GLOBAL PAPER ON KOSOVO CRISIS

3/4/99

- to be adapted progressively
- operational reference
- source for communications

1. READING OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

1/ Humanitarian assistance to Kosovar population in Kosovo was possible before Nato-bombing; it was difficult and responded only to the basic needs of the civilians.

2/ International presence, both humanitarian and observers (in the later phase) provided with balanced info on incidents and on the consequences of the increased tension on the civilians. To a certain extent it contributed also to protection of civilians in being disturbing witnesses to the situation.

3/ Serb exactions and repression of Albanian population under the argument of confronting the KLA has been going on for many months disregarding Nato-threats or -actions.

4/ The bombing set the materialised starting point for a new phase in which military action overtook the humanitarian space: the initiative in itself and particularly the behavioural switch it provoked amongst warring factions in Kosovo (uncontrolled and uncontrollable gan-warfare) makes now humanitarian assistance or even international presence impossible.

5/ Without arguing over whether this overtake was right or avoidable, we should focus at the present reality that shows that humanitarians under the present circumstances cannot respond to the civil needs for assistance and protection in Kosovo. As such responsibility and perspectives lay to a large degree with the military.

6/ There is a growing mix-up between military and humanitarian international initiatives and mandates (HCR):

- Nato initiatives were supposed to solve the humanitarian problem in Kosovo; through an unforeseen reaction-chain it resulted in exporting the humanitarian problem to the neighbouring countries.

- in Macedonia humanitarian response procedures are "controlled" by
- in Albania, where basically only humanitarian objectives are at stake, Nato decides to send in troops with unclear objectives.

7/ There is important and converging evidence from refugees that systematically Albanian Kossovars are forced out of all villages and towns and have to leave Kosovo; there are cases of people beaten up and indirect evidence of killings but it is hard to make an absolute picture of this.

8/ Humanitarian response to the needs in neighbouring countries was somehow delayed and is facing difficulties (see below).

9/ The Nato-action is not understood by Serbian population, also by the non-extremists amongst them. Casualties on the Serb side are probable but kept secret and will be difficult to respond to. As such showing our impartiality has become even more difficult than in the past, although we maintained still some relation till the end.

2. MAJOR NEEDS AND CONSTRAINTS

1/ general needs that are relevant for all contexts are:
   1. organisation of aid and sufficient space to deploy it in an autonomous way. Clear distinction in mandates and formal and flexible agreements with the local authorities are crucial.
   2. fluxes are important, will increase further and may last for long time; important international and lasting commitment to aid is important

2/ individual needs of the people: so far the picture seen is classical with respiratory infections with children, chronic diseases and exhaustion with the elderly, occasionally wounds and all-over serious psychological trauma and stress. Progressively alimentary problems and waterborne diseases will become important related to the organisational set-up.

3/ constraints have to be seen different per region:
   - in Albania: delay is linked with administrative procedures, logistics/transport and change of plan (originally all refs had to be transported immediately south, now absorption capacity has to be set up on the spot; there is a bottleneck on the Albanian side of the border.
   - in Macedonia: authorities are reluctant to let in the refs and they plan to concentrate them in the north of the country; as such the bottleneck is in the no man's land, where people are even beyond reach of humanitarian assistance.
   - in Montenegro: tension is rising since this is still a part of Serbia (even with open border to Kosovo), absorption capacity seems sufficient but people seem to consider Montenegro as a transit to Bosnia, Italy or Albania.

PS:
Specific explanation on "slow humanitarian response in Albania" (anticipating critics):

1. impossibility to build-up antipatively absorption capacity in northern Albania (though we had teams there at certain moments) because of the opposite plan of the Albanian authorities.
- face serious limitations in humanitarian space in the hosting countries (particularly Macedonia)

=> Operations-advocacy:

Communicating seems absolutely indicated, not only for the sake of MSF’s visibility but actually to avoid political recuperation of the humanitarian action and preparing recuperation of humanitarian space.

Topics to be elaborated:

1. insist on distinct mandate and role between the international humanitarian actors (OMG’s, UNHCR,...) and the politico-military initiatives and responsibilities.

2. clarify the link between the Nato-airstrikes and the fluxes of refugees: Nato did not cause it and actually they intended it differently but the opportunity was seized by the Serbs to accelerate the evacuation of the Albanian population.

3. at present no assistance or protection can be provided by humanitarians or is provided through the military initiative in Kosovo. This is a reality that is contrary to the original objectives of the intervention and should be corrected immediately.

4. INTERNAL READING OF POLITICS

1/ Was there another way towards peace ?

Probably not; there is the feeling that 2 elements remained under exploited (but difficult to judge):
- role for the Russians, not only in the negotiations but also in the plan of monitoring (only Russian troops)
- the Rambouillet plan was wrong in support in the end independency and should have pleaded for a simple return to the autonomy granted before 89.

We should not forget that repressions was already a reality and that big diplomatic efforts were deployed before

Given the recent dramas, independency of at least a big part of Kosovo has become unavoidable

This remains an aspect that is difficult to appreciate by non-politicians

2/ What should happen now ?

All is in hands of the military, at least in Kosovo. So they should for sure not make this situation last, but make up their minds to finish this asap:
- either they send in ground troops (probably from Albania) and secure at least areas if not the whole Kosovo for civilian populations
- either they brooker decent conditions for stopping the present bombing (via Primakov), go back to negotiations and let humanitarian aid return to Kosovo.

It seems evident that MSF cannot call for ground troops as such.
bombing wouldn't last for long and definitely the massive forced
exodus of Kosovo was not the expected outcome (NGO's anticipating
needs more inside Kosovo)

3. logistics and administration are complex in Albania, from
importation procedures over transport problems to physical access
(7-10H drive from Tirana to Kukes).

4. there is important humanitarian presence through different
organisations, but there seems to lack an organisation to result more
effectively, particularly when the authorities plans seems to require
a change.

5. northern-Albania offers security-problems in as far as this is an
important 'traffic-area' with Kosovo and many arms are in the area.

3. ACTION LINES

Generally speaking we acknowledge a certain delay (see constraints) and in
many sites we are present and more in a phase of hard trying to set up
systems.

=> Operations-assistance:

Serbia-Kosovo:
In the coming days a return cross-border to Kosovo seems unrealistic;
technically it could happen via the Montenegrain border. At present
international neutrality in that area is hard to explain and live by
and assistance would be hard to deploy.
A return to Belgrade seems pertinent and is planned by Brussels
(probably with non-nato-nationalities), although the operational
margin may be weak in the beginning.
WHO left just now, ICRC are still present and apparently the Min.of
Foreign Affairs invited the Red Cross to assist and even go to Kosovo
? (think about Rugova).

Albania:
- integrated support will be organised to settlements of refs in
  Kukes, Shkoder, Fier and Vlore, with coordination in Tirana.
- assistance will focus on psychological care, shelter, basic medical
care, drinkable water and sanitation. Commodities like blankets and
hygiene kits will be distributed; it seems probable that we'll have to
get into distribution of biscuits ?
- support of host-families
- collaboration with the authorities seems reasonable.

Macedonia: (to be completed by MSF-H)
- assistance to the settlements of Boyane, Cegrane, Neprestena.
- to gain access to the refs in the nomanslandzone.

Montenegro: (to be completed by MSF-F)
- assistance to the settlements of Rozaje and Ulcine
- make sure about host-family support
- find out about possibilities for crossborder activities. ??

General:
Apparently humanitarians (and Nato ?) were rather unprepared for the
direction and the scope that the whole flux has taken; on top of this
major changes and adaptations seems to happen with an increased speed
at different levels; we should try to think of different scenario's
for the future and try to anticipate to the worst;
eg.
in short term clearly not; the longer term results and consequences are hard to predict.
we should remain vigilant on double if not triple agendas that aim at eliminating strategically only an uncontrolled military force and might be ready to sacrifice civilian populations, even manipulate media or use it to manipulate public opinion.

4/ International - European responsibilities in absorbing the fluxes of refs: not only by funding actions but actually also absorbing practically quota of refs?

5/ What will be the consequences for the rest of the Caucasus, inclusive Bosnia?

If DO agree this could go wider to Com and partner sections as a baseline document.

And then we should see what kind of statements we want to send public.

Vincent