus. He guaranteed the group that Syria would be a “free, pluralist and multiparty democracy” (Chade, 2011).

Assad also recognized that his security forces had “gone too far” at the beginning of the conflict and stated that efforts were being made to prevent this from recurring (IBSA, 2011). Then, at the UNSC, a declaration condemning the widespread human rights violations and the use of force against civilians by Syrian authorities was released with the support of these three countries. This declaration also demanded an immediate end to all violence, urged all sides to act with restraint and declared that the UN was committed to Syria’s sovereignty, independence

---

<sup>11</sup> Global Policy Forum (2011). See also: Riediger (2013).

and territorial integrity. Finally, the text condemned the use of heavy weapons by Syrian authorities, including random air raids. It demanded that Assad abstain from the use of chemical weapons, alluding specifically to a chemical attack carried out in late August 2013 in the area around Damascus, which left hundreds dead<sup>12</sup>.

In August 2011, the UN Human Rights Council created an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission was given the responsibility of investigating the alleged human rights violations in the country since the beginning of the unrest, as well as the task of preparing reports for the Council. In September, Secretary-General Kofi Annan named Brazilian social scientist Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to lead the investigations on the human rights abuses committed by Assad, a position he has held since then. Pinheiro was chosen for the position partly because the UN believed that having a Brazilian leading the process would help to convince the Syrian government to open its doors to the Commission<sup>13</sup>. However, even after promising an independent, and not a political, inquiry and clearly being backed by the Brazilian government<sup>14</sup>, Pinheiro's team experienced difficulty related to access in Syria. Since then, the Commission has mainly been collecting testimonies from refugees in neighbouring countries or, wherever possible, victims in Syria by using Skype and other remote methods. The team is documenting the violations so that one day, proof – such as a list of people responsible for the massacres – can be presented at a trial.

---

<sup>12</sup> However, there are accounts that chemical weapons were used by other groups in the conflict.

<sup>13</sup> *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 12, 13 Sept. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 14, 25 Mar. 2012.

One year later, with the number of victims already in the tens of thousands (Khera, 2012), Brazil supported a resolution initially proposed by Saudi Arabia and approved by the General Assembly that called for a political transition in Syria, condemned the Assad regime and criticized the UNSC for “not taking action” to detain the violence. Brazil argued that all parties involved in the conflict must comply with the mediation plan proposed by Kofi Annan by putting an end to the violence, cooperating with the Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry and allowing humanitarian assistance to be provided in the country (O Globo, 2012). However, the text was not binding and while there were 133 votes in favour (especially from Western superpowers and Arab countries), it was met with 12 votes against it and 31 abstentions<sup>15</sup>.

At this point, the BRICS coalition had already released a statement on the conflict in Syria. For example, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in September 2013, the group affirmed its “profound concern” with the violence and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria. The five countries called for all parties to engage in a ceasefire and an end to the violence and the violations of human rights and humanitarian law. They also expressed their support for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, reiterating that they do not see any military solution for it, and defended the idea of an agreement on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons. They concluded by calling for an international conference to be held to deal with the situation in Syria and gave full support to the efforts of the

---

<sup>15</sup> The countries that voted against it are: Russia, China, Iran, Belarus, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia. Ecuador abstained on this occasion. Available from: <<http://internacional.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,assembleia-geral-da-onu-aprova-resolucao-contra-a-siria,910654>>.

UN-Arab League Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi to find a political solution to the crisis<sup>16</sup>. However, in certain circles, mainly in US and European research centres, the BRICS caused concern by defending the principle of respect for national sovereignty. The ‘Clingendael’ Institute of the Netherlands even went so far as to affirm that the coalition was beginning to represent a “security challenge” (Clingendael, 2015).

In late January 2014, an international conference on Syria was held in Geneva with the goal of advancing with the 2012 agreement that defined the process for establishing a transitional government. Dilma vetoed the participation of the then-Brazilian Chancellor Luiz Alberto Figueiredo in the conference, as she preferred to have him at her side at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Secretary-General Eduardo dos Santos was sent in his place. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to use an official discourse that supported the project and legitimized international efforts, rather than seeking a leadership role in the process. This change in the political importance the Brazilian government attributed to the event – in spite of Russian Chancellor Serguei Lavrov’s insistence that Brazil be there together with the BRICS – was strongly criticized by NGOs such as Conectas and Human Rights Watch (HWR), as it reflected the “lack of interest” in the meeting<sup>17</sup>.

### 3.4. Brazil’s humanitarian efforts and the conflict in Syria

Brazil became more involved in the Middle East, including the conflict in Syria, in a context where the country has gradually

---

<sup>16</sup> According to estimates of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Available form: <<http://www.syriahr.com/en/>>.

<sup>17</sup> *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 8, 22 Jan. 2014.

gained importance in relation to security issues in the region. It is not surprising, then, that despite the discourse on Brazilian humanitarian aid being “demand-driven”, the MRE highlighted initiatives focused on Syria and the surrounding region. For example, in mid-2016, on the institutional presentation page of CGFome’s website, it was affirmed that:

“among the different initiatives, support for Syria should be highlighted as part of the strategy to prevent a ‘lost generation’ in the country. The objective is to expand access to education to displaced children in situations of vulnerability, especially those who live in areas with limited access to formal education and where school infrastructure has been destroyed or seriously damaged.”

This excerpt refers to the “No Lost Generation” initiative launched in 2014 by a series of partners with the support of the UN. It focuses on the education of Syrian child refugees in the five countries that receive most of these refugees (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt)<sup>18</sup>.

On a broader level, since 2012, Brazil has been making financial donations directly to international partners (such as the UNHCR and Unicef) and donations of medicines and basic health supplies through the World Health Organization (WHO). In relation to the latter, the emergency supplies (the so-called “disaster kits”) sent in 2015 to the Lebanese government specifically for the care of Syrian refugees are worth highlighting<sup>19</sup>.

One can see, then, that Brazil’s donations are not only tied to interventions implemented in Syria through the UN, but also

---

<sup>18</sup> *No Lost Generation*. Available from: <<http://nolostgeneration.org/about>>.

<sup>19</sup> Coordenação-Geral de Ações Internacionais de Combate à Fome (CGFome), ‘Doação de medicamentos’.



bilateral and multilateral ones in neighbouring countries where the large majority of Syrian refugees can be found. From 2012 to 2015, financial contributions from Brazil to Syria and neighbouring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey) totalled US\$1,236,679.44 (CGFome, n.d.). In 2016, in the midst of political turmoil in Brazil, the government announced it would make more contributions.

In February, the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira participated in the “Supporting Syria and the Region Conference” held in London in which representatives from 80 countries and international organizations participated. The main objective of the conference was to raise emergency funds for Syrian people – both those who are still in their country and those who are seeking refuge in other countries in the region. Brazil expressed its solidarity with “the Syrian people and the surrounding countries” (MRE, 2016) and its intention to donate food to Syria and neighbouring countries and to expand its financial contributions to UNHCR. In his speech, the chancellor announced a donation of US\$1.3 million to UNHCR and the purchase of US\$1.85 million of food, even in the midst of fiscal adjustment and budget cuts, as the country sees humanitarian aid “as a need that should not be feared”. The donations were to be supplied by the *Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento* (Conab, or the Brazilian National Supply Company in English) linked to the Ministry of Agriculture. According to sources at the MRE, however, as of September 2016, the donation had not been made due to lack of resources to cover the costs of transportation<sup>20</sup>.

With the conflict now in its fifth year, Brazil continues denouncing the war while classifying it as “one of the worst humanitarian disasters of the century” (MRE, 2015d). In October 2015, during a press conference, President Dilma Rousseff criticized Russia’s

---

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a Brazilian diplomat in Brasília, Jul, 2016.

military intervention in Syria and stressed that she was against any kind of dialogue with Daesh (Colon, 2015).

In addition to the contributions of financial resources and food, Brazil has sought to participate in regulatory discussions on humanitarian aid. In 2016, for example, Brazilian diplomats participated in the elaboration of the agenda of the summit in Istanbul. During the negotiations on the event's agenda, Brazil and Argentina defended the idea of integrating three agendas that were managed by the UN, but that, until then, had been elaborated separately: risk management, the humanitarian agenda and the sustainable development goals. During the summit in Turkey, the Brazilian delegation promoted a broader vision of humanitarian aid, "which involves both actions and issues related to development and responses to emergency situations". At the end of the event, Brazil adhered to the five core commitments proposed by the Secretary-General<sup>21</sup> and assumed another 47 practical commitments. These include the renewal of its willingness to continue receiving refugees from Syria and other nationalities affected by the war, at least until the end of September 2017<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> (1) Prevent and end conflict; (2) Respect rules of war; (3) Leave no one behind; (4) Working differently to end need; and (5) Invest in humanity (World Humanitarian Summit, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> The 47 commitments include, for example, the strengthening of compliance with international humanitarian law; the empowerment of women in conflict situations; the defence of the institution of refugee protection and the principle of non-refoulement; risk management strategies for socio-environmental disasters; and the strengthening of local, national and regional capacities so that the affected populations are able to overcome situations of vulnerability in a sustainable way." CGFome. 25 May 2016. Available from: <<http://cooperacaohumanitaria.itamaraty.gov.br/noticias/170-o-brasil-na-cupula-humanitaria-mundial>>.

Finally, Brazil contributed to the protection of Syrian refugees in various ways, both multilaterally and bilaterally, and mainly in the region around Syria. The financial contributions and food donations that Brazil makes to the UN help to maintain the well-being of the population of the countries hosting most of the refugees. The spreadsheets of the extinct CGFome demonstrate that Brazil's contributions to the UN are frequently directed towards refugee camps and refugee populations from different nationalities, including Syria (CGFome, 2011).

Brazil also takes in refugees from the Syrian crisis. As of 2016, Brazilian embassies had issued more than 8,000 humanitarian visas for Syrian citizens to allow them to travel legally to the country where they requested asylum (BBC, 2016). In April 2016, there were 2,298 Syrians living in Brazil in this situation. The large majority of them are concentrated in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Despite the country's relatively open policy, in practice, refugees are still confronted with various challenges related to legal issues and integration, especially in the context of the current economic crisis. Since 2013, in partnership with UNHCR, Brazil has been seeking to simplify the process for granting visas (not only for Syrian nationals, but also other peoples affected by the conflict in Syria). For this, the government exchanges information and expertise with Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (Gruijl, 2015).

The ones who actually welcome the refugees in Brazil and offer social, legal and psychological support to them – in partnership with UNHCR and the National Committee for Refugees (Conare) – are civil society organizations. Many are linked to the Catholic Church, as in the case with the Caritas Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Adus – Refugee Reintegration Institute, the “Cultural Hug” project (of *Plataforma Atados*) and Migraflax are also some of the institutions and projects that have been seeking to give visibility to the issue and/or create the con-

ditions for the successful integration of refugees into Brazilian society. For some observers, the existence of an Arab community or a community of people of Arab descent with close to 10 million people justifies having a more open policy.

Brazil's stance on the reception of refugees varies. In March 2016, after only 15 days in the position of the Minister of Justice, Eugênio Aragão proposed a project on this issue. Aragão managed to speak with the German embassy in Brasília and the delegation of the European Union and mentioned the idea of receiving 100,000 refugees over a 20-year period (Douglas, 2016). In exchange, measures to integrate refugees would be funded through international aid. Brazil's advantage is apparently the fact that the country has the "largest Syrian-Lebanese Diaspora community". Aragão also went so far as to suggest the establishment of a national institute that would provide assistance to refugees<sup>23</sup>. However, he ended up staying in the position for only three months (from March to May) and was substituted by Alexandre de Moraes, who suspended the project. The seemingly more restrictive position of the Temer government appears to be related to a possible securitization of the issue, as, in both the official discourse and the media, the issue of the reception of foreigners is increasingly associated with "border security" (Fellet, 2016).

## Conclusion

As with other emerging powers, Brazil has been attempting to become more active and increase its influence in the field of humanitarian aid. The fact that Brazil partially institutionalized this aid, mainly in the framework of the MRE, and allocated resources to emergencies in different regions of the world il-

---

<sup>23</sup> *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 14, 31 Mar. 2016.

illustrate its willingness to participate in these actions via both bilateral and multilateral channels. In the case of the conflict in Syria and the humanitarian crisis brought on by this war, despite the distance separating Brazil and the Middle East, Brazil's humanitarian aid began to incorporate a broad variety of initiatives. These range from financial contributions to UN bodies, donations of food and medicines, participation in regulatory debates, attempts to mediate through the IBSA Forum and the reception of refugees by granting them humanitarian visas.

However, the government's institutional basis for these activities is still recent and relatively fragile. There is a lack of: a sound legal framework to regulate Brazilian humanitarian aid; a critical mass of experienced Brazilian experts specialized in the area; and mechanisms to maximize institutional learning. The elimination of CGFome weakens the MRE's institutional capacity and memory on humanitarian aid to a certain degree. Outside of the state structure, there is also a lack of a more solid commitment from Brazilian civil society to go beyond the welcoming of refugees.

Both the advances of Brazilian humanitarian aid over the past decade and its current limitations can be seen in the initiatives that Brazil has been implementing in relation to the Syrian crisis. On one hand, Brazil dedicates resources to alleviating the problems caused by the humanitarian crisis, especially in the countries of the Middle East that are receiving large flows of refugees, and strives to participate more actively in some of the main humanitarian debates. On the other hand, however, its efforts are still susceptible to economic fluctuations and policy changes. Even in relation to refugees, the official discourse that seeks to promote Brazil as a country with its "arms open" does not correspond to reality. Even though it grants humanitarian visas to individuals affected by the Syrian conflict, Brazil is still lacking specific legal instruments and government institutions

specialized in the reception and integration of refugees and in finding ways to take advantage of their knowledge and skills. Many of them, for example, have diplomas and extensive experience in fields for which there is still a lack of professionals in Brazil, such as engineering or information technology.

Given the growing importance of emerging powers in the humanitarian field and the different approaches they have adopted, the mapping presented here indicates that they resort to various channels of action. These include unilateral, bilateral and multilateral initiatives and strategies pursued through either well-established institutions, such as the UN, or informal coalitions, such as IBSA. It is not yet clear to what extent other groups, such as the BRICS, are important as collective actors (and not just as individual member countries). In the case of Syria, especially when Russia first intervened in support of the Assad regime, Moscow appeared to be attempting to influence the coalition's official discourse on the Syrian conflict to define it as an issue predominantly linked to terrorism, which tends to reduce the emphasis on the humanitarian aspects of the crisis (Abdenur, 2016, p. 109-133).

This study on the humanitarian aid interventions of Brazil and other emerging powers merits being pursued further in relation to specific conflicts. First, it is necessary to investigate the actions they undertake during specific crises in the Middle East and elsewhere and compare them. Secondly, future research should focus on the role of civil society organizations from emerging countries in humanitarian aid. Finally, studies on the humanitarian aid norms and practices of Brazil and other "emerging powers" could help to clarify how and to what extent the approaches of these countries diverge from those of "traditional" actors. Here, researchers should strive to identify not only the differences, but also the convergences and possible areas for greater convergence and collaboration.

## Bibliography

ABDENUR, A. E. Rising powers and international security: the BRICS and the Syrian conflict. *Rising Powers Quarterly*, n. 1, p. 109-133, 2016.

AGÊNCIA DE NOTÍCIAS BRASIL-ÁRABE (Anba). *Refina de açúcar sírio-brasileira começa a ser construída*. 13 Mar. 2004. Available from: <<http://www.anba.com.br/noticia/7416490/industria/refinaria-de-acucar-sirio-brasileira-comeca-a-ser-construida/?indice=2170>>.

AMORIM, C. *Teerã, Ramalá e Doha: memórias da política externa ativa e altiva*. São Paulo: Benvirá, 2015.

BARBA, M. D. *Brasil é criticado por ajuda financeira “baixa” à Síria*. BBC Brasil, 12 Feb. 2014. Available from: <[http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2014/02/140211\\_ajuda\\_brasil\\_siria\\_mdb](http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2014/02/140211_ajuda_brasil_siria_mdb)>.

BBC. *Why don't Syrian refugees stay in Turkey?*. 15 Jul. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36808038>>.

BINDER, A. The shape and sustainability of Turkey's booming humanitarian assistance. *International Development Policy*, n. 5.2, 2014. Available from: <<https://poldev.revues.org/1741>>.

BRAUMAN, R. *Médecins Sans Frontières and the ICRC: matters of principle*. 2012. Available from: <<https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/review/2013/irrc-888-brauman.pdf>>.

CASARÕES, G. S. P. Construindo pontes? O Brasil diante da Primavera Árabe. *Ciência e Cultura*, São Paulo, v. 64, n. 4, Oct./Dec. 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_; VIGEVANI, T. O lugar de Israel e da Palestina na política externa brasileira: antissemitismo, voto majoritário ou promotor da paz?. *História*, n. 33, p. 2, 2014. Available from: <[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0101-90742014000200150](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0101-90742014000200150)>.

COORDENAÇÃO-GERAL DE COOPERAÇÃO HUMANITÁRIA E COMBATE À FOME (CGFome). *Colaborações financeiras 2011*. 2011. Available from: <<http://paa-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2011-PARA-O-SITE-Compilado-CGFOME-Colaborações-financeiras.pdf>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Doações crise humanitária na Síria*. [n.d.]. Available from: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cgfome/sets/72157656678236184/>>.

CHADE, J. Assad diz a diplomatas que está comprometido com reforma política. *Estadão*, 10 Aug. 2011. Available from: <<http://internacional.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,assad-diz-a-diplomatas-que-esta-comprometido-com-reforma-politica,756719>>. Charleaux, João Paulo. *Nexo: por que um país em crise doa dinheiro para a Síria*. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/noticia/41545-nexo-por-que-um-pais-em-crise-doa-dinheiro-para-a-siria>>.

CLINGENDAEL, The BRICS as a security challenge in multilateral forums. *Report*. 2015. Available from: <[https://www.clingendael.nl/pub/2015/the\\_brics\\_as\\_an\\_eu\\_security\\_challenge/1\\_the\\_brics\\_as\\_a\\_security\\_challenge\\_in\\_multilateral\\_forums/](https://www.clingendael.nl/pub/2015/the_brics_as_an_eu_security_challenge/1_the_brics_as_a_security_challenge_in_multilateral_forums/)>.

COLON, L. Dilma critica intervenção russa na Síria e rejeita diálogo com EI. *Folha de S.Paulo*, 19 Oct. 2015. Available from: <<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2015/10/1695628-dilma-critica-intervencao-russa-na-siria-e-rejeita-dialogo-com-ei.shtml>>.

CONNECTAS. *Acesso humanitário na Síria*. 26 Feb. 2014. Available from: <<http://www.conectas.org/pt/acoes/politica-externa/noticia/14973-acesso-humanitario-na-siria>>.

DOUGLAS, B. New Brazilian government suspends plans to welcome Syrian refugees. *DW*, 26 Jun. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.dw.com/en/new-brazilian-government-suspends-plans-to-welcome-syrian-refugees/a-19353345>>.



FELLET, J. *Governo Temer suspende negociação com Europa para receber refugiados sírios*. BBC Brasil, 17 Jun. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-36556393>>.

FOLEY, C. *The Thin Blue Line: how humanitarianism went to war*. London: Verso, 2010

FORSYTHE, D. *The Humanitarians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

FOX, R. *Doctors Without Borders: humanitarian quests, impossible dreams of Médecins Sans Frontières*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

FUNDAÇÃO OSWALDO CRUZ (FIOCRUZ). *Acordo de cooperação formalizará parceria entre Fiocruz e Médicos Sem Fronteiras*. 2015. Available from: <<http://www.fiocruz.br/omsambiental/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?infoid=423&sid=13>>.

GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. *India: country briefing*. 2012. Available from: <<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/India-country-briefing1.pdf>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Who's who in humanitarian response?*. [n.d.]. Available from: <<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/tools/guides/humanitarian-aid-network/>>.

GLOBAL POLICY FORUM. *IBSA coalition an emerging player in global diplomacy*. 10 Aug. 2011. Available from: <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/lebanon/50569-ibsa-coalition-an-emerging-player-in-global-diplomacy.html?itemid=id#870>>.

GRUIJL, K. de. *Brazil and UNHCR strengthen partnership to help refugees fleeing the Syria conflict*. 7 Oct. 2015. Available from: <<http://www.unhcr.org>>.

org/news/latest/2015/10/5615130c6/brazil-unhcr-strengthen-partnership-help-refugees-fleeing-syria-conflict.html>.

IBSA. *IBSA delegation calls on President Asad to discuss situation*. 11 Aug. 2011. Available from: <[http://ibsa.nic.in/president\\_assad.htm](http://ibsa.nic.in/president_assad.htm)>.

INSTITUTO DA CULTURA ÁRABE. *CCBB Rio de Janeiro abre a exposição "Islã" em outubro*. 30 Sept. 2010. Available from: <<http://www.icarabe.org/noticias/ccbb-rio-de-janeiro-abre-a-exposicao-is-la-em-outubro>>.

KHERA, J. *Syria crisis: counting the victims*. BBC, 29 May 2012. Available from: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18093967>>.

MATUSKI, E. *Gastos do Brasil para ajudar outros países somam R\$ 1,6 bilhão em 2010*. UOL, 2013. Available from: <<http://noticias.uol.com.br/internacional/ultimas-noticias/2013/08/01/gastos-do-brasil-com-cooperacao-internacional-somam-r-16-bilhao-em-2010.htm>>.

MÉDICOS SEM FRONTEIRAS (MSF). *Ebola: médicos e enfermeiros brasileiros participam de treinamento*. 5 Sept. 2014a. Available from: <<http://www.msf.org.br/noticias/ebola-medicos-e-enfermeiros-brasileiros-participam-de-treinamento>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Médica brasileira na Rep. Democrática do Congo*. 2014b. Available from: <<http://www.msf.org.br/videos/medica-brasileira-na-rep-democratica-do-congo>>.

MERCOSUL. *Realizou-se diálogo Unasul-Mercosul sobre direitos humanos dos migrantes e cooperação humanitária*. 20 Jul. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.mercosur.int/innovaportal/v/7863/3/innova.front/realizou-se-dialogo-unasul-mercosul-sobre-direitos-humanos-dos-migrantes-e-cooperacao-humanitaria>>.

MINISTÉRIO DA DEFESA. *Navio brasileiro resgata 220 refugiados no mar Mediterrâneo*. 4 Sept. 2015a. Available from: <<http://www.defesa.gov.br/noticias/16776-navio-brasileiro-resgata-220-refugiados-no-mar-mediterraneo>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Terremoto no Haiti: como os militares brasileiros apoiaram a reconstrução do país*. 12 Jan. 2015b. Available from: <<http://www.defesa.gov.br/index.php/noticias/14716-terremoto-no-haiti-como-os-militares-brasileiros-apoiaram-a-reconstrucao-do-pais>>.

MINISTÉRIO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES (MRE). *A cooperação humanitária horizontal brasileira*. 18 Aug. 2015a. Available from: <<http://cooperacaohumanitaria.itamaraty.gov.br/noticias/119-a-cooperacao-humanitaria-horizontal-brasileira>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Conferência internacional de apoio à Síria e região – Londres, 4 de fevereiro de 2016*. 3 Feb. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/notas-a-imprensa/13089-conferencia-internacional-de-apoio-a-siria-e-regiao-londres-4-de-fevereiro-de-2016>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Cooperação humanitária brasileira*. 2015b. Available from: <<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/politica-externa/cooperacao/11937-cooperacao-humanitaria-brasileira>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Cúpula América do Sul-Países Árabes (Aspa)*. [n.d.]. Available from: <<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/politica-externa/mecanismos-inter-regionais/3675-cupula-america-do-sul-paises-arabes-asp>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. Divisão de Inteligência Comercial. *Síria: comércio exterior*. Sept. 2015c. Available from: <<http://www.investexportbrasil.gov.br/sites/default/files/publicacoes/indicadoresEconomicos/INDSiria.pdf>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Quatro anos de conflito na Síria*. Blog do Itamaraty, 19 Mar. 2015d. Available from: <<http://blog.itamaraty.gov.br/52-oriente-medio/116-quatro-anos-de-conflito-na-siria>>.

MONTENEGRO, C. *Hospital do Coração e Sírio-Libanês ampliam parcerias com países árabes*. Portal Arabesq, 24 Sept. 2010. Available from: <<http://www.arabesq.com.br/Principal/Comunidade/Community-Article/tabid/68/ArticleID/2196/Default.aspx>>.

O GLOBO. *Assembleia Geral da ONU aprova resolução que pede transição na Síria*. 3 Aug. 2012. Available from: <<http://g1.globo.com/revolta-arabe/noticia/2012/08/assembleia-geral-da-onu-aprova-resolucao-que-pede-transicao-na-siria.html>>.

OZERDEM, A. Harnessing rising powers for leading role in humanitarian and peace keeping operations. *The Conversation*, 25 Aug. 2014. Available from: <<http://theconversation.com/harnessing-rising-powers-for-leading-role-in-humanitarian-and-peace-keeping-operations-30625>>.

PARSI, T. *A single role of the Dice: Obama's diplomacy with Iran*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

PINTO, P. G. H. da R. et al. Para el estudio de las relaciones entre Siria y América Latina. In: DELMONTE, Luis Mesa (Org.). *Las relaciones exteriores de Siria*. México: el Colegio de México, 2013. p. 403.

PORTAL BRASIL. *Brasil é um dos maiores doadores de alimentos do mundo*. 20 Aug. 2012. Available from: <<http://www.brasil.gov.br/governo/2012/08/brasil-e-um-dos-maiores-doadores-de-alimentos-do-mundo>>.

PRICE, G. Diversity in donorship: the changing landscape of official humanitarian aid: India's official aid programme. *ODI Humanitarian Policy Group Background Paper*, Sept. 2005. Available from: <<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/416.pdf>>.

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. *Relations between Turkey and Somalia*. 2016. Available from: <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-somalia.en.mfa>>.

REUTERS. *Arab League expresses “growing concern” about Syria*. 7 Aug. 2011. Available from: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-league-idUSTRE7761H720110807>>.

RIEDIGER, B. F. A posição brasileira frente ao conflito na Síria. *Revista Conjuntura Austral*, v. 4, n. 20, Oct./Nov. 2013.

TOURINHO, M.; STUENKEL, O.; BROCKHEIMER, S. Responsibility while protecting: reforming R2P implementation. *Global Society*, v. 30, n. 1, p. 134-150, 2016.

UNHCR. *Syria emergency*. [n.d.]. Available from: <<http://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>>.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Syria regional refugee response: inter-agency information sharing portal*. 2016. Available from: <[http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#\\_ga=1.63804463.1292648223.1465860647](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#_ga=1.63804463.1292648223.1465860647)>.

WALLING, C. B. *All Necessary Measures: The United Nations and humanitarian intervention*. Filadélfia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

WEISS, T. G. *Humanitarian business*. Londres: Polity, 2013.

WHITFALL, J. *The “new humanitarian landscape” – case study: MSF interaction with non-traditional and emerging aid actors in Syria 2013-14*. Médecins Sans Frontières, Jul. 2014. Available from: <[http://www.msf.org.uk/sites/uk/files/humanitarian\\_aid\\_landscape\\_-\\_syria.pdf](http://www.msf.org.uk/sites/uk/files/humanitarian_aid_landscape_-_syria.pdf)>.

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT. *About the World Humanitarian Summit*. 2016. Available from: <<https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/learn>>.

XINHUANET. *China to deliver committed humanitarian aid to Syria soon: diplomat*. Xinhua, 31 Mar. 2016. Available from: <[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/31/c\\_135238036.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/31/c_135238036.htm)>.



## Humanitarian cooperation in Brazil: testimony and reflections

Celso Amorim

Up until the end of the last century, the concept of humanitarian assistance or, to be more exact, humanitarian cooperation was virtually absent from Brazilian foreign affairs. This does not mean that there were no situations in which emergency aid was provided, especially in countries in South America. However, it takes a great deal of memory or a thorough search through archives to find cases where the aid or cooperation the country offered was significant. In some cases, we sent a Hercules airplane from the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) in support; in others, such as earthquakes and floods, medicines and blankets; and sometimes, Brazil gave financial support, which rarely (if ever) reached the sum of US\$100,000.

For quite obvious reasons, as pointed out by scholars, Brazil had been a recipient of humanitarian cooperation more than a provider. As the Permanent Representative of the Brazilian government in Geneva (and also at the United Nations [UN] headquarters in New York) in the 1990s and the early 2000s, I maintained few contacts with organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I did so generally to gather information or, in the case of the ICRC, to deal with the prolonged crisis of the organization in Brazil.

In certain situations, the analyses offered by humanitarian organizations – all prepared with great impartiality and balance – were very useful for understanding concrete situations. This



was the case of the humanitarian crisis that resulted from the economic sanctions on Iraq. During the crisis, I had to take the seat of the president of the Security Council, in January 1999, and act as the coordinator of three panel discussions on the topic in the months that followed. At the time, fellow countryman Sergio Vieira de Mello was the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN and I learned a lot from him. I also helped Sergio and the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, organize Council sessions on humanitarian issues. But beyond this involvement in multilateral efforts, Brazil's actions were limited and ad hoc. At the end of my second term as ambassador in Geneva, however, a secretary from the Ministry of Justice from Brazil came to our office while on visit to the UNHCR to discuss the refugees (especially economic refugees) in our country. For me, this was a sign that other Brazilian authorities – and not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) – were starting to take interest in these issues.

Over the past decade, Brazil has begun to make significant contributions to humanitarian crises. At one point, it even ranked first in the list of contributors from developing countries. We made our presence felt in several situations in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in even more distant places, such as in Asian countries affected by the tsunami. There has recently been a decline in our efforts, but there is reason to believe that this is due to cyclical factors (economic and political) that will not reverse the long-term trend.

Without ignoring the distinction – and even the “opposition”, as I gather from certain texts – between the concepts of humanitarian aid and development assistance, in the case of Brazil, the shift to a more proactive stance on humanitarian issues occurred in parallel to a similar evolution in cooperation for development, perhaps with a slight delay between the two. One only has to recall the history of the Secretariat of International Economic

and Technical Cooperation (Subin) – a cooperation agency that was initially part of the Ministry of Planning, but later transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where it became the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) – to see that even in the field of cooperation for development, Brazil went from being a net recipient to “donor” (a traditional and unsuitable term I use here as a mere verbal shortcut).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, major transformations have changed the perception that the country had of itself. In the 1980s, the process of democratization increased Brazilians’ self-esteem and gave us greater agility to act at the international level. This was reflected, for instance, in Brazil’s participation in global forums such as the United Nations Security Council and its playing a more proactive role in human rights organizations. The economic stability in the decade that followed further increased the country’s confidence, freeing it from the stigma of being a mismanaged nation, unable to contain the demoralizing effect that had haunted the country for a long time.

Even so, Brazil remained reserved in the area of foreign relations, except for some initiatives on development at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT]. It is no wonder that a Mexican intellectual (who later became the minister of foreign affairs of his country) wrote an article in a prestigious international newspaper with a title that impressed me at the time (when I was the chancellor for the Itamar Franco government): “Brazil punches below its weight” (a boxing metaphor that meant that Brazil was playing in a lower league than it should be). This was true in regards to foreign affairs in general and, of course, our passive attitude towards humanitarian issues.

It was only at the beginning of the new millennium that the fight against inequality – a legacy of the slavery in our past,

exacerbated by economic and political conceptions that legitimized it (“we need to make the pie grow before sharing it”) – became a priority. A “culture of solidarity” emerged in if not all of society, at least the majority that would inevitably have repercussions on our attitude towards situations of deprivation (structural or emergency) in other countries. A renewed emphasis on cooperation appeared initially in political positions (closer ties with developing countries, especially in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa; and technical cooperation programmes, some of which involved other countries of the South, such as the members of the IBSA [India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue] Forum, etc.). Even in business forums, which are usually marked by an almost cynical defence of selfish interests, Brazil moderated its positions. Without abandoning the country’s essential objectives, it “gave up” certain maximalist demands (on access to agricultural markets, for example) to accommodate the needs of poorer nations.

In general, it is undeniable that there was a political motive behind this attitude of openness and understanding (I have even used the term “generosity”) towards the interests of the weakest. Yet, the motive was not inspired by narrow interests; it was based on a worldview that sought to affirm concepts such as “solidarity”, cooperation among equals (or near equals) and multipolarity, instead of the logic focused exclusively on the market and historical dependency on richer countries. The extent to which these concepts were meant to increase Brazil’s room to manoeuvre as an emerging nation is a matter of debate. As foreign minister, often tormented by the media and the elite that criticized anything that did not bring tangible and immediate benefits, I was led to emphasize on several occasions that the exercise of solidarity was not pure altruism, but also a way to meet our long-term interests. That did not stop me from coining a concept that I thought was new – “non-indifference” – to explain, for example, our presence (not only military, but also in numerous coopera-

tion projects) in Haiti. Later, a researcher pointed out that the concept had already been used in the African Union, which incidentally strengthened my conviction that we have much to learn from the culture of many of our ancestors.

In the field of technical cooperation or development, an example of this attitude was the help we sought to provide, through the Brazilian Corporation for Agricultural Research (Embrapa), to the countries that make up the group known as “Cotton Four”: four very poor African nations (Chad, Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso). These countries depended largely on cotton exports for income, which are affected by the subsidies that the governments of rich countries provide their producers. The same spirit led us to cooperate actively with Mozambique in establishing a pharmaceuticals manufacturing plant. In these cases, in addition to the sincere desire to help the poorest nations, there was a conviction that forming alliances with other least developed countries strengthened our own demands in trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO). In both cases, there was a structuring element of preventative value that could even prevent hunger and disease (including AIDS).

However, the question that remains is: what does this have to do with humanitarian cooperation, which is primarily focused on short-term responses and which should, in principle, be devoid of political motives? In our case, the push for both types of cooperation (development and humanitarian) were rooted in the awareness that Brazil needed to “come out of its shell”, so to speak, and assume its responsibilities on the international level - or, to put it positively, to “punch according with its weight”. Unlike civil society organizations such as MSF, when we speak of states, it is hard to imagine an action that is totally devoid of political motives. Setting aside the case of armed conflicts (where the notions of neutrality, impartiality and independence are very important for humanitarian action) for a moment, when facing natu-

ral disasters, how can one explain why more efforts are made for one country than another? Why Haiti and not Nepal? It is impossible to deny that historical, cultural and geopolitical reasons explain these choices. This is one limit of the “depoliticization” of humanitarian cooperation of states that cannot be ignored. Otherwise, one risks running into hypocritical formulations such as “selfless assistance” or “the white man’s burden” (or, the more modern phrase, “doing nothing is not an option”), which have inspired so many imperialist acts.

Humanitarian aid or humanitarian cooperation gained ‘status’ in Brazil during President Lula’s mandates. The director of CGFOME (General Coordination of International Actions Against Hunger), Minister Milton Rondó, one of the authors of this book will surely mention the efforts made to establish and consolidate a structure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and provide it with resources (albeit modest ones) with much more skill and knowledge than I ever could. Nevertheless, as a minister, I feel authorized to affirm that, during the eight years of the Lula government, Brazil multiplied its contributions (financial or in-kind) to mitigate the effects of crises such as those caused by the earthquake in Haiti or the conflict in Gaza. Moreover, the country learned to be operational in emergencies.

The rescue of 3,000 Brazilians (including their families) that had taken refuge in Turkey and Syria cannot be considered a ‘humanitarian’ intervention in the sense of the term that is commonly used at the international level due to the simple fact that the beneficiaries of the operation were our compatriots. However, this does not diminish the novelty of the action, nor the practical lessons it provided. Regarding the first point, I can remember the phrase of a 60-year-old woman I found among the refugees in the Turkish city of Adana: “It’s the third time I have to flee a war, but it is the first time I have the support of the Brazilian government”. As for the practical aspects, which

involve political decisions, my colleagues and I at the Foreign Ministry had to overcome unexpected obstacles, such as the difficulty in obtaining fuel at affordable prices from our state-owned enterprise (in contrast to a foreign company's offer of fuel at a "humanitarian price"). Obtaining the consent of the respective commands so that our planes could rescue Brazilian citizens in Damascus, considered a "risk zone", or take food and medicine to Beirut the day after the cease-fire with the Brazilian foreign minister inside the Brazilian air force's Hercules C130 plane were no simple tasks either. In both cases, the lack of a "humanitarian culture" threatened to seriously undermine the operation.

When nature released her fury on Haiti and set off an earthquake that claimed the lives of more than 100,000 people and left nearly 1 million people homeless, the opposite occurred. Brazil acted quickly to provide funds and deploy troops (including an air force field hospital) to work on rescue operations, emergency assistance and reconstruction. We moved up a notch by learning how to conduct humanitarian operations with all that they imply. This includes greater agility in freeing up funds: Brazil contributed US\$40 million to the fund established by the Organization of American States (OAS) and was among the first, if not the first, to pay what it had committed to paying. This also goes for complex tasks related to commanding and controlling a situation of total chaos, in which Brazil was not the only actor.

The earthquake in Haiti also illustrates the difficulty in fully separating humanitarian cooperation from cooperation for development. Many projects that were already in place were useful in the efforts to return to (relative) normalcy in the country. More than any other factor, the Brazilian military presence in MINUSTAH<sup>1</sup> contributed decisively to the effectiveness of our

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. 18 Brazilian soldiers were

action, as I was able to confirm in person during my visit to Port-au-Prince a week after the disaster.

This is not to deny the importance of the note of caution on the political *instrumentalization* of humanitarian action, whose extreme examples in Afghanistan and Libya are mentioned in another article in this publication. On the contrary, by refusing to give any legitimacy to armed intervention in the name of the “responsibility to protect”, MSF forces us to reflect on the use of force in humanitarian crises. First, there is the issue of the “legality” of armed intervention without the authorization of the Security Council (Kosovo), or when there is an abuse of this authorization – for instance, when the objective of the mission is no longer to protect civilians but rather to bring about regime change (Libya). In recent years, Brazilian diplomacy has developed the interesting and inventive concept of “responsibility while protecting”, which can put a halt to some of the interventionist furor of the last two decades. Something more than an imaginative concept will be needed, though, to prevent the political goals and simplistic views of the “right side of history” from causing once again greater tragedies than those that are allegedly being avoided.

\*\*\*

As I was no longer in any government position, I was surprised when I received the invitation from the UN Secretary-General to be part of a high level committee that was to provide responses to global health crises in the wake of the eruption of the Ebola epidemic in three very poor West African countries, two of which had recently emerged from armed conflict. It is too soon to draw conclusions on the immediate and structural causes of the tragic event (which is still not entirely under control, contrary

---

killed in the earthquake.

to the impression left by the decline in media coverage), a task to which the committee will certainly dedicate itself. One aspect that can be highlighted now, though, is the key role that organizations such as MSF play in not only providing direct services to the population, but also warning the international community (multilateral institutions, countries and other entities), which, unfortunately, did not respond fast enough in this case.

In situations such as the Ebola epidemic, the independence of these organizations is fundamental. In a publication such as this one, it is worth highlighting the physical and moral courage MSF displayed in the fight against this disease, from which many of the organization's employees did not escape with their lives. But there are other issues embedded in this crisis, which require, in my view, a debate on the concept of humanitarian action. One of them has to do with political motivation. It is well known that the developed countries that were more directly involved in the crisis (with some delay) were the United States, the United Kingdom and France. It was no coincidence that each one prioritized the African nation with which it had historical ties (colonial or otherwise), which are, respectively, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Good or bad? Probably inevitable. What is key for the future is to ensure that this is done in coordination with local governments and multilateral institutions. But to delete all political motivation seems to be a utopia that the world is still far from achieving.

I will not address the debate on giving priority to structural measures (strengthening health systems) rather than to emergency measures in the case of the Ebola epidemic. However, there is an obvious difficulty in establishing a clear line between them, even though I agree that each actor or each "type" of actor should specialize in the role it can play best. As a Brazilian citizen and former coordinator of two dossiers that are intrinsically linked to humanitarian issues, I must express my concern about the



need to offer much more aid than we did if this elusive and deadly disease reaches Guinea-Bissau, a country with which we have important historical, cultural and political ties and, like us, a member of the *Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries* (CPLP). If this does happen – which unfortunately cannot be ruled out given the incidence of cases in the other Guinea (Conakry) close to the border – I do not believe that Brazil can limit its contribution in cash or in-kind. We will have to be much more active and participate directly in operations that hopefully will not be necessary – God forbid! It would be important to prepare ourselves now and seek to engage in coordinated action with the Bissau government and international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO). There would undoubtedly be a role for MSF as well.

Once again, we are faced with several dialectical issues to which I referred earlier: between political interests and purely humanitarian action; between emergency and prevention; and between the spirit of solidarity and concerns about our own public health. Beyond these conceptual dilemmas, what is important is to be prepared to act without bureaucratic delays and while respecting the sovereignty of the country with which we cooperate. Positive news about vaccines together with the recent experience with the outbreak will hopefully prevent the tragedy from spreading to one of the poorest countries in the world. But if the worst case scenario happens, the Brazilian people and the world will not understand a merely reactive attitude and little engagement on the part of the Brazilian government.





**RESCUE ZONE**

RC 19

RC 175

43008

## **Comments on MSF’s article “What not to do: how manipulated aid undermines the effectiveness of emergency response”**

Andrés Ramírez

The globalized world today, characterized by the intensification of conflicts with devastating humanitarian impacts, coincides with the rise of emerging countries that are increasingly positioning themselves, albeit timidly, as global players. Regardless of whether these countries are part of the conflict or not, the truth is that as emerging global players, they are beginning to understand the importance of being part of the donors club. Some international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have earned recognition for their experience in the humanitarian sector have noted this phenomenon and interpreted it as a window of opportunity for moving beyond traditional donor practices that are considered “negative”. This can be done – if not by traditional donors – by new stakeholders, such as Brazil, which are appearing on the international stage and can contribute to the formulation of a more effective response to this seemingly endless human drama. This is the framework in which the article by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is situated. I will comment here on this article on my own behalf, but from the perspective of an agency such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which also suffers from the ups and downs of voluntary donations. As an agency of the United Nations (UN), UNHCR’s pool of donors usually is relatively more diversified, stable and predictable than that of NGOs. However, in recent years, this situation seems to have been affected by a reversal of the trend among traditional donors, as they began to redistribute their contributions at the expense of the UN. Many traditional donors often argue that this trend derives from

the greater accountability and efficiency of some experienced NGOs. Ironically, MSF's article tacitly questions, at least in part, this justification, as it is the organization's understanding that humanitarian aid is being manipulated by at least a group of traditional donors, which, instead of contributing to the effectiveness of response to the growing number of emergencies, it actually undermines it.

This reflects the fact that the growing trend among donors to increase the amount of resources for NGOs is neither disinterested nor random. It may be based, at least in part, on the conviction that these donors might consider NGOs more likely to be influenced by their conditions and political interests. This is precisely the main concern expressed in MSF's article and it is in response to this growing risk that some effective measures to neutralize the possible negative aspects of this situation are presented.

## **Humanitarian aid**

The MSF article begins by outlining the fundamentals of humanitarian aid, which are understood to be based on a code of three basic principles: neutrality, impartiality and independence. These principles, as MSF recalls, constitute a sort of code of ethics for humanitarian workers. Commitment to these principles is at the heart of the matter. The article discusses the common limits imposed by donors as one of the "bad" practices that violate these principles. It is argued that they should not be understood as a mere lack of respect for an ethical code, but mainly as a practice that undermines the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. MSF does not consider this issue as only a matter of "principle", but rather as an element that can compromise humanitarian work and therefore endanger people's lives instead of saving them. Thus, the respect for humanitarian principles,

strictly speaking, represents a code of ethics that is not only for “humanitarian players”, but must be respected by all those who are participate in some way in the process that culminates in humanitarian action. The message is that the donors themselves must also respect humanitarian principles. This is not necessarily what happens. For many donors, these principles only apply to humanitarian workers, even though they have recently defended and even designed an entire doctrine on humanitarian intervention, which we will discuss shortly. The question, then, is: is it possible to separate humanitarian aid from politics completely?

### **Brazilian humanitarian cooperation**

MSF’s article highlights that Brazilian humanitarian cooperation has grown significantly over the past decade. This increase in cooperation, generally in response to the request of recipient countries, has the advantage of having improved the country’s image not only because of its political will to channel resources to those in need for mainly humanitarian reasons, but also because it is seen as a support that seeks to foster local production in order to contribute to the native economy by supporting local producers and traders. However, what is most important to highlight from MSF’s article is that emerging donors such as Brazil can develop alternative models that get past the “incorrect” practices of many traditional donors from the North. The article emphasizes that humanitarian issues are used to justify intervention and humanitarian assistance, which has led many NGOs – in practice and inadvertently – to become a sort of extension of some traditional donor countries’ foreign policy. What is most alarming is that their foreign policy is often interventionist and even belligerent and as a result, the efficiency of these organizations’ work is undermined. Therefore, MSF argues that Brazil could act as an important “agent of change” by defining the conceptual and operational framework of its

humanitarian cooperation policy so that it is more sensitive to populations at risk to ensure that decisions do not arise from a purely instrumentalist use of NGOs. In truth, it is not a matter of treating Brazilian humanitarian cooperation as being disconnected from its foreign policy. One must understand that, as with any other donor country, humanitarian cooperation is an integral part of its humanitarian policy, which, in turn, is a component of its foreign policy. The point is not to believe that there are countries whose humanitarian cooperation is subtracted from its foreign policy, but to understand that it is possible for some emerging countries to develop a humanitarian policy that is coherent with a non-interventionist, peaceful and culturally sensitive policy. This presupposes a policy of respecting beneficiary countries, their sovereignty and cultural practices, always on the understanding that it must not violate human rights.

## **Humanitarian rhetoric**

In MSF's opinion, the concept of "humanitarian intervention" has become a synonym of military intervention and the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) doctrine (which emerged in response to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and evolved to the 'most advanced form' of R2P), as can be seen in the selective way the doctrine has been applied. MSF is concerned with this situation, as it directly affects humanitarian NGOs that end up doing work that is part of donor countries' military strategy. It is obvious that this clearly violates the principles of humanitarian action. Even though the text does not explicitly demonstrate this, it has important implications for the safety of these organizations' humanitarian workers, especially when they operate in countries in conflict, and even more so when interventions are not carried out as part of a UN peacekeeping operation. Clear examples, which are not mentioned in the article, are the UN operations in the context of the attack on Iraq launched on March 20<sup>th</sup>,

2003 by the United States and the UK, and the bombing and armed occupation of Afghanistan by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which began in November 2001 as a result of the bombing of the twin towers. Obviously, the humanitarian work of UN agencies becomes complicated under these circumstances. The problem is not only their *de facto* insertion in the donor countries' military strategy, especially in the case of donors that are part of the coalition of occupying forces, but rather how the work of humanitarian organizations – whether they are NGOs or UN agencies – is perceived *in practice by the local population*, including the resistance groups reacting to invaders. This perception can in no way be underestimated by humanitarian stakeholders. Any underestimation of local perceptions can cause distrust among the local population and, in a worst case scenario, lead to violent attacks on aid workers, which would not be an unlikely scenario. I am not referring here to only attacks by terrorist groups and/or mercenaries, whose violent nature is consubstantial, but also to sectors of the civilian population that are susceptible to radicalization due to the frequent collateral damage often resulting in civil casualties that is caused by occupants who are often perceived as allies or funders of humanitarian workers. Furthermore, the article highlights the concrete case of invoking the R2P rhetoric to justify the humanitarian intervention in Libya, which was authorized by Security Council Resolution No. 1973. While the formal explicit goal was to guarantee the protection of citizens, in the opinion of several Security Council members that supported the resolution, it ended up being a “smoke screen” used to overthrow the Gaddafi regime.

This widely criticized experience led Brazil to formulate a proposal for an alternative to R2P, which highlights the importance of responsibility while protecting. Furthermore, the way the resolution was applied was the basis for the veto of the Security Council resolution on Syria in October 2011 by China and Rus-



sia – members of the BRICS (the group formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) – which was based on the R2P doctrine.

## **Linking humanitarian assistance to development assistance**

MSF's article also brings to light the dilemma between the characteristics of humanitarian assistance and those of development assistance: the latter is aimed at alleviating poverty in the long term, while the first focuses on saving lives in the short term. Progress has been made in uniting the two types of assistance, especially since the 1990s. In 1997, the UN had already introduced the idea of integration to address both aspects of assistance. During the reform carried out under Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security were created at the UN headquarters. This was no coincidence. In the context of the early stages of the post-Cold War era, it was a response to the major challenges raised by the terrible crisis of the Great Lakes in Africa and the Balkans before the collapse of former Yugoslavia. As MSF explains, the attempt at integration sought to align political, military and humanitarian aid objectives. However, in the authors' opinion, as development is a long-term process, it involves a highly political process that seeks to alleviate structural inequality and poverty. In the post-Cold War era, this involved a process of promoting Western liberal democracy, which is different from humanitarian assistance that is intended to save human lives and that demands respect for the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. As MSF's article indicates, the NGOs that were actively working with this global approach in the humanitarian field found themselves caught in a situation where they faced the dilemma of either crossing the boundaries of humanitarian work or being per-

ceived as supporting one of the parties of the conflict. For the authors, development and humanitarian assistance are generally incompatible and merging both types of assistance is seen as a contradiction. Here, I would like to mention that linking humanitarian assistance to development assistance does not necessarily mean that one is combining two contradictory aspects. In fact, they are often two sides of the same coin.

For UNHCR, the most effective strategy would be to adopt an approach that contains measures to help refugees achieve self-sustainability during the initial phase of emergency response efforts, as this would lead to an early break with the “assistentialist” vision that reproduces and perpetuates dependency on aid. Also, as argued in the article, humanitarian assistance, in practice, often ignores humanitarian principles. What is questionable, however, is not so much development assistance per se, but the specific model of development that this type of assistance supports and strengthens. The authors do not, in fact, propose alternatives when they refer to this development model as the one that arose in the post-Cold War era and that, from their perspective, involves a process of promoting “Western liberal democracy”. We can agree that *this* development model can indeed result in, or intend to result in, the imposition of “Western liberal democracy”. Yet, it is obviously this way because it is the model of development that traditional donors have adopted for themselves and therefore, they wish to use aid to export and establish it “in their own image and likeness” in recipient countries. It is not, however, the only model that can be applied. It appears to be wrong, then, to consider “humanitarian aid” and “development assistance” as being necessarily incompatible. This position could lead humanitarian organizations to a dead end - as it is clear that donors will not, nor cannot, renounce to “development assistance” – or to be stigmatized as “assistentialist” or “enemies of development”. Instead, aid agencies need to defend humanitarian principles for

their humanitarian activities and demand a development policy that respects national values, is inclusive and self-sustainable, has a gender perspective, and respects human rights and the environment.

## **Post-9/11 and stabilization**

The article refers to the definition of the Stabilization Unit of the UK Department for International Development, created after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, which understands stabilization as a mechanism for addressing the underlying causes of humanitarian assistance and development assistance. According to MSF's article, the combination of these kinds of assistance via multiple-mandated organizations, including those with a humanitarian dimension, means that they may be seen as part of a global effort that is susceptible of being attacked. For UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations working to support certain categories of people, including refugees and other relevant groups, the post-9/11 era represents a watershed. More restrictive policies have been established in several countries in the northern hemisphere, namely in the US with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002, which paved the way for the stigmatization of certain nationalities on the grounds that their people could be terrorists. This element cannot be ignored in analyses of the post-9/11 era. It is also related to the issue of the denial of aid. As the text states, counter-terror legislation seeks to sanction any form of support to "designated terrorists". These regulations also aim to prevent "humanitarian organizations from having direct contact" and, therefore, negotiating with "designated groups". The article concludes that this legislation subjects humanitarian impartiality to the decisions of hegemonic powers and the criminalization of aid can define the limits of humanitarian work. Here, one can give the example of Syria, a place where MSF has more flexibility to work, unlike other or-

ganizations that are subject to the rules imposed by donors. The stigma of terrorism undoubtedly has prevented UNHCR from dialoguing with groups with which it had previously engaged in talks without any problems, such as the FARC in Colombia and the Taliban in Afghanistan, to name just a few. One interesting case was the successful negotiations headed by Sergio Vieira de Mello, a UNHCR employee at the time, with the dreaded Khmer Rouge to guarantee the repatriation of Cambodian nationals in 1991. These appointments are often completely arbitrary and may change according to the circumstances and the whims of the powers that establish them. This puts humanitarian organizations in situations that oscillate back and forth, which causes them to lose credibility with the people with whom they work.

### **Effectiveness of humanitarian aid**

In addition to the discussion on “the link between humanitarian assistance and development assistance” that I referred to earlier, it is interesting to note MSF’s criticism of the existence of the UN Integrated Missions, which leads to the development of humanitarian action under the aegis of political and military considerations. The article cites Jordan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as examples. When referring to the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for South Sudan, the authors emphasize that at every stage, aid delivery was subordinated to long-term political goals. However, as argued in the article, MSF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were recognized by the CAP as the main providers of humanitarian aid despite not having adhered to the said agreement. It thus highlights that the success of MSF’s humanitarian aid was due to not only for conducting its work outside of the CAP, but also because this meant that it would not receive funds from the agreement, which allowed the organization to work with financial autonomy. This last aspect was

emphasized as a key element for guaranteeing that MSF would not be affected by the manipulation of humanitarian aid. The strategy for achieving this objective consisted of raising funds from individuals in the 28 countries in which MSF has offices. As the majority of its funds comes from private sources, the organization has made significant progress in killing two birds with one stone: a) steering clear of the manipulation of humanitarian aid; and b) responding to emergencies faster since it does not have to wait for funds to be released. What is more, this strategy allows the organization to avoid the problems in the “multi-mandated” approach which, in the authors’ opinion, reduce the ability to respond to emergencies. However, it is clear that MSF is still associated with decision-making centres concentrated in Europe and the humanitarian system of the Western powers. Even though it has tried to distinguish its positions by releasing public statements, it is clear that this was insufficient and that it is necessary to move forward in building broader alliances with civil society. In other words, an important step is recognizing that MSF is part of a common struggle together with similar organizations that suffer similar problems related to organizational issues and the pressures and constraints of an increasingly globalized world, while being subject to the *diktat* of the same hegemonic powers.

As part of the UN system, UNHCR cannot escape the “integrated missions”, which are a double-edged sword. There are several examples of this. I will mention the case of Afghanistan, which is especially delicate because of the integrated operation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Unama) whose mandate (which was recently renewed in March of this year) began in the context of a NATO occupation. In August 2003, NATO took over the control of Isaf (UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force). Unama’s mandate covers political affairs, electoral processes, human rights, peace and reconciliation issues, etc. Together with other UN agencies, and as in

all operations, UNHCR is a part of the Country Team and the Senior Security Management Team. The explicit prohibition on establishing a one-off contact with the Taliban for operational reasons limited UNHCR operations ostensibly. It was often necessary to use remote control mechanisms via local NGOs for security regions. While the agency normally dialogues freely with one of the parties to the conflict in order to inform them of plans for repatriation of refugees and other relocation operations, which is essential for safety, the same does not occur with the Taliban. This has clearly affected the effectiveness of the humanitarian operation and protection.

## **Conclusion**

Recognizing that the current dynamics are creating a favorable environment for the emergence of new actors in the field of international humanitarian cooperation, MSF's article concludes that countries like Brazil have the potential to establish themselves as alternative donors that respect humanitarian organizations and are capable of affirming a position for themselves at the international level that is independent from the hegemonic powers. As an example, I would add the clear and independent humanitarian stance Brazil took towards the R2P doctrine under question, when it formulated the alternative proposal of "responsibility while protecting". This proposal conveyed a strong message that clearly emphasized the need to understand that a humanitarian intervention must in no way cause more human suffering than already exists amid the tragic dynamics of increasingly frequent conflicts. It is clear that the first steps are the hardest and Brazil's potential as an emerging donor, which is highlighted well in MSF's article, will necessarily have to go through a stage of administrative adaptation, consolidation and institutional strengthening. It also requires more agile and predictable procedures that are not subject to partisan insta-

bility and changes in the political context to be established. Brazil has shown its size, will and humanitarian vocation. These qualities will undoubtedly be decisive for turning this potential into a reality sooner or later. In the case of agencies such as the UNHCR, the strategy it should use to strengthen its capacity to raise voluntary resources is to consolidate a more diverse platform of donor countries, including emerging donors such as Brazil, while advancing in the development of a more effective and modern policy on raising funds from private sources.







## Humanitarian crises, cooperation and the role of Brazil: the experience of CGFome

Minister Milton Rondó Filho

Brazilian humanitarian cooperation efforts began in an organized manner in 2006. That year, the Israeli air attack on southern Lebanon, the region of origin of many Brazilians, brought many unexpected challenges. Thousands of Brazilian citizens had to be evacuated in a very short period of time and under extremely difficult conditions: the banks had no cash, land transportation prices were rising daily and there was the risk of bombardment on the roads leading to the border.

The evacuation was a large scale operation that required precise tactics and strategy on everything from the decision to not withdraw the ambassador in Tel Aviv so he could negotiate a safe passage for the buses that were to Brazilian citizens out of the country to the entry of cash into Lebanon to pay for the buses, since the banks no longer had any cash.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) realized that it did not have – not even close to – the necessary means to face an emergency of this size. Previous governments had organized hardly anything in the field of international humanitarian cooperation. Fortunately, this observation coincided with the creation of the unit that was to be the international interface of the MRE’s “Zero Hunger” (*Fome Zero*) strategy: the General Coordination of International Actions Against Hunger (CGFome). When CGFome took charge of the international relations of that strategy, it began dealing with emergency issues and the institutions responsible

for them, such as the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), among others. At the international level, collaboration on emergency issues was transformed into humanitarian cooperation, which assimilated *Fome Zero's* two-track strategy: emergency response and structuring actions.

The MRE Secretary General at the time, Ambassador Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, immediately proposed to then Foreign Minister Celso Amorim the creation of a budget line that could cover the costs of humanitarian operations. For the first time in the MRE's history, plans to provide financial resources for humanitarian cooperation were made.

It was a modest beginning, yet it allowed a whole new agenda to take shape in the MRE, a ministry that was not very inclined to working on poverty and whose agenda on this probably dated back to the conflict in Acre, whose outcome had been successfully negotiated by the Baron/Barão of Rio Branco. Even the diplomats in charge of this matter in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to undergo training, including on administrative issues related to humanitarian cooperation. Procedures had to be established for managing the country's humanitarian contributions to international organizations, which eventually accounted for close to 95% of Brazilian donations to international humanitarian cooperation operations.

From 2006 on, the funds allocated to international humanitarian cooperation grew exponentially each year, up until 2010, the year of the earthquake in Haiti. That was when the National Congress approved a donation of US\$55 million to support the earthquake victims and contribute to resilience building in Haiti. In parallel, Brazil began to donate food internationally. As the second largest exporter of agricultural products, it could not help but contribute food in order to alleviate hunger in a world where

842 million people still suffered from this scourge. While there was no record of significant contributions made to WFP prior to 2006, Brazil became its seventh largest contributor in 2012, surpassed only by the richest countries on the planet. Hundreds of thousands of tons of food – mainly rice, beans and corn – were donated.

Accordingly, the Brazilian government launched a process to discuss the national strategy for humanitarian cooperation. It initiated an internal debate, mainly within the Inter-ministerial Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance (GTI-AHI). Created by presidential decree, the working group was composed of 15 ministries and also by civil society representatives.

In this context, concepts were revisited and redefined, such as:

1) “South-South cooperation”, which we began to call “horizontal cooperation”, as the former term lacked substance. It is not a question of belonging to one hemisphere or the other, but rather how cooperation is carried out. It can be “horizontal” or “dialogic”, in the words of Paulo Freire, even among countries with varying levels of development and that are geographical antipodes;

2) “Natural disasters”, which became “socio-environmental disasters”. This term includes wars, internal civil conflicts and environmental disasters such as floods, droughts, landslides, tornadoes and hurricanes, among others;

3) The concept of “criteria for saving lives”, adopted by international organizations, had become very limited and thus unsustainable, since it did not consider the importance of preserving the livelihoods of the affected people. If this is not taken into consideration, the allocation of economic resources would be

inefficient, as it would not be sustainable in the long run, nor would it generate resilience or reduce the risk of disasters in the future;

4) In fact, probably Brazil's greatest contribution to humanitarian cooperation is its association of emergency response to structuring actions, which are the only ones capable of stopping disasters from reoccurring;

5) For this reason, the Brazilian government evolved from the concept of "humanitarian aid" to "humanitarian assistance", and finally to "humanitarian cooperation", which best expresses the horizontal collaboration among international actors it desires to achieve;

6) Furthermore, the Brazilian government rejected the term "donor" and preferred to be considered a "partner";

7) All of these factors made it clear that humanitarian cooperation should also be developed under the framework of social, economic and environmental sustainability established by the Rio 92 and Rio + 20 conferences to avoid crises from being "protracted".





# Humanitarian cooperation in the world today: how can Brazil best contribute?

Cynthia Jones

## Global context

Before examining Brazil's role in humanitarian crises and cooperation, it is important to discuss the global humanitarian situation in mid-2015<sup>1</sup>, in the lead up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which will reshape the world's response to humanitarian crises and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a very important moment of reflection for all UN Member States and all nations concerned with addressing hunger, poverty and inequality. Brazil has much to offer, but falls short of the mark as one of the 10 largest economies in the world.

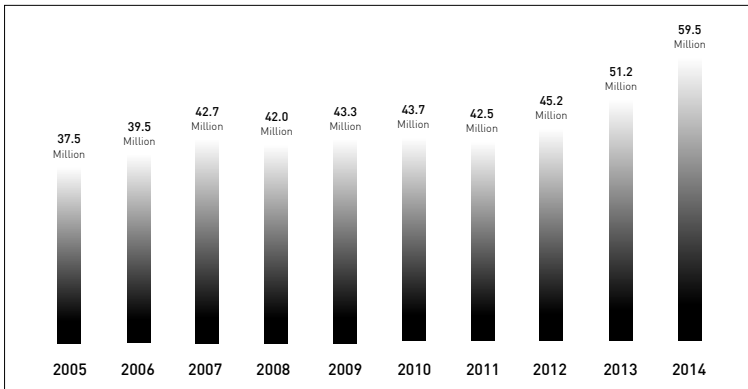
The humanitarian situation today is alarming. There are more refugees and displaced persons in the world now than at any other point in history. In its global report<sup>2</sup>, UNHCR says the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million compared to 51.2 million one year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago (figure 1). The increase represents the biggest leap ever seen in a single year. Moreover, the report said the situation was likely to get even worse. The crisis in Syria has been a major contributor to the increase.

---

<sup>1</sup> World Humanitarian Summit Website.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2014. Available from: <[http://www.unhcr.org/2014trends/#\\_ga=1.21581496.2083257403.1441136976](http://www.unhcr.org/2014trends/#_ga=1.21581496.2083257403.1441136976)>.





UNHCR 2014 Global Trends Report.

**Figure 1.** The number of people displaced by war has reached a staggering new high.

Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum. If this figure were expressed as the population of a country, it would be the 24<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. These people are food insecure and vulnerable, have lost their livelihoods and have limited to no means. These figures do not factor in the increasing number of economic migrants. Globally, there were 232 million international migrants in 2013. Between 1990 and 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide rose by over 77 million people, or by 50%. While many of them are outside the remit of the world humanitarian apparatus, this burden will increasingly fall on the international community and put more demand on a system that is struggling to keep up to pace.

In 2013, natural disasters once again had devastating impacts on human society.<sup>3</sup> Worldwide, 330 reported natural disasters caused

<sup>3</sup> Guha-Sapir, D.; Hoyois, P.; Below, R. *Annual disaster statistical review 2013: the numbers and trends*. Brussels: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (Cred). Available from: <[cred.be/sites/default/files/ADSR\\_](http://cred.be/sites/default/files/ADSR_)

the death of more than 21,610 people, turned 96.5 million people into victims and provoked US\$118.6 billion in damages. A total of 108 countries were hit by these disasters. In the last few years, the number of natural disasters and their victims have tapered off, when compared with annual averages between 2003- 2012. During this period, statistics reveal an annual average of 388 disasters, 106,654 persons killed, 216 million affected and US\$156.7 million in damages. The poor are disproportionately affected and require humanitarian assistance to get through the aftermath and back on the road to recovery. There also remains the constant risk of the next major catastrophe being on the same scale as the tsunami, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in Haiti.

Who will provide the much-needed humanitarian relief to respond to this increasing demand? The food, shelter, health, water and sanitation services to these vulnerable people who have been uprooted by conflict or disasters? Who will finance all of this? What is the best way to deliver it? And what is the role of emerging economies such as the BRICS? While long-term structural approaches such as building the resilience of vulnerable people and setting up national social protection systems are essential, they cannot respond or meet the needs of massive sudden onset emergencies that outstrip any national government's capacity to respond.

In 2003, many key donors endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship<sup>4</sup>, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, Sweden and Switzerland. Even with the world looking to the World

---

2013.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Good Humanitarian Donorship. *23 principles and good practice of Humanitarian Donorship*, 2003. Available from: <<https://www.worldhumanitarian-summit.org/node/434472>>.

Humanitarian Summit, these principles are still valid today, establish the objectives and define what good humanitarian action is.

1) The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.

2) Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; impartiality, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; neutrality, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and independence, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

3) Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

4) Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.

5) While reaffirming the primary responsibility of the state for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding on the basis of the collective obligation to strive to meet humanitarian needs.

6) Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.

7) Request implementing humanitarian organizations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.

8) Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.

9) Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.

10) Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in implementing humanitarian action.

The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade and is expected to keep rising<sup>5</sup>. Today, more people are affected by conflict and disaster more

---

<sup>5</sup> WFP. *The 2013 annual performance report*. Available from: <<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp265227.pdf>>.

frequently and for longer periods of time than in previous decades. Humanitarian action must continue to evolve in order to keep pace with our rapidly changing world and meet the needs of millions of people now and in years to come. National capacity to respond to large scale crises and disasters is insufficient.

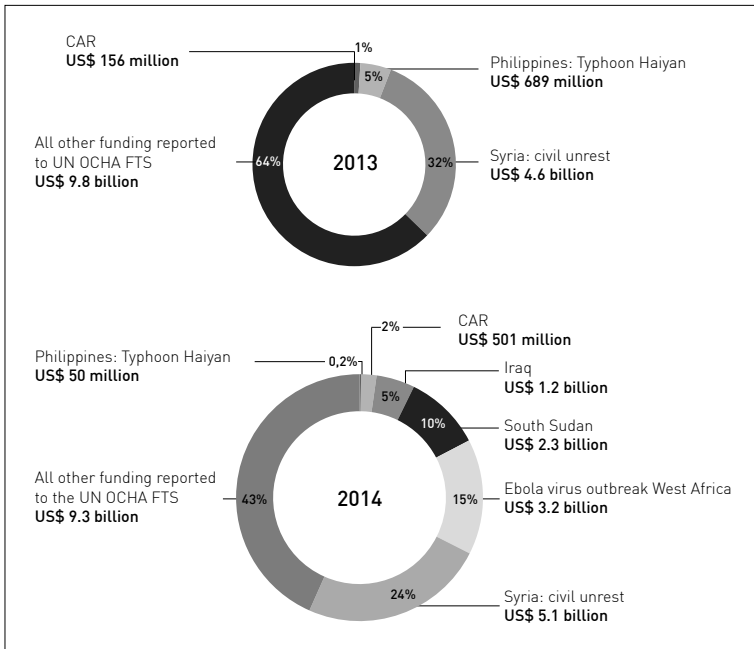
To provide a case in point about the increasing demand on the humanitarian system, the voluntarily-funded World Food Programme (WFP), which is the largest humanitarian organization in the world, had a record-breaking year in 2014.<sup>6</sup> A total of US\$5.38 billion in contributions was received; this was the largest amount in WFP history and 27% higher than the 2013 total. This amount reflects the extraordinary number of major emergencies that WFP responded to that year. In 2014, WFP reached 80 million affected persons with food assistance in 82 countries. Children remained the primary target for WFP support and accounted for 64% of total beneficiaries.

WFP assisted more than 42 million people in emergencies. It responded to six Level 3 (L3) emergencies. The L3 designation, the highest on the emergency scale, indicates to the international community that help is desperately and urgently needed, and to WFP, that a global mobilization and collective response is needed to support in-country efforts. The L3 emergencies are as follows (figure 2):

- *Central African Republic*: WFP assisted more than a million people who were forced to flee their homes due to the breakdown of law and order.
- *Iraq*: Conflict throughout vast parts of the country in the summer of 2014 triggered widespread internal displacement and

---

<sup>6</sup> Idem.



**Figure 2.** Funding to WFP L3 emergencies plus Ebola and all other funding reported to FTS, 2013 and 2014.

generated overwhelming humanitarian needs. WFP responded by providing food assistance to some 2.2 million people.

- *Philippines:* WFP provided more than 2 million people with food and cash following the Super-Typhoon Haiyan that smashed into the Philippines archipelago in 2013 and posed a logistics challenge that required massive resource mobilization.
- *South Sudan:* The conflict pushed millions into food insecurity in the world’s newest country. Even before the conflict began, WFP had been assisting more than 2 million people.
- *Syria:* The Syrian Regional Emergency continued to be WFP’s largest and most complex operation. WFP provided food for

as many as 4.9 million people inside Syria and assisted more than a million refugees in neighbouring countries.

- *West Africa*: the 2014 Ebola epidemic was the largest in history, affecting multiple countries in West Africa: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In response, WFP provided critically needed food to more than 2 million people, logistics expertise to humanitarian agencies and built treatment centres in all three countries.

The declaration of a Level 3 emergency is part of a broader push from humanitarian agencies to have a more predictable, accountable and cost-efficient response.<sup>7</sup> It is a new process and inevitably, it raises questions not only on the impact of L3 declarations, but also about the changes these declarations are meant to bring about, notably on coordination mechanisms and accountability to affected populations.

## **World Humanitarian Summit 2016<sup>8</sup>**

The last global discussion on humanitarian action took place almost 25 years ago. Since then, the humanitarian landscape has changed tremendously. There have been global economic and demographic changes, such as urbanization, as well as great technological advances. At the same time, humanity is facing new challenges caused by global trends such as climate change and rapid population growth. In the two years leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit, extensive consultations are being held to gather the perspectives, priorities and recommendations of all stakeholders on what can be done to make humanitarian action adequate for the future. The goal is to build a more inclu-

---

<sup>7</sup> Idem.

<sup>8</sup> World Humanitarian Summit Website.

sive and diverse humanitarian system by sharing best practices and searching for new paths to resilience and innovative ways to make humanitarian action more effective. The process will culminate in a global summit in 2016 and will reshape the humanitarian preparedness and response system.

Some of the key issues on the table for debate in the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 are:

1) *Reducing vulnerability and managing risk.* How humanitarian aid can more effectively support countries and communities in building resilience to the changing nature of shocks and stresses, including recurrent and predictable shocks and uncertainties in the future.

2) *Humanitarian effectiveness.* The growing needs and the changing context of emergencies mean that pressure to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action is building. The preparations for the WHS will look for ways to do with the collaboration of all the actors involved. The debates on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid must explore how to meet the humanitarian needs of all people with timely and appropriate aid delivered in a sustainable manner.

3) *Transformation through innovation.* Introduce new ideas and methods in flexible and uncommon ways. Put differently, innovation is an umbrella term for concerted efforts to respond to new challenges or a changing context, to improve existing programmes or to integrate new developments from other sectors, such as advanced technologies. The issue is being raised so as to generate greater commitment and a new drive to invest in the proposed models for effective humanitarian innovation, which allow new and/or improved models to be researched, developed and scaled up to achieve breakthroughs on challenges affecting the humanitarian field;



4) *Serving the needs of people in conflict.* The scale, intensity and duration of armed conflicts, including the massive displacement of people, continue to create immense humanitarian need. Work under this theme will include identifying more effective strategies and methods to provide assistance and protection to people affected by conflict, even in areas where combat exists.

Situations of protracted conflict and violence are creating increasingly large numbers of both refugees and internally displaced persons. In addition to the rise in the overall numbers, there is also a noticeable shift in the geography of displacement. The largest numbers of displaced people are no longer only in Africa but also in countries in the Middle East region. Conflicts in Syria and Iraq have largely been driving this trend. Last year, millions of Syrian refugees continued to cross borders into Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt to seek safety and protection.

## **Financing humanitarian aid and disaster response**

Now more than ever, discussions are focused on funding for crisis response and for reducing vulnerability and risk. This is due to two elements: the urgent challenge of meeting growing humanitarian needs with limited resources and the unique opportunity to develop solutions that are the result of a set of global processes underway in 2015 and 2016.<sup>9</sup>

The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Report<sup>10</sup> 2015 provides evidence that helps to understand the increase in demand and that serves as input for the global processes underway. The challenge posed by increasing demand is caused by both the rise in the amount of people affected by crises and the expansion of

---

<sup>9</sup> Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

the scope of what humanitarian action is and what it is for. In other words, while we need to reach an enormous contingent of people hit by the crises, such as the ones in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and West Africa, resources are also required to address a broader spectrum of needs: from disaster risk reduction to protracted response and recovery.

Despite record levels of international humanitarian assistance, the resources available are not enough to meet all demands. The problem of scarcity persists. While it is clear that meeting people's needs depends on many nonmonetary factors, including access and appropriate capacity, a needs-based response cannot be provided without an adequate amount of funding. The solutions to this dilemma lie both within and beyond humanitarian financing.

This is why the global processes in 2015 and 2016 are so important.<sup>11</sup> In relation to funding for humanitarian aid, there is a need to improve sufficiency and efficiency – sufficiency through an increase in resources from a diverse range of donors and efficiency through more intelligent ways of obtaining them. There is a need to understand and better mobilize other resources, both public and private – such as domestic, development, climate and security-related resources – in order to end poverty, reduce vulnerability and build resilience. After all, people need international humanitarian aid only when the other resources available to them prove inadequate. Where adequate provisions exist, a shock does not become a humanitarian crisis and a crisis does not become chronic.

There have been many calls to focus international humanitarian aid once again on what is described as its “critical mission”. To do so, others stakeholders (including providers of development, private and domestic resources) must assume the task of meeting ba-

sis needs and, in some cases, responding to crises. The conflict in Syria, Typhoon Haiyan and the Ebola virus outbreak highlighted the need, in the case of an emergency, to provide responses that combine different types of resources based on the nature of the crisis, existing capacities and the context. Different types of crises (conflict, natural disaster and epidemics) emerging in very different political, economic and geographic contexts were what indicated the roles that national governments, the private sector, development aid and the different configurations of humanitarian donors can play.

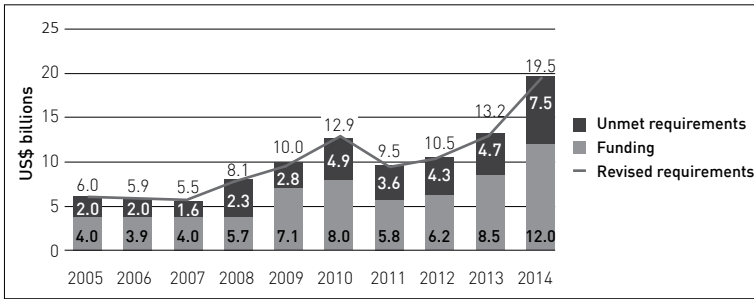
No two crisis will be exactly the same and therefore, the mix of resources will always have to vary to fully address needs.<sup>12</sup> Throughout this article, we drew comparisons and made distinctions between conflict situations and natural disasters, between income levels and capacity to cope with crises and between the phase and the duration of a humanitarian response. Ultimately, regardless of the context, individuals must have the necessary resources to prepare for, withstand and become resilient to crises: no one should be left behind.

Given that 93% of people living in extreme poverty (with less than \$1.25 per day) are also in countries that are politically fragile, environmentally vulnerable or both, it is clear that poverty, vulnerability, risk and crisis must be tackled together. The needs of the people affected by crises are multi-dimensional and, therefore, the collective test of effectiveness for all stakeholders should be the same: the impact of their actions on the inter-connected needs of the affected populations. The outcomes of the 2015 and 2016 global processes and their implementation have the potential to unite communities with different levels of development and disaster and climate risk around this vision and to mobilize means of financing for it.

---

<sup>12</sup> Idem.

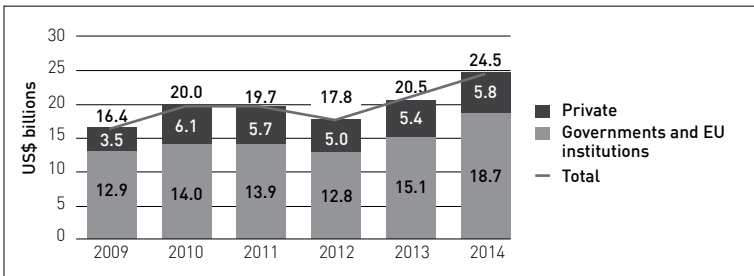
While all the global processes currently underway refer to aspects of risk and resilience to some extent and even though some links have been established, they have varying degrees of relevance to financing and coherence with one another. For example, the



**Source:** Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS and UNHCR data.

**Notes:** 2012 data includes the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) 2012 monitored by UNHCR. UN-coordinated appeals include strategic response plans (SRP) and those inside and outside the previously named consolidated appeals process (CAP). 2014 data includes the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak Response Plan. Funding to the Ebola Response Plan 2014 is calculated using decision dates up to and including 31 December 2014. 2014 data includes the Ebola appeal. Data is in current prices.

**Figure 3.** Funding and unmet requirements, UN-coordinated appeals, 2005-2014.



**Source:** Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC, UN OCHA FTS, Central Emergency Response Fund, International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook, UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination data and GHA’s unique dataset for private contributions.

**Notes:** Figures for 2014 are preliminary estimates. Totals for some years may be different from those reported in previous GHA reports due to updated data and methodology. Private figures are in current prices (see Data & Guides for full methodology).

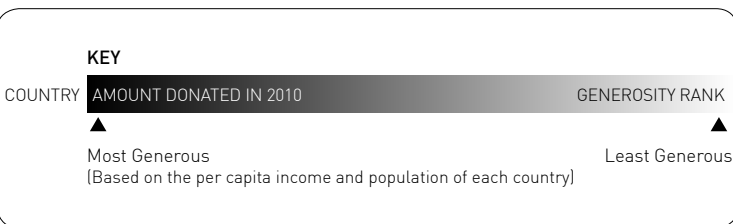
**Figure 4.** International humanitarian response, 2009-2014.

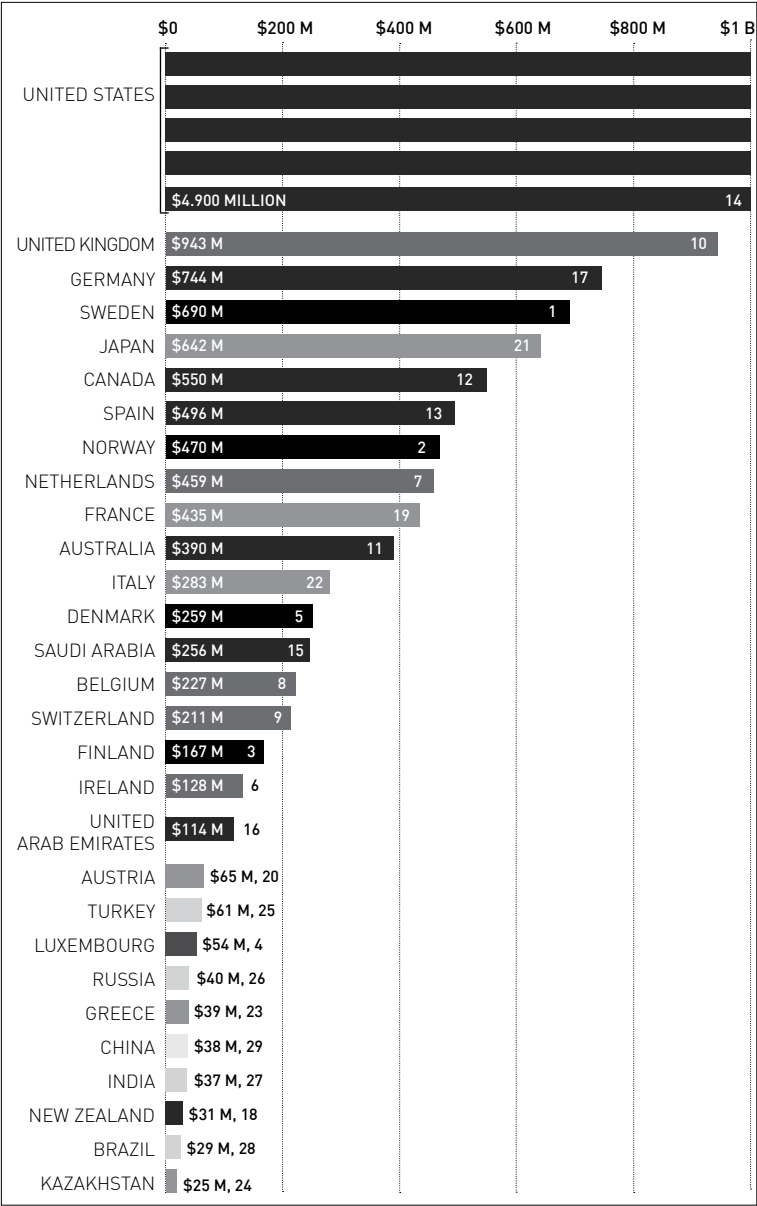
World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction set targets for disaster risk reduction, but provided no financing plan. The WHS will not produce inter-governmental agreements, but it is likely to give rise to a number of initiatives on humanitarian aid financing (figure 3). What all of these processes have in common, however, is the need for timely, comprehensive and transparent data on who needs what and what resources are and could be available to meet these needs (figure 4).

With the growing gap between global humanitarian needs and financing, it is worth examining which countries are actually providing resources for humanitarian responses. Although the United States provides the most in absolute terms, the Nordic countries are the most generous in terms of their per capita income (figure 5). Considering their size and potential, the BRICS and other middle income countries (MICs) are falling behind. Brazil is in the lead when compared to the rest of Latin America. But it is clear that in order for the humanitarian system to be able respond effectively, greater commitment from these countries is required. What are the challenges or barriers to getting more involved in multilateralism and donations for humanitarian aid that these countries face? Is it a lack of confidence, understanding of or

*The United States may have donated the most money to humanitarian causes in 2010, but when one takes into account the size and wealth of each country, Sweden is the most generous in the world.*

*All countries that donated more than \$25 million in 2010, in order of amount donated and color coded by level of generosity:*





By Lisa Mahapatra for International Business Times.  
Source: Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2012.

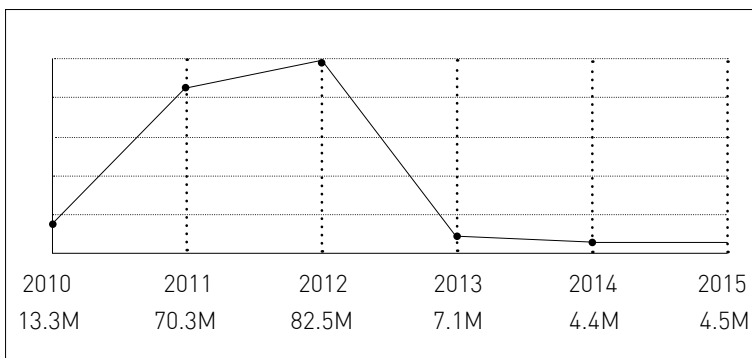
Figure 5. The most generous countries in the world.

belief in the current humanitarian system? Are they still in the transition from aid recipient to donor and thus, lack the legislation and institutional frameworks needed for humanitarian cooperation? It is surely a combination of multiple factors.

## The Brazilian context

According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015,<sup>13</sup> Brazil is a relatively small donor of humanitarian aid: it ranks 34<sup>th</sup> in terms of volume and 53<sup>rd</sup> in terms of international humanitarian assistance as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). Humanitarian assistance from Brazil amounted to US\$124 million between 2005 and 2014. Its US\$14.9 million contribution in 2014 was almost six times that of 2005 (US\$2.6 million).

Contributions peaked in 2012 at US\$52.4 million with much allocated to WFP in the form of in-kind food donations (figure 6).



Source: WFP data base.

**Figure 6.** Brazil's contributions to WFP between 2010 and 2015 (in millions of US\$)

<sup>13</sup> Idem.

The food donations were not accompanied by additional funding to cover the costs of transporting, monitoring and distributing the food to the affected population. Funding for these costs were raised by twinning Brazil's contribution with other international donors that had an interest in supporting a greater role for Brazil in humanitarian assistance. These efforts were intended to encourage Brazil to move to the next level of full-cost recovery on its donations by providing both the food and funds to cover transportation costs. This transition has still not been made and even though Brazil continues to work to provide food, it has not been able to convince its leadership of the need to provide funding to cover the related costs. As a result, the support of other donors is dwindling. After becoming one of WFP's top 10 donors in 2012, Brazil's contributions have drastically tapered off due to the lack of funding for the associated costs.

Brazil also directed funding through pooled funds, such as the multilateral United Nations Central Emergency Response Funds (Cerf). The Cerf is one of the fastest and most effective ways to support rapid humanitarian response for people affected by natural disasters and armed conflict. Cerf receives voluntary contributions year-round to provide immediate funding for life-saving humanitarian action anywhere in the world. This mechanism set aside funding for immediate use at the onset of emergencies, in rapidly deteriorating situations and in protracted crises that fail to attract sufficient resources. Between 2006 and 2015, Brazil donated a total of US\$3.4 million to Cerf and is near the bottom of the list of BRICS making contributions to the Cerf in this period, with Russia providing US\$10 million, India and China providing US\$5.5 million each and South Africa providing US\$2.4 million. In contrast, the Cerf's top donor, the UK, provided US\$809 million over the same period – a staggering contrast when one considers that the UK and Brazil have similar sized economies.



Although Brazil's cash donations are rather insignificant, the country is of strategic importance. One of a small group of countries that has been both donor and recipient over the last decade, it is also a member of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Group and one of the increasingly influential BRICS economies. Brazil is a founding member of the BRICS' New Development Bank. It has also long been a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. In 2010, Brazilian investments in peacekeeping operations peaked at US\$328 million (36% of total development cooperation from Brazil). A key player on the development stage in the post-2015 discussions, Brazil is hailed as a positive example for reducing its national rate of extreme poverty by almost three quarters: it went beyond the Millennium Development Goal to halve rates by 2015. Brazil has served as the inspiration for the UN Secretary General's Zero Hunger Challenges, which shaped Sustainable Development Goal 2 on Hunger as follows:

**Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture**

1. by 2030 end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round
2. by 2030 end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving by 2025 the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons
3. by 2030 double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other pro-

ductive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

4. by 2030 ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality
5. by 2020 maintain genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at national, regional and international levels, and ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge as internationally agreed

Other developing countries have expressed interest in learning from this experience. Brazil is a leading proponent of South-South cooperation and promotes solidarity with developing countries, non-interference in domestic affairs, equality in relationships with other developing countries and demand-driven cooperation. Humanitarian assistance represented 17% of Brazil's development assistance in 2010 (the latest date for which the most comprehensive reporting is available) and is primarily managed by the General Coordination for International Actions against Hunger (CGFome). CGFome coordinates the Inter-ministerial Working Group on International Humanitarian Assistance, which oversees requests for assistance by affected countries. Brazil does not have a formal humanitarian assistance policy and lacks an enabling institutional and legal framework. In practice CGFome favours a 'structural approach' that views humanitarian interven-

tion as an opportunity to build long-term, sustainable solutions that will prevent crises from enduring and recurring.

## **How can Brazil best contribute?**

Brazil's comparable advantage clearly lies in the possibility of sharing its experiences in fighting hunger, improving food security and nutrition and building integrated social protection systems through South-South cooperation. Partnerships with UN organizations such as WFP, which created the Centre of Excellence against Hunger, and the United Nations Development Programme, which created the RIO+ Centre, have broadened the opportunities to share Brazil's experiences more. There is a strong demand from other nations of the South that are looking for models, approaches and lessons learnt to help them scale up their own national food security and social protection systems. Brazil's work and efforts will bear fruit in the long term. Yet, Brazil still needs to help shoulder the short-term humanitarian assistance burdens of massive displacements that leave affected populations with no access to food, markets or social protection in order to save lives in the immediate aftermath of a sudden emergency. Brazil needs to find ways to increase its humanitarian budget to support other countries.

The first thing that Brazil can do is to agree to some benchmarks for humanitarian assistance financing. In 2010, Brazil dedicated the equivalent of 0.02% of GDP to foreign aid.<sup>14</sup> Even though only a few countries in the world, such as the UK and the Nordic countries, have met the UN target of allocating 0.7% of GDP to foreign assistance, Brazil can start to increase its target gradually over time. The most effective way for the country to contribute

---

<sup>14</sup> *Brazil's 2013 key figures global humanitarian assistance*. Available from: <<http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/brazil>>.

initially would be to adopt a multilateral approach and increase its contribution to pooled funds, such as CERF; to efficient humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR, WFP, Unicef; and global NGOs with on-the-ground expertise such as MSF, Save the Children and others.

The Brazilian government also needs to strengthen its institutional capacity and legal frameworks for the management of international humanitarian assistance. Currently, to make an international contribution, a bill that allows the government to finance actions outside the country must be approved in the National Congress. Despite CGFome's efforts to raise awareness among decision-makers and increase humanitarian aid in Brazil, the institution has limited staff and financial resources.

As Brazil has been so successful in mobilizing civil society to fight hunger and poverty within the country, it can do more to raise awareness on the plight of refugees, displaced persons and others affected by conflicts and disasters abroad. As it is quite isolated geographically from the conflicts in the Middle East and Africa and the chronic disasters hitting Asia, it may be difficult to get public support for a more significant role for Brazil, but the process to build awareness must be started. The challenge is the same for any other middle income country (MIC) in which a portion of its population continues to live in poverty.

The World Humanitarian Summit and the post 2015 agenda need the MICs and Brazil's commitment, leadership, know-how and resources now more than ever. Without a meaningful commitment by the BRICS to shaping and moving these agendas forward, millions will continue to suffer, as needs grow and the financing gap widens.



## INTERVIEWS

### The Global South tries to create its own concepts for international cooperation

Carlos Milani

Political scientist and specialist in international relations Carlos Milani is currently a professor at the Institute of Social and Political Studies (Iesp) at the Rio de Janeiro State University (Uerj) and a researcher at the National Council of Technological and Scientific Development (CNPq) and at the Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Faperj). He is also the author of several books, articles and studies on Brazilian foreign policy, international cooperation and the participation of civil society in the foreign policy agenda. Milani is a co-author of the *Atlas of Brazilian Foreign Policy* published by the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (Clasco) in 2015, which is available in Spanish and English. In this interview, he analyzes the recent experiences of Brazil and other countries from the Global South with “humanitarian cooperation” programmes and practices.

#### **Does Brazil have a humanitarian aid policy? If not, should it have one?**

Until recently, Brazil was developing a series of practices in the field of humanitarian cooperation. Like other countries of the “Global South”, the Brazilian government does not use the term “development aid” or “humanitarian aid”. The term “aid” has strong connotations. A symbolic and political space on South-South cooperation has been generated among numerous countries of the South – including Brazil, India, China and South Africa – that began to gradually build their own narrative on what development, international cooperation for development and

humanitarian cooperation are. Although these countries' practices in the area of development cooperation and humanitarian cooperation may date back to decades ago (mainly the 1950s and 1960s), the countries started to build this symbolic-political construction more densely in recent years, when they acquired more economic and geopolitical muscle.

In this context, the term "aid" gained a very negative connotation: since there is one who helps and the other who is helped, the relationship would not be equal, but rather hierarchical in which defined tasks are attributed to each one. Aid would be basically a paternalistic relationship, strongly marked by colonization. If we analyze it from the point of view of the ones who receive aid and cooperation packages – Africans, Latin Americans, Asians, East Europeans, etc. – this is their perception, especially in the case of Africa, for which the issue of colonization is still recent. The independence of many African countries dates back to the late 1970s and the early 1980s, including in Zimbabwe and the former Portuguese colonies: Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea-Bissau.

The mark left by colonization introduced a strong negative bias in the use and practices of aid, which is why countries such as Brazil have built in the past few years their entire narrative around the term "cooperation". Cooperation involves two or more actors. The idea is to establish more horizontal, less hierarchical and more dialogic standards for discourse and practices.

This is the first important contribution from these countries, since this discursive-political investment has political implications. However, it does not mean that, empirically, when one does field research and impact assessments, one finds practices that are essentially very different from those of the traditional North-South model. In a few rare cases, mistakes are repeated (ethnocentrism or exporting models, for example). That said,

when one looks at this from the perspective of aid recipients, the simple fact of not coming from traditional colonial powers modifies the relationships of cooperation. If you ask many African people even about Chinese cooperation, which has been identified as being the most devastating because it is gigantic in scale, they will tell you that it is easier to negotiate with the Chinese than with traditional powers. Some of my African students from Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique say that, when compared to China, Brazil does much better. I respond by saying that Brazil does very little in comparison to China and thus, it also does less damage. It is a fact that Brazil gives priority to international technical cooperation (knowledge and experience transfer) and not financial and trade cooperation, which makes its platform for South-South cooperation much more positive when compared to many countries from the South.

Therefore, coming back to your question, does Brazil have a humanitarian aid policy? No, not an aid policy, since it does not even recognize the term. Does it have a humanitarian cooperation policy? Yes and no, because what exists is the practices adopted in recent years by the General Coordination of International Actions Against Hunger (CGFome) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which associated “emergency humanitarian” and “structuring” cooperation. These practices, however, did not lead to the institutionalization of a policy that Brazil began to call “structuring humanitarian cooperation”. Its lack of institutionalization allowed the current government to cancel CGFome. In my view, why wasn’t it institutionalized? Neither CGFome, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency [which is focused on the technical cooperation programme], the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Presidency were capable of or had the political will to build a real public policy on cooperation that would embrace both the more long-term, structuring cooperation for development approach and the more short-term, emergency approach. That said, I do not have anything against the semantic



slip towards aid for cooperation. I believe it is important that when a country enters a field, it enters with its own identity.

**In institutional terms, what would be needed to consolidate a public policy on humanitarian cooperation?**

To build a public policy, you have to create constituencies, budgets, regulatory frameworks and a specific career on cooperation in the public service. Working with humanitarian cooperation or aid, or even with cooperation for development, requires expertise. It is a field that has its own knowledge and practices. One has to study specific subjects and become familiar with specialized literature in order to carry out the tasks associated with the cooperation *métier*. It is not the profile of a diplomat or a foreign affairs official that will include all of these functions, nor that of a public official with no specialization. A bureaucracy, in the positive sense of the word – that is, a machine of trained and specialized professionals – is needed. Are a lot of people needed? That, I do not know. It depends on the size of the agenda, but for the Brazilian government's current level of intervention, I would say that some 100 professionals with expertise would be sufficient.

**Going back to the issue of semantics, I believe that the word 'aid' in the term "humanitarian aid" comes from the debates that, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have led to the consolidation of international humanitarian law rules that talk about "relief", even though 'aid' does not apply only to conflict situations. Therefore, "humanitarian aid" precedes the concept of "development aid", which is more from the Cold War period, right?**

Yes. The idea of development aid comes from a speech by former US president Harry Truman in 1949. But even in the case of humanitarian aid, politics have always been behind it. For example,

when I did my masters and PhD in France, I followed the debate on the right to military intervention for humanitarian reasons. And these reasons were sometimes associated to a traditional discourse on the white man's burden, the responsibility and the right to intervene. What is odd is the fact that they export weapons to conflict zones and, at the same time, defend humanitarian interventions. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the discourse and practices of Western countries because they build the discourse on the right and responsibility to intervene at the same time as they engage in this kind of contradictory behaviour.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were founded on these principles. Their headquarters originated in these countries. Therefore, like it or not, they are accomplices in this process, no matter how excellent their humanitarian aid work is. They are part of this contradictory set of discourses and practices. When other countries seek to propose new terms, they do so to affirm that India, China, South Africa, Turkey, Brazil, Venezuela and, to a certain extent and up until very recently, Cuba can also build international rules and international law. Why are the ones responsible for the elaboration of international rules always the same ones? And the ones who always accept these norms – the rule-takers – are us at the bottom. Then, in geopolitical terms, a minefield is generated by history and contexts. This does not invalidate the highly necessary work of NGOs and organizations such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and the Red Cross, which act on this front full of risks in the name of values and based on an ethic of conviction.

**MSF makes a fundamental distinction between humanitarian aid and development aid. It is not that the organization is against development aid. But it sees humanitarian aid as that which is provided in times of emergency with the goal of saving lives and is based on the criteria of the needs of individuals, whereas development aid involves economic**

**and political choices. Is this distinction useful for guiding Brazil's policy on humanitarian cooperation?**

Yes, it is. When Milton Rondó, who directed CGFome and did excellent work job in this department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, used to defend the agenda on “structuring humanitarian cooperation”, I believe it might have created confusion about cooperation for development. It is not that I do not see connections between one agenda (humanitarian, emergency) and another (development, long-term), but their logic for intervention, their procedures, emergencies and timing are totally different. We can think about development policies on girls education for any given country over a 10-year period, but when there are people suffering from hunger, we cannot afford to keep thinking about strategies and evaluating impacts. We have to offer relief and relieve the pain and the suffering.

This does not mean that lessons drawn from one agenda cannot be useful and influence another. As MSF's team is highly professionalized, I imagine that its experience contains lessons for developing a better nutritional policy, for example. If an emergency is handled well, other policies – on development and not humanitarian aid – may benefit as well. But we will continue to face crises brought on by a tragedy such as a tsunami or an earthquake or caused by wars, conflicts and invasions. One point that I must mention is that there are moments when the so-called “international community” decides to intervene and others when it does not, and this bothers me. States act selectively and the justification for this double standard cannot be found in humanitarian discourse, but rather in the strategic interests of the most powerful countries.

**The response to the Ebola outbreak, for example, was too slow...**

Too slow, just like the withdrawal from Rwanda was precipitated. I believe multilateralism and a minimum of international regulations are vital for pacific coexistence in international relations, but I can always note a double standard, which is bothersome. In the humanitarian field, perhaps due to the strong roles given to non-governmental and non-state actors, international NGOs may have a little more control and a greater capacity to exercise power in relation to powerful states.

This hypocrisy is also present in the human rights field. There is a lot of talk about rights violation in Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, but not in Saudi Arabia and Israel. Obviously, I prefer to live in a country where human rights are respected and practiced instead of living where they are not, but why does the media talk so much about violations only in certain places? In the early 1990s, right after Tiananmen, China was the human rights bogeyman. After the country went through an economic boom and began to be associated with business and trade, no one touched on human rights issues any more. At times, the “agendas of the good” are conveniently used to demonize the “other”.

**In the first article of this report, MSF expresses its concern with the fact that traditional donors of humanitarian aid are seeking to establish conditionalities, as often happens with development aid. Does Brazil - which is traditionally opposed to the political game on cooperation or human rights - have a role to play in the regulation of the field of humanitarian aid in order to preserve its unconditional nature?**

I think so. I do not think this is an issue only for the “big players”. I see Brazil as a big country, which occupies a lot of space and territory and has its traditions, a sizeable population, economic power and an internal market. In this regard, I used to appre-

ciate the type of foreign policy implemented by ambassador Celso Amorim and having a big strategy on international integration. Obviously, international ambition comes with a bonus, but also an onus. It has a price. Haiti is a price. Brazil had never commanded this kind of intervention under the auspices of the United Nations, which was military and humanitarian and developmental all at the same time. It is an extremely complex operation. Part of Brazilian civil society rightly and harshly criticizes the country's participation in supporting US imperialism in the Caribbean. This interpretation is logical both historically and empirically.

I think that one contribution Brazil could make, perhaps at a time of institutional strengthening and not of institutional destruction like we are currently experiencing, is its practice of not using political conditionalities in humanitarian or development cooperation. In my opinion, political conditionality is a tool for humiliating others and not for convincing others to adopt best practices in human rights and democracy.

No one can be forced or pressured to learn about democracy and human rights. Tying someone's hands and telling them, "Now, you're going to learn what democracy is" is a terrible educational strategy. How will someone who is tied up, forced to submit to conditions and deprived of the freedom to act ever learn what democracy is if he or she – in this case, the state – does not have the capacity to fully exercise its freedom to negotiate and construct policies? It is an awful practice. I have already written about this to point out that countries that use conditionality in their narrative as a regulatory tool for their policies on development cooperation and even desire to use them for humanitarian cooperation at some point, if the country with which they are cooperating is very important, donors go ahead with the cooperation efforts, even though the country is not democratic and does not respect human rights.

Therefore, the effectiveness of this norm for the development agenda is very limited. On the political level, what is it good for? Humiliation. I am totally opposed to all forms of humiliation, be it by the state, human beings or and any organization. I think that it is not an instrument to be used in politics. The use of political conditionalities only serves to manage and produce what I call a policy of humiliation. I get my inspiration on this issue from a recently published book by Sciences Po professor Bertrand Badie in Paris called *Humiliation in International Relations*. He poses the following question: “Why are the BRICS together? They have nothing in common”. He replies, “Because they were humiliated and are tired of it”. Perhaps at this moment, under the Temer administration, Brazil will not care about this. However, until not long ago, it was no longer able to conceive of itself in a secondary role. Brazil wanted to build rules. Constructing norms meant defending respect for state sovereignty. Societies must be respected.

If the objective of a humanitarian cooperation policy is emergency relief, it does not matter whether an individual is right- or left-wing, Christian fundamentalist or from the Taliban. Saving lives is what matters. Is this not what humanitarian law, politics and humanitarian strategies were established for? Thus, conditionalities should not exist. Moreover, I think countries like Brazil – which until recently fully enjoyed the positive things about being a democratic state – have a lot to say on this theme, as they built their own democracy.

Nowadays, I have my doubts about whether we are still building democracy or not. Brazil is currently going through a loss of legitimacy and symbolic capital at the international level. I do not think these things are permanent and unavoidable when one looks at historical processes. I do not know if at the current moment, Brazil will be able to export rules and help construct norms. Building international rules or standards requires power

and legitimacy, which the current Brazilian government is perhaps lacking. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would need to step up its diplomatic efforts with the goal of having the right to demand the right to participate. I have my doubts on whether these efforts will be effective, regardless of how well executed they may be (after all, our diplomatic teams are highly professional), but that is another issue...

**In the context of the intervention in Libya, Brazil launched the concept of “responsibility while protecting” (RwP), which aimed to moderate the idea of “responsibility to protect”. Even though law scholars and international actors embraced the discussion, it did not evolve. Why?**

I believe that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs abandoned or allowed the “responsibility while protecting” concept to take a back seat because it realized that the operation in Libya was a failure and that the RwP concept could end up legitimizing negative practices. In fact, there was no protection. It was an intervention for the sake of intervening. It dismantled the little state structure and social relations that used to exist in Libya. There is not one single Libya anymore; there are small Libyas at war with one another. Perhaps, an idealistic Kantian view is being projected via the RwP concept but the war and the economic and geopolitical interests involved have weakened it since the beginning. The intervention in Libya was disastrous for the debate on international responsibility.

**There is currently a discussion on how anti-terrorism laws can undermine humanitarian assistance and the right of populations in need of aid. What is your view on this debate?**

The adoption of highly restrictive laws on human rights opens the door to the criminalization of humanitarian aid organizations and solidarity. In Brazil, during the Dilma Rousseff ad-

ministration, we adopted a counterterrorism law in the name of investors' interests. This shows just how promiscuous politics is with the logic of the market. That is not to say that in capitalism, state-market relations have never been promiscuous, but currently, this promiscuity is very obvious and seems even more profound and frightening. The difficulty of separating what is a policy on the public good from what pertains to the market and finance spheres has gotten to the point where everything in democracy – a space for defending collective interests that we thought was a bit more protected, legitimate and inclusive – is permeated by strong tensions between the “public” and the “private.”



## The concept of resilience and the stripping of rights from the international agenda

Paulo Esteves

Political scientist Paulo Luiz Moreaux Lavigne Esteves is a professor at the Institute of International Relations at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and a researcher at the BRICS Policy Center, a research centre dedicated to the study of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Consultant for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Esteves conducts research on the intersections between the fields of international security, humanitarianism and development. In 2010, he published the book entitled *A convergência entre práticas humanitárias e segurança internacional* (The Convergence of Humanitarian Practices and International Security). In this interview, he analyzes Brazil's experience in the field of humanitarian cooperation, the international cooperation networks created by Brazilian public policy actors and the theoretical and practical changes that have occurred in the UN system in relation to humanitarian aid.

**Does Brazil have a policy on humanitarian aid? If not, should it have one? What type of institution is needed for this to happen?**

I think that in recent years, Brazil has sought to develop what it called a “humanitarian cooperation” policy. As Brazil has problems with the ideas of humanitarian aid and development aid, it tried to elaborate a humanitarian cooperation policy, especially after getting involved in Haiti. At that time, because of all of its demands on the international level, it was important for Bra-

zil to show that it was a state capable of not only contributing to the stabilization of certain regions, but also responding to emergency situations. And the path it took to do so was rooted in experiences in Brazil, in the social policies it was developing here. That is why humanitarian cooperation efforts were placed under the responsibility of a department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Coordination of International Action Against Hunger (CGFome), which was strongly linked to the promotion of food security.

In Brazil, the design of humanitarian cooperation policies emerged, then, in connection with these two areas: on one hand, the intervention in Haiti and the need to demonstrate capacity in order to be recognized as an emerging power capable of assuming international responsibilities; on the other, its anchoring or inspiration in the domestic policies that were proving effective and beginning to bear fruit in the early 2000s. The latter led the development component to be more pronounced in the case of Brazil. If we consider that the nexus between development and humanitarian protection was already noticeable in the international system, in the case of Brazil, this nexus was strengthened by the fact that the country's humanitarian efforts took inspiration from its social policies.

It was actors in the area of health - and not humanitarian workers - who coined the term “structuring humanitarian cooperation”, which was highly controversial. The “structuring cooperation” concept contains both a focus on “best practices” and a criticism of what already exists. Criticism is directed at the humanitarian industry, which is seen by certain Brazilian actors as an attempt to deal with emergencies by adopting measures that often make them worse. One example I have heard on several occasions is how the practice of purchasing supplies in countries of the North and donating them to countries in emergency situations has led to the destruction of local value chains. For instance, instead of

strengthening milk production chains, donor countries bought powdered milk in the North and delivered it to countries in need of assistance. The idea of ‘best practices’, as the expression was conceived, is to seek to rebuild local value chains as a way of addressing the causes of a given emergency: social aspects, the distribution of economic resources and so on.

This was when Brazilian humanitarian cooperation took on such characteristics. Emphasis is placed on the so-called “structuring” elements, which engage with local value chains and development agenda by adopting actions inspired by Brazilian social policies. At the same time, the actions present a criticism – albeit a surreptitious one – of existing humanitarian practices. What is more, Brazil also has a set of so-called “emergency” practices. Brazilian cooperation policy recognizes that there are emergency situations that demand timely and agile responses, which often involves delivering supplies, etc. Brazil has made significant contributions to the World Food Programme (WFP), for instance. Brazil donated food to several regions – from Haiti to Palestine. Thus, a two-pronged concept of humanitarian cooperation was created that recognized emergency-related aspects, but focused on the structuring dimension.

What seems odd to me is the fact that Brazil’s discourse did not end up being all that different from the one developed in the 1990s within the UN system, when the nexus between humanitarian aid and development aid was gaining ground. Since the 1990s, the process of stabilizing and rebuilding state has been seen as an ongoing process. If we analyze, for example, the manuals of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, we can clearly see a sequence of events: they begin with the emergency and the arrival of humanitarian workers; shortly after, there is a moment of stabilization and peacekeepers enter the scene; and finally, a period of development begins in which the development banks, World Bank and regional banks get in-

volved. The challenge raised in the 1990s, according to these UN documents, was how to generate a process in which the transition from one stage to the next would not be problematic. How could one introduce the elements necessary for achieving development into humanitarian protection? This idea was already present in the rhetoric of the 1990s.

It is highly likely that international actors took advantage of this to create the humanitarian industry that the Brazilian group responsible for coining the “structuring humanitarian cooperation” concept identifies as a problem. But the theory that defends tackling the profound causes of conflicts in order to resolve them was already affirmed in a UN General Assembly Resolution from 1991. In a way, Brazil repeats this rhetoric while arguing that it is new. The thing is that once such a strong nexus has been established between development and humanitarian protection, the recognition of the specificities of humanitarian practices is lost and this becomes a problem.

**In the first article of this report, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) argues that the nexus between humanitarian aid and development aid threatens to distort humanitarian aid practices, which must be provided to individuals in need without imposing conditions. How useful is maintaining the distinction between the two types of intervention to the implementation of a Brazilian aid or humanitarian cooperation policy?**

The moment Brazil designed its humanitarian cooperation policy in the shadow of development practices, it blurred the distinction between humanitarian aid and development aid. Institutionally, this meant two things: first, the country did not develop an institutional niche responsible for formulating a policy of humanitarian protection or commitment to the issue of humanitarian protection. A second problem is related to the fact that

the country did not build capacity. Who are the people going to work in the field? What do they know about humanitarian work? Where were they trained? This does not exist. In informal conversations with people dealing with this, they themselves drew attention to this matter: “We don’t have people to work in emergency situations.”

That is where Brazil’s problem came from - from this confusion, this intersection between development and humanitarian protection. There is a need to distinguish between humanitarian protection and development cooperation. However, the concept of humanitarian protection was stretched too far by not only Brazil, but the UN itself, in an agenda launched in 2005.

### **Which agenda?**

The Humanitarian Reform Agenda, which created “clusters” to coordinate efforts among UN humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are clusters on health, education, food security, etc. Humanitarian protection became dispersed. When no distinction is made between development and humanitarian protection, donor money does not go to humanitarian protection, but rather to development most of the time. And what they call humanitarian protection is turned into a problem of containment: of containing the population outside the borders of the developed world, as happens with refugees, for example. As a result, the specificities of humanitarian protection are set aside. This happens in the world in general and in the case of Brazil for other reasons.

In the future, the design of Brazilian humanitarian cooperation policies must recognize the specificities of this field of action. It is necessary to demarcate what is relative to humanitarian aid and what is relative to development. What is humanitarian space? What dilemmas does the humanitarian field face? These di-

lemmas do not appear in the development space. There is a dilemma regarding access to the humanitarian space that is not found in the development space.

**From MSF's point of view, in the humanitarian space, the principles of neutrality and impartiality must prevail: regardless of whose side they are on, a population whose survival is threatened is a potential recipient of humanitarian aid. Development aid, on the other hand, does not go to individuals; a government or some authority mediates it.**

Indeed, the humanitarian space is potentially depoliticized and involves difficulties in relation to access and needs whose time dimension is very different from that of development. The development dimension involves, above all, a political confrontation. As the differences between the two were gradually eliminated, it became easier to carry resources over to the development space. However, thinking about Brazilian policy means thinking about how Brazil should address humanitarian issues.

What is the structural problem that Brazil faces? It is rooted in the term “humanitarian”. If we analyze the debate on humanitarian protection, especially since the creation of MSF, we will see that it has always been linked to intervention. Whether in the 1970s, when the concept of the “right/duty to interfere” emerged, or 20 years later, with the idea of the “responsibility to protect”, we always come across an element that triggers debate: intervention. This is the problem with Brazil characterizing situations as humanitarian crises. Classifying them this way necessarily sparks a debate on whether there is a need for intervention or not.

Brazil's position on this is changing, or at least it was. It started to change in the early 2000s. Brazil adopted what was called the

principle of “non-indifference” in the case of Haiti to justify an intervention that was essentially an intervention based on the use of force according to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Even though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not recognize this principle, Brazil created the non-indifference concept as a kind of more flexible version of the non-intervention idea to allow the country to get involved in humanitarian crisis situations. While this revived the debate on humanitarian protection in Brazil, it did not have any major impacts in the end. Although the country created this concept, it did not introduce it to the world of humanitarian cooperation, which continued to be colonized by the development discourse.

Therefore, the challenge before Brazil today is: how can we build a vision for humanitarian cooperation based on the concept of non-indifference? The idea is not just to create an institutional niche that deals specifically with humanitarian protection issues and builds capacity for humanitarian protection. In Brazil, there are no schools or training programmes for people working in humanitarian crises. The country has training programmes for peacekeepers, diplomats and soldiers, but not to train people to work in the field of humanitarian protection. Another key element is the establishment of an institutional niche in which this discussion can be held. It would appear that the concept of non-indifference opens the door to this. This concept must be taken up again for dealing with humanitarian emergencies.

When we work with concepts, it appears as though we are working in the abstract, but that is not true. Without this concept, Brazil would not have been able to get involved in Haiti because it goes against everything it has always defended. The inspiration for the concept of non-indifference was the African Union. The concept was created in Africa to apply the “responsibility to protect” idea to the African continent. It is obviously

a concept that addresses humanitarian crises. Therefore, it must be incorporated into the Brazilian framework in order for us to design a humanitarian protection policy for Brazil.

**In the previous institutional arrangement in Brazil, there was a division between the *Agência Brasileira de Cooperação* (ABC, or the Brazilian Cooperation Agency in English), which was responsible for technical cooperation programmes, and CGFome, which was in charge of humanitarian cooperation. With the elimination of CGFome, part of its activities were transferred to ABC. What is your assessment of this change?**

I need more information to assess this change. I know that CGFome was, in fact, eliminated and it is likely that the ABC has taken over the structuring projects, mainly the Purchase from Africans for Africa Programme [inspired by Brazil's *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* (PAA or Food Acquisition Programme), which purchases products for school meals from family farmers]. The emergency aid part has probably been transferred to another division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This does not surprise me, as the technical cooperation programmes already had humanitarian components. The problem is that once again, instead of creating an institutional niche to work on humanitarian protection issues, they are absorbed by departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deal with the multilateral system. And, judging by what is being announced as the priority of Brazil's foreign policy, the situation will stay this way and humanitarian protection will not become a priority.

**By using the terms “technical cooperation” and “humanitarian cooperation”, Brazil wanted to convey the idea that its aid relations would be more horizontal than those with the traditional superpowers. Did this work?**



I believe so, due to the fact that the main characteristic of the majority of Brazilian cooperation efforts – be they technical or humanitarian – is that they have been formulated and carried out via Brazilian public policy networks. In the area of health, for example, the directors of the Brazilian national health care system participated in health forums with the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries (CPLP). Plans of action for the creation of national systems in Portuguese language speaking countries were elaborated, which are, to a large extent, what is fuelling the national healthcare systems. The milk bank programme, for instance, has been successful everywhere it has been adopted in the world and this is largely because of the internationalization of the Brazilian public policy networks. This international presence serves as a vehicle for the promotion of Brazilian technical cooperation. The same phenomenon occurs in the case of food security. There has been a sort of transnationalization of the Brazilian food security community, which is represented in the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea), but there is a group of social organizations behind it. Today, this group maintains relations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on a regular basis. Therefore, these policies have been recognized, one way or another, for their success.

We have a problem, though, because we did not actually evaluate these projects. We sinned for not having a process to assess impacts and what improved in the lives of the people and the communities after a Brazilian cooperation project was executed. There are case studies that examine local perceptions on the importance of Brazilian cooperation efforts, but we do not have a consistent evaluation process.

**In addition to Consea, institutions such as the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) are actively involved in Brazil's international cooperation efforts. Is there a clear organogramme that illustrates how these efforts are organized?**

A bipartite structure exists. On one side, there is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ABC, which have been mandated to coordinate Brazil's cooperation programmes. On the other, there are those networks on health, food security, agricultural innovation, such as the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa). Embrapa has, for example, a programme called "Marketplace" which issues international calls for partnerships with researchers from African countries on the development of agricultural techniques and plant varieties. The thing is that these networks do not have a legal mandate to operate on the international level. That is why they need to go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ABC.

An important variable for analyzing Brazilian cooperation would be to examine the relations between these networks and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ABC's institutional structure and personnel. In the area of health, there is work being done for over 30 years now, ever since discussions were held on the creation of the Unified Health System (SUS, for its acronym in Portuguese) by the Constitution of 1988. As a result, there are close relations and a convergence between government authorities in charge of foreign affairs and actors from the healthcare field. The same cannot be said about the area of food security, which is a more recent agenda and has not succeeded in penetrating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I was asked the other day how the crisis would affect Brazilian cooperation programmes. I responded that it would affect them seriously, as there will be no resources for them. That said, the networks already in place will not cease to exist. And the educational system plays an important role in them. While doing field work in Maputo, we visited an Embrapa project on the production of vegetables for the metropolitan region of the capital of Mozambique. When our researcher entered the project facilities, she was surprised to find that the person who was leading the

project on the Mozambican side had a PhD from Viçosa [state of Minas Gerais, Brazil] and worked with two people with master's degrees from Viçosa and another three who had graduated from the same place. Brazil has a programme called the Student Programme – Undergraduate Agreement (PEC-G) and Graduate Agreement (PEC-PG), which allows Africans and Latin Americans to study in Brazil and then return to their country of origin. The condition imposed is their return. These people are socialized through this Brazilian agricultural innovation network, learn the Brazilian vocabulary and only know how to deal with other dynamics by using the Brazilian way of innovating in agriculture. Individuals from Mozambique study with Brazilians pursuing their PhD degree in Viçosa. Where will these Brazilians work? Either in Brazilian universities or for Embrapa, which is the main professional niche for these people. Therefore, despite the downsizing of Brazilian cooperation efforts, these networks will continue to exist.

There is an attempt by the ABC to strengthen institutions and increase capacity to maximize these projects' potential, but it does not include a humanitarian component. What is missing? The issue of a humanitarian presence is missing. None of these public policy networks address humanitarian issues. Is it possible to think of ways of using social technologies in humanitarian work? I believe it is, as is going beyond the development discourse.

**From MSF's perspective, and this was mentioned in the first text of this publication, there is also concern with the impact of anti-terrorism laws on access to people in regions of conflict or disaster. Does Brazil have some contribution to make on this issue, given its tradition of dialoguing with different international actors?**

This is currently off the radar of Brazilian foreign affairs officials, which is focused on immediate economic interests. The first

international trip the new president made was to China; the second, to the United States. Brazil will probably maintain its position of non-alignment, while perhaps leaning a little more towards the West. In any case, it does not appear disposed to get involved in this kind of agenda.

**Going back to the issue of the attempt to link humanitarian aid to development aid, are you following this discussion at the United Nations?**

I was part of a UN commission created with the goal of providing input to the reform of the organization's development system. While the Europeans wanted stronger linkages between humanitarian protection and development aid, the G77 [*group of developing countries*] rejected this proposal. The G77 has no interest in them being linked because it means neither of the two will be funded.

We have already mentioned the depoliticization of humanitarian aid. Well, what happened in the 1990s and 2000s in the UN was the depoliticization of development. When we talk about a development project, there is an axiological element: value exists and therefore, politics are involved. How did they go about neutralizing and depoliticizing development aid? By introducing the concept of resilience into the development discourse - a concept that allows a less problematic relationship between humanitarian protection and development aid to be established. How so? When we think of humanitarian protection, we think of protecting one fundamental right: the right to life. We think of other rights as well. The moment we begin working with the idea of resilience, we void the catalogue of rights of meaning. It is as though the situation were as follows: those people need to survive, but they do not necessarily have to have access to a set of rights. You know the whole political debate on the development model? It was dropped because it is now enough for the po-

pulation to be resilient and capable of guaranteeing their own reproduction and survival in time.

Twenty years ago, we used to discuss which development model would be necessary in order to have a good life. This debate has been lost. Currently, the issue is whether the favela has been pacified or not, or if there are sirens in the hills to warn people to leave when there is a threat of a landslide. It is not about whether these people have a life of dignity or not, or if their rights are being respected. If it is necessary to impose a curfew to guarantee these people's rights, that is what is done because it guarantees resilience; less people will die. Resilience is a concept that attempts to depoliticize all that is political and the discussion on what development is. That is why it lends itself so well to this tendency to bind humanitarian protection. While humanitarian protection seeks to be neutral to generate impact and the development discourse carries the political discourse, now, with resilience, the political debate on the development discourse can be dismantled. There is, based on this, a series of actions to be carried out that will guarantee the reproduction of a given population, regardless of the conditions imposed.

### **Can you give us an example?**

The debate on development models is basically a debate on what is right and wrong, what justice is. Imagine a situation of violence, such as one in a favela in Rio de Janeiro. This happened four years ago. If there is a *funk* dance party in the favela and the population is allowed to leave their homes at any time, the number of deaths will be 20. If a curfew is imposed and the *funk* dance party is prohibited, this number falls to five. This is resilience, and it is terrible. It depoliticized absolutely everything.

In the 1990s, our entire debate was on the right to come and go. Guaranteeing public safety is necessary, but the right to go to the

*funk* dance party must be undeniable. Now, for the sake of a relative decline in homicide rates, a state of exception is imposed. The very idea of exception has become the rule. Using all means to guarantee the reproduction of population is considered valid. And that is what the concept of resilience does. It voids the vocabulary on rights of meaning for the sake of reproducing the population. The case of the sirens is interesting. Having sirens in the favela is highly necessary. People live in precarious conditions and they know that their house will collapse, but there is a siren to let them know where they should go. The whole idea of the right to housing is lost to the siren. Thus, resilience is a concept that allows the nexus with humanitarian protection to be strengthened in the future and leads development to be depoliticized completely. It eliminates all concerns with rights, which was characteristic of the debate on development. It is as though the situation has been reversed. Everything is about protection now; there are no more rights.

My dismay with the concept of resilience lies in that I realized it was created based on a biological logic linked to the Darwinian survival of the species. Basic survival. With it, the distinction between development and humanitarian practices simply disappears. Everything becomes about resilience. People find themselves living in camps generation after generation. It is almost as though there is an underlying notion of sustainability. The situation continues to exist, but there is no discussion on how just it is and what rights these people have. What disturbs me the most is to see how far we have gone in abandoning the idea of rights.

## **Ebola exposed the failure of state-building programmes**

Deisy Ventura

Deisy Ventura is a professor at the Institute of International Relations and the School of Public Health at the University of São Paulo (USP). She dedicates her work to the study of what people have been referring to as “global health” since the 1990s – that is, the idea that any health event could be a potential threat to the world population and the national security of the richest countries. She focuses on the securitization of international responses to health emergencies and the impacts of this approach. In this interview, Deisy Ventura discusses her research on the United Nations’ response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014 and compares it to the reaction to the Zika outbreak in Brazil. One of the differences is the absence of healthcare systems with a minimum of structure in Africa, despite the presence of multilateral organizations dedicated to “state-building” in post-conflict or catastrophe periods in the region.

**In the first article of this publication, MSF expresses two concerns: one with the intersection between development aid and humanitarian aid, and the other, with the impact anti-terror laws may have on humanitarian organizations’ access to populations in need. In your research on Ebola, have you noted any influence of these factors?**

In relation to Ebola, it is worth noting that the one who was capable of identifying the extent of what was happening in West Africa, had the largest team in the region and actually succeeded in responding to the crisis was MSF.

The United Nations already had special missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It is incredible that the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) closed its doors on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014, a few months before the onset of the epidemic, whereas the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) that has existed since 2003 remains active until today. How does one explain that in a territory where United Nations missions were underway, the health conditions, the organizational capacity and the capacity to respond to a health crisis were as precarious as they were there?

What I mean by this is that the current international response that is supposed to strengthen state and their structural elements in that region is a total failure. In the case of emergencies such as the Ebola crisis, the UN missions in the region have been incapable of stopping them from reaching such large proportions and of formulating adequate responses given the seriousness of the situation. In the case of Ebola, once it was recognized that there was an emergency, it was decided that a new mission had to be created. Announced on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2014, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) was the first United Nations mission created for health reasons. It was presented as a *sui generis* mission and concentrated the whole international response to the Ebola crisis under the United Nations Secretary General in the form of a special envoy that coordinated fundraising and the provision of aid on site.

It is not that the UN Security Council had never dealt with health issues or emergencies before. The HIV/AIDS issue, for example, has appeared several times in Security Council resolutions. However, according to the UN Secretary-General himself, it was the first time that the UN had created a health mission to respond to an emergency. What was the significance of this? First, it relegated the World Health Organization (WHO) to a secondary role, when the WHO is the only international



organization whose *raison d'être* and logic are rooted in public health. The mandate of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security. This was, then, a very important shift. It is important to note that it was not the Security Council that created this mission; it was the Secretary-General, but with the approval of both this organ and the UN General Assembly.

With this, a new phenomenon in international relations emerged. An international health crisis triggered a response from the United Nations Secretary General and a UN mission was created with the blessing of the Security Council, which began to provide this kind of international response. Contrary to previous international health emergencies, such as the H1N1 flu in 2009 and 2010 and the resurgence of polio since 2014, this time, it was not the WHO that guided the response based on International Health Regulations (IHR). This is one aspect that seems extremely important to me.

What was done essentially? When this mission began to operate in West Africa, it was announced that 3,000 US marines would be sent to the region. Thus, the response was one of militarization and contention. I am not saying that this was not necessary at the time. What happened later is that when the end of this mission was announced in August 2015, we went back to square one. We do not know what was left by this experience. What was the significance of this first international health mission?

There is currently one development that I find enormously unsettling. The responses to international health crises have begun to be coordinated by UN missions that are accumulating a history of extraordinary failure in relation to the objectives of development and state-building. And the best example of this is the missions set up in the Ebola-affected regions in West Africa that were incapable of preventing what happened.

And why were they incapable of this? When we talk about epidemics, what I consider an emergency is quite different from what the international community considers an emergency. For example, when the International Health Regulations were adopted in 2005 (but came into effect in 2007), a legal category called “a public health emergency of international concern” was created. This category has been used four times up until now: for the H1N1 flue; the return of the poliovirus, especially in regions with armed conflicts because it becomes impossible to vaccinate people; Ebola; and the association between the Zika virus and microcephaly and/or alterations to the central nervous system.

### **And what are the specificities of this category?**

One very revealing detail of the process of implementing the Health Regulations in relation to public health emergencies of international concern is that the emergency related to the Zika virus fever was decreed not because of the disease itself, but because of its association with microcephaly and/or alterations to the central nervous system. If someone asks me what the current public health emergencies are here in Latin America, I would say, for example, dengue, chikungunya or Zika. For me, the fact is that some endemic diseases – the so-called neglected diseases – constitute enormous health emergencies. They are diseases that appear where poverty exists, but that also keep people in poverty, as they limit the ability to work and to enjoy life of those who contract them.

However, the criteria the international community developed for identifying public health emergencies of international concern are quite different from those used in the field of public health and by independent NGOs such as MSF or academics. Therefore, different criteria and different responses mix to form a broth in which health acts as a pivot in the unravelling of the security

ideology that has prevailed mainly since the September 11 attacks in New York. Based on my research, it is obvious that this security-focused vision can be applied to absolutely everything, including public health.

If we analyze recent literature on Ebola, we will note that there has been a change of course since late 2014 and that there is now a specific sub-area in health studies on “global health security”. There is a set of dossiers, articles, proposals of reforms for institutions, namely the World Health Organization, and an agenda on this. But if we ask MSF how the organization sees global health security, its response will certainly be different from the one from the United States, which is driving the global health security agenda.

From my point of view, the major difference between these views resides in what I call a “totalitarian utopia”: the idea that the developed world is capable of keeping these diseases in places that they should never have left. The global health security ideology establishes the capacity to detect an emergency or risks as the main element of the global health security approach and this leads to the focus being on surveillance systems. It appears to me, however, that real security can only be guaranteed by focusing on national health systems and universal and free access to healthcare. To contest this idea of surveillance-based security, we need to defend systems with free access in which health is treated as a right.

Currently, we are seeing the exact opposite. Systems that were once considered references, such as the British or Brazilian systems, are in the process of being destroyed. These are truly difficult times. If we compare the response to Ebola with the one to Zika, we see that in the latter, neither the World Health Organization nor the Brazilian state was removed from their functions. 3,000 marines were not sent to Brazil on a UN health mission.

Why was the response here different? Obviously, the country's level of development is different from that of the countries hit the hardest by the Ebola epidemic, even though Brazil is not a developed country. But the main difference is the existence of a healthcare system with facilities set up all over the country and universal access. Thus, the radical difference between the response to Ebola and the one to Zika is not only the number of cases or deaths. If we did not have the Unified Health System (SUS, for its acronym in Portuguese), it would be impossible to predict what the statistical results would have been. But we did have the SUS, the Olympics...

### **We also had research institutions, such as Fiocruz...**

In Brazil, there is a scientific community that can prove the relation between the Zika virus and microcephaly and the alterations to infants' central nervous systems, but the ones who detected the virus were "bedside" doctors. In her recent book *Zika: do Sertão Nordestino à Ameaça Global* (Zika: from the North-eastern Interior to a Global Threat), Debora Diniz shows how the first cases were discovered. She overturns the idea of the medical community in the Southeast being the protagonist and demonstrates that it was the bedside doctors in the universal healthcare system that made this association. And Brazil had the capacity to manage this response.

There was another important factor. In November 2015, Brazil declared a national health emergency. Later, in February, the WHO declared an emergency of international concern. But the fact that we had a public healthcare system is the element that separates what is humanitarianism – that is, emergency responses to guarantee people's survival – from what is structural. If national healthcare systems with adequate operational conditions exist, we can put humanitarian workers where they really aim to be, which is responding to emergencies, the unpredictable. I

imagine that this is where humanitarianism dreams of being, and not responding to needs that are structural.

**You said that development aid projects did not enable the countries affected by Ebola the most – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea – to establish a health system that is at least capable of taking the first steps to control the epidemic, even if help will be needed later on. Why is this?**

While the international community was proclaiming that development aid would be able to establish the rule of law, generalize democracy and strengthen the economies and the political and social organization of these territories, it must be recognized that international financial institutions were promoting the dismantlement of sectors of the state through their famous recipes for reform and good governance. There is a common idea that these countries have never had a public health structure, but that is not true. Healthcare systems did exist, even if conditions were precarious. Recent studies show that the structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) played a decisive role in the lack of personnel and unpreparedness in the healthcare systems in West Africa. In Sierra Leone in the 1990s, for example, World Bank consultants succeeded in having more than 5,000 hospital employees fired and reducing the Ministry of Health payroll by two thirds in three years. According to the WHO, the result of this was that prior to the epidemic, Sierra Leone only had 0.2 doctors for every 10,000 inhabitants, whereas Liberia had 0.1.

Therefore, the Ebola epidemic clearly reveals not only the failure of international development cooperation, but also the contradiction between what was being promoted in the development arena and the demands being made in the area of financial aid. It seems to me that we must find ways to hold the international organizations that contributed not to the

strengthening, but to the weakening of these healthcare systems accountable.

The idea that there can be health security without universal national healthcare systems is false. Yet, we can observe today the alignment of pressures to implement an efficient surveillance system, universal health coverage rooted essentially in the private health insurance market and the internationalization of the health market. I believe that the developed world imagines that with this, diseases will be restricted to the poor and the rich will be protected. What is more, they will gain access to a market with an incredible scope. The problem is that this does not and will not work.

### **Did the Brazilian government play an active role in the response to Ebola?**

Brazil did not exercise leadership in this crisis, even though it sent donations. There was essentially one international response led by the United States and the UN. The resolution on UNMEER was unanimously approved in the UN Security Council. At the time, it would have been hard for someone not to agree. I think Cuba was the state that stood out the most for its individual response. Often perceived negatively in international relations, it was one of the only countries that had the capacity to immediately send health professionals to West Africa and it was successful in doing this.

### **Can you explain how the International Health Regulations work?**

The regulations exist since 1951 and until 2005, they gave priority to international cooperation efforts to fight specific diseases. In 2005, mainly due to the influence of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the envelopes sent with anthrax and the fear of attacks with biological

weapons or bioterrorism, the category that I mentioned – public health emergency of international concern – was created. Instead of fighting a specific disease, the combat targets something the WHO defines as a threat. The moment this kind of emergency is declared, a series of practical recommendations is released for different actors to follow, particularly governments and the transportation sector. With this approach, more than 1 million cases of dengue in six months are not considered an emergency. An intervention is urgent if its motive is to preserve security in the developed world.

**Based on your research on the international reaction to the Ebola epidemic, what suggestions can you make for a Brazilian humanitarian aid policy?**

Right now, it is difficult to discuss Brazilian foreign policy and the possibility of Brazil playing a role on international issues, including humanitarian ones. Since late 2015, we have been seeing the government coalition at the federal level fall apart. Once a confrontation between interests and proposals, even antagonistic ones, erupted within the federal government, it became difficult to imagine that any policy would be consolidated, including foreign policy.

During both of Dilma Rousseff's mandates, we saw international issues losing ground and Brazil's lack of commitment to its contributions to the budgets of international organizations. Thus, it was hard to believe that Brazil would adopt a strong foreign policy, or even maintain the Lula administration's foreign policy direction. In relation to this direction, while there were inconsistencies between Brazil's discourse and some of its actual practices, it is important to note that there was clearly an ideology and an agenda to follow. With Dilma, then, we could at least demand coherency in relation to the so-called political spectrum to which she belonged. Now, I do not see any interlo-

...  
cutor in the government with whom we could debate the issues that MSF is raising. It appears as if alignment with the developed world is a value in itself. Brazil will probably stop appearing on the international stage as an actor that questions global governance.



## About the authors

**Adriana Abdenur** – Fellow at Igarapé Institute and researcher at the Brazilian Naval War College.

**Andrés Ramírez** – PhD in Economics from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Unam) and former representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Brazil.

**Camila Lissa Asano** – Foreign policy and human rights coordinator at Conectas Human Rights.

**Carlos Milani** – Associate Professor at the Institute of Social and Political Studies (Iesp) at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (Uerj), 1-D (CNPq) and Faperj. Coordinator of the Laboratory of Global Political Analysis (Labmundo, Rio de Janeiro).

**Celso Amorim** – Chair of the Executive Board of Unitaïd and Brazilian diplomat who served twice as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and once as Minister of Defence.

**Cynthia Jones** – Former Deputy Director of the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger at the World Food Programme from 2011 to 2015.

**Deisy Ventura** – Professor at the Institute of International Relations and the School of Public Health at the University of São Paulo (USP), and member of the Coordinating Committee for the PhD in Global Health and Sustainability programme at the USP.

**Jonathan Whittall** – Head of Humanitarian Analysis for MSF.

**Milton Rondó Filho** – Brazilian diplomat, former Coordinator-General of International Actions in the Fight Against Hunger at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Monique Sochaczewski** – Professor and researcher of the Post-Graduate Programme on Military Sciences at the Meira Mattos Institute (Army Command and General Staff College – Eceme).

**Paulo Esteves** – Director of the Institute of International Relations of PUC-Rio and Director of the BRICS Policy Center.

**Renata Reis** – Institutional relations/advocacy officer for MSF Brazil.

**Simone Rocha** – Member of Doctors Without Borders' Association and Professor of International Relations at the Puc-Rio.

**Susana de Deus** – General director of MSF Brazil.

Humanitarian crises generate enormous suffering for affected populations. At the same time, they also expose the difficulties international cooperation and organizations have in responding to them in an agile, effective and objective manner. Whereas some countries are revisiting the traditional approach to humanitarian cooperation, others – such as Brazil – are facing the challenge of organizing and implementing their policies in this field. This gives them the opportunity to propose daring, innovative and inclusive responses that are connected to the people and their needs, and not to economic and political interests.

This book is part of Doctors Without Borders' efforts to broaden the discussion on Brazil's role in the humanitarian field and the challenges and opportunities the country faces. The valuable perspectives of Brazilian organizations, researchers and prominent figures are shared in this compilation of articles and interviews, which begins with an opinion piece by Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

