



Annual Report

2002

Geneva, Switzerland

centre for humanitarian dialogue
centre pour le dialogue humanitaire

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Contents

	Page
I. About the Centre	3
II. The Centre's Mission Statement	4
III. Letter from the Director	5
IV. Financial Statement	6
V. Humanitarian policy programme	7
A. Developments in 2002	7
B. Ongoing projects	7
VI. Humanitarian mediation	10
A. Review of humanitarian mediation	10
B. Project assessments	
C. Ongoing projects	11
VII. Humanitarian negotiators network	14
VIII. Forum for dialogue	15

I. About the Centre

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is an independent and impartial organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to the promotion of humanitarian principles, the prevention of conflict and alleviation of the effects of conflict through dialogue.

The Centre facilitates high-level, low-key dialogue between principal actors to armed conflict, and among other stakeholders such as governments, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The Centre was officially launched in January 1999, and is registered under Swiss law as an international, Geneva-based, independent institution for promoting humanitarian dialogue.

II. The Centre's mission statement

We believe that dialogue about humanitarian issues can unite the divided, create a common vision and build trust between people.

We recognise the intrinsic value of dialogue with its respect for individuals and their different views.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue will facilitate a universal and inter-sectoral exchange on challenging humanitarian issues in the context of dynamic societal change.

It is our firm belief that dialogue can also lead to the discovery and acceptance of a peaceful means of resolving dispute.

III. Letter from the Director

In 2002, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue continued to develop activities in the areas of both policy and humanitarian mediation, which constitute the two pillars of its approach. While continuing to work on established projects, the Centre looked into developing those programmes further, and sought ways to link both kinds of activities.

For the humanitarian community 2002 was a year of extraordinary challenges. In Afghanistan the overthrow of the Taliban regime had opened the country to the opportunity for assistance and reconstruction. This absorbed many of those with the best skills in our community. But as this continued the signs of hunger in Southern Africa drew humanitarian attention and initiated an extended struggle to stabilise communities in that region.

It is possible to assert that both those challenges were, overall, met with some success. But, as the months of the year went by, the looming threat of another war - this time in Iraq - reminded us that there would always be more to be done.

The Centre worked only on the margins of these major events, although as our Annual Report states we did draw lessons from the experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere to learn more about the uncomfortable relationship between political and humanitarian action.

Our work, on the whole, focused on conflicts comparatively neglected - in Indonesia, Myanmar, Central Asia and Colombia. In these cases the need for a steady and long-term perspective is immediately evident, a theme which is most apparent in our slow-burn work on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

But even long-term projects sometimes have important events along the way. For us the signing in our Geneva villa on December 9 of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement was precisely one such event. Hailed by some at the time as "historic", it has yet to withstand the test of time. But, whatever the future holds, for some months after its signature there was a peace in Aceh. And people were able to begin to plan ahead, see a future for their children and families. People were alive who might otherwise have died.

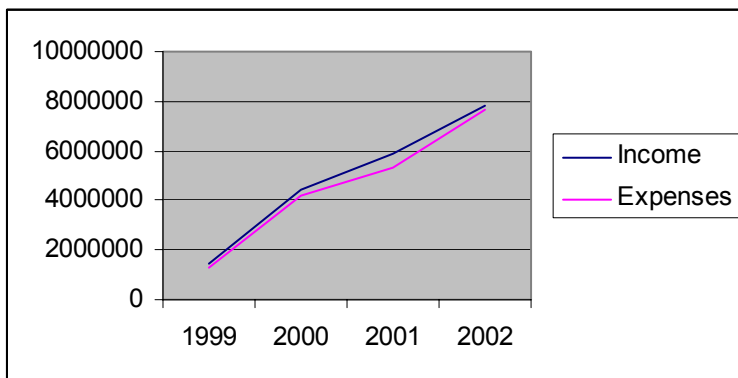
This is the central humanitarian objective: to do all that is within one's power to prevent avoidable deaths. It is an immediate, urgent perhaps even blind objective. But it remains as honourable, compassionate and essential a task today as it ever has been.

IV. Financial Statement

The Centre's income increased from CHF 5,917,193 in 2001 to CHF 7,817,092 in 2002, reflecting the inclusion of new projects in the Centre's portfolio, increased support from existing donors and the addition of new donors, including the Governments of: Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America. Funds were also donated by the Red Cross Movement, The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Quakers UN Offices, City of Geneva and private philanthropists.

Income

Growth of income and expenditure (million Swiss Francs)

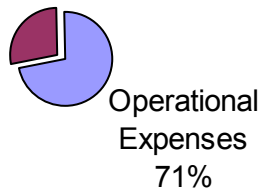


Expenses

The Centre attempts to maintain a proportional balance between its administrative and operational expenses to maintain its efficiency.

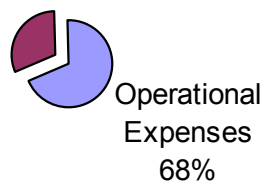
2002

Administrative
expenses
29%



2001

Administrative
expenses
32%



V. Humanitarian policy programme

A. Developments in 2002

Since the spring of 2002, the Centre has been looking into increasing its policy work on issues arising from its mediation experience, while continuing its function as a forum for debate on humanitarian policy issues. It has been conducting a survey of stakeholders, including donors, humanitarian organisations, and relevant academic institutions, to determine the most appropriate scope of the policy programme. Results show that the Centre is already recognised for its work on policy issues and is in a good position to develop this area further.

In the spring of 2002, the Centre chaired a review of the UN's Military and Civil Defence Unit (MCDU), which looked at military and humanitarian links and the role of the MCDU. Also during 2002, work continued on three other major policy programmes, as detailed in the rest of this section. By the end of 2002, the Centre had decided to increase its policy work, starting with the recruitment of a Policy Director in 2003.

B. Ongoing projects

1. Humanitarian engagement with armed groups

The Centre's interest in humanitarian engagement with armed groups – rebel or paramilitary forces – continued in 2002 with several meetings and documents being devoted to this issue. A generic study on engagement with armed groups, which began in 2001, was designed to advise those in contact, or considering contact with, such groups. The study included field visits to Colombia (November 2001) and South Africa (February 2002). The final report will be published in 2003.

After consultation with humanitarian organisations, particularly in the UN, the Centre started in January 2002 to study specific armed groups in order to enable more effective humanitarian engagement. Groups were selected for study if they presented particular difficulties for engagement, and if there was little other available information about them. Two groups were studied in 2002: the Colombian paramilitaries, and the Central Asian Islamic movements.

In Colombia, research included analysis of the political and military background of the paramilitaries and their role in the Colombian conflict, plus interviews with humanitarian organisations and paramilitary commanders. Following completion of the study and publication of a report at the end of 2002, a series of meetings was held in Geneva and Paris, with concerned humanitarian organisations, NGOs, and diplomats, to discuss the findings of the study. Further workshops with academics, UN agencies and the policy group of the Steering Committee on Humanitarian Response, will follow in 2003.

In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, consultants carried out field research in September 2002, including interviews with humanitarian organisations, Muslim religious leaders and (in Tajikistan) Islamic opposition leaders. A synthesis report will be produced and meeting held with humanitarian organisations active in Central Asia in early 2003.

Feedback to date has shown that the impact of the first case study on the Colombian paramilitaries was useful. It encouraged internal debate within several humanitarian organisations and triggered a review of operational practices. Feedback on the second case study will be available in 2003, and further case studies will be prepared. The Centre's growing reputation on engagement with armed groups reinforces the view that analysis on this topic is needed and is useful to humanitarian decision-makers.

2. Humanitarian and political action

Launched in 2002, this project seeks to contribute to humanitarian policy by examining the relationship between humanitarian and political action in complex emergencies. This uneasy relationship also features in the Centre's own mediation work, but has become more significant internationally with the UN system's attempt to achieve greater internal coherence between political, humanitarian, human rights and development objectives.

The Centre canvassed the views of a wide range of people in humanitarian organisations, UN member states, and at senior levels of the UN Secretariat. The depressing but unsurprising finding was that many senior humanitarian officials felt that those working on the political side showed little concern for humanitarian issues. The Centre's own working hypothesis was not that humanitarian prerogatives must always be given precedence, but that there should at the very least be an understanding of the trade-offs inevitable between different objectives if a single strategy is to be pursued.

The Centre agreed, with the UN Deputy Secretary-General, to undertake action research in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone, and to recommend improvements in process which could stabilise or improve the relationship between politics and humanitarian action. The research was undertaken in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London and the International Peace Academy (IPA) in New York. Fieldwork in the three countries was completed in late September 2002, and three reports were produced. A synthesis report for wider circulation will be published in 2003, when the Centre also plans to give a series of briefings in New York, London and Geneva.

3. Human security and Small Arms

This project was established in April 2001 to build a greater understanding of the human cost of the proliferation, use and abuse of small arms and light weapons. As well as research, advocacy and lobbying to improve human security worldwide, the project is also working regionally in Southeast Asia.

Human security outreach

In 2002, the Centre continued its active involvement in developing the Humanitarian Coalition on Small Arms (HCSA). It has been contributing to the development of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) by encouraging and facilitating action on these issues within the humanitarian NGO community.

In December 2002, the Centre initiated research into the production of a Human Security and Small Arms Bulletin, to be distributed three times a year from 2003, to a large number of humanitarian, development, health and human rights NGOs, to encourage greater awareness of small arms political processes and mobilise more support for IANSA.

Small arms questionnaire

In 2002, the Centre, in collaboration with the Small Arms Survey, conducted a qualitative investigation into the impact of arms availability and misuse on humanitarian and development operations. Relief and development field workers worldwide were sent questionnaires, with a focus on the Balkans and Southeast Asia. The UNDP and 8 NGOs took part, and more than 600 responses were received from workers in 35 countries. Results were compiled into a report for distribution at the biennial meeting for the UN Small Arms Conference held in July 2003.

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia and neighbouring regions experience a massive free flow of arms across borders, which fuels armed conflicts and crime, and undermines sustainable development and comprehensive peace and security. In May 2002, the Centre co-organised an international workshop in Cambodia exploring the demand for small arms in Southeast Asia.

The workshop was co-organised by the Centre, the Quaker United Nations Office (Switzerland), the Quaker International Affairs Representatives (Southeast Asia) and the Working Group for Weapons Reduction (Cambodia). It explored factors propelling proliferation and use of small arms in the region, initiated a dialogue on the issues of availability and misuse, and provided an opportunity for NGOs and individuals to exchange information and build networks for collaboration.

The Centre sponsored four individuals from NGOs in Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia to participate in the 'Regional Seminar on Implementing the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons' held in Manila in July.

The Centre also established a fellowship programme in 2002, to provide an opportunity for people under the age of 35 to enhance their capabilities as researchers, advocates, campaigners or lobbyists on small arms issues. The Centre also seeks to complement its capacity with the experience and skills of the fellows, who work at the Centre for six months, with a particular focus on their country or region within Southeast Asia. The first fellow, a Thai national, started work in May 2002. The Centre remains committed to this fellowship as a long-term investment in supporting interest in this issue among young scholars and activists.

VI. Humanitarian mediation

Humanitarian mediation is the shorthand term used by the Centre to describe its work in bringing together belligerents in a conflict, to reduce the conflict by addressing humanitarian concerns and then to resolve the conflict by addressing the underlying causes. This core part of the Centre's activities also grew during 2002, in terms of projects undertaken and skills acquired, and has also extended to include civil society.

New skills developed during the Centre's work in humanitarian mediation include political and security analysis, management of confidential communications, and enlistment of diplomatic support in sensitive political environments. Unusually for a humanitarian organisation, the Centre's profile includes a reputation for discretion – necessary in such work. The Centre has learned how to manage the need for explaining its programme of work to stakeholders, and how to balance this with the need for confidentiality when required.

A. Review of humanitarian mediation

In January 2002, the Centre initiated a review of humanitarian mediation theory and practice, to clarify principles and define what is distinctive about humanitarian mediation, and to investigate future directions for the Centre. Carried out by a senior policy adviser, the review included: visits to Myanmar, New York, Washington DC and London, attendance at the March 2002 Wilton Park Conference on Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building; and a range of consultations and interviews, including with the UN and the World Bank.

The review resulted in proposals for how the Centre's experience and expertise could inform and contribute to broader conflict-prevention and peacemaking efforts undertaken by the UN and its partners. The Centre has decided to launch a mediation policy programme in 2003.

B. Project assessments

The Centre receives many requests for involvement in mediation activities – either from parties to the conflict, or from other external actors – and devotes considerable resources to deciding whether and how to become involved. This assessment phase includes: basic analysis of the conflict situation, to determine whether the Centre's involvement would comply with its principles of neutrality and independence; investigating whether there are other organisations involved already, leaving no need for the Centre's intervention; determining whether there is a possibility of making progress; and, making contact with the parties and other relevant actors, with great care.

The assessment process is therefore substantive and often lengthy work. It concludes with either a decision to withdraw, or the launch of a mediation process. The Centre may not proceed to implement a project if it cannot reasonably assume that it has a fair chance of making a positive humanitarian contribution. In 2002, the Centre carried out assessments in conflict areas including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Middle East, Sudan and Afghanistan.

1. Afghanistan

The Centre continued to maintain a close relationship with the former King of Afghanistan and his entourage in early 2002. Previously, it was suggested that the former King, as a non-political figure, could play a unifying and peacemaking role in Afghanistan after the ejection of the Taliban. The King and the Centre had agreed in principle that the Centre would provide the King with a support office to advise him on opportunities for reconciliation. In February, however, it became clear that the King or members of his entourage intended to play a more political role. The Centre therefore decided not to act on its offer in principle.

2. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In July 2002, the Centre was alerted by one of its consultants to gaps in the mediation process taking place in the DRC. The Centre subsequently carried out its own investigation into mediation opportunities, and hired a consultant who explored options and produced a report on the economic dimensions of the causes of the conflict. The Centre is currently keeping a watching brief on the rapidly evolving situation in the country.

C. Ongoing projects

1. Aceh

Since early 2000, the Centre has been facilitating dialogue between representatives of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (GOI) and the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), aiming to reduce violence in the province and find long-term solutions to the conflict. After a seven-month hiatus in dialogue, representatives of both sides attended talks in Geneva in February 2002, and outlined a timetable for future talks focusing on autonomy, a cessation of hostilities, all-inclusive dialogue and elections.

Both parties met again in Switzerland in May, resulting in a signed Joint Statement giving a clear mandate for future negotiations. In Aceh, the Centre continued to work with members of the monitoring teams, and with representatives from civil society to minimise the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, and implement the agreements reached in Switzerland.

In August, the Centre met with representatives of the Indonesian Government, in Singapore, to discuss the terms for a cessation of hostilities (COH). The meeting was productive and set the stage for intense bilateral negotiations in the months to come. In October, several members of the GAM leadership, with the help of the Centre, held two-day talks in Geneva with representatives of the Acehnese civil society. The civil society representatives – academics, NGO personnel and religious leaders from Aceh – reiterated their support for a COH agreement, encouraged GAM to accept and sign it, and restated their commitment to work with both parties towards sustainable peace in Aceh.

In early December, the Centre participated in the ‘Preparatory Conference on Peace and Reconstruction in Aceh’ in Tokyo, Japan, along with more than 16 countries and 5 international agencies, to secure political and financial support for the ongoing dialogue and the international monitoring mission. Over US\$ 8million were pledged to the Centre for the monitoring mission.

Soon afterwards, the Centre brought the GOI and GAM to Geneva on 9 December 2002 to sign the COH Agreement. The historic signing ceremony was attended by high-level delegations from both parties, and representatives from Acehnese NGOs and from the diplomatic community. As in the 10 May Joint Statement, the Agreement commits both parties to using the Special Autonomy Law for Aceh as a starting point for an all-inclusive dialogue, which will eventually lead to the election of a democratic government in Aceh. The Agreement also calls for the creation of a tripartite monitoring mission (from the GOI, GAM and the Centre) to oversee its implementation, including the establishment of a Joint Security Committee (JSC).

The first meeting of the 15-member tripartite JSC took place in Banda Aceh on 20 December. The number of civilian deaths in Aceh dramatically decreased as soon as the Agreement was signed: in contrast to a previous average of 87 deaths per month, there were 11 reported civilian casualties in the month following 9 December 2002.

2. Myanmar/Burma

In August 2000, the Centre opened a small office in Yangon, Myanmar, with the agreement of the State and Peace Development Council (SPDC). The objective was to facilitate dialogue between the SPDC and opposition groups in order to address the isolation of Myanmar and the consequent increase of the people’s humanitarian needs. With its presence in Yangon, and its flexibility of operation, the Centre is able to assist in ways that are more difficult for others. It is also the only independent organisation in the country regularly meeting with the SPDC and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy.

In 2002, the Centre’s work as informal facilitator focused mainly on building trust between the two sides to advance talks from the confidence-building stage to that of a structured dialogue. The Centre continued to assist the UN Special Envoy, Razali Ismail, in his efforts to facilitate talks, and assisted the Special Envoy’s visits by providing policy advice presenting arguments for increased delivery of humanitarian assistance, economic reforms and the participation of ethnic nationalities.

The Centre also:

- maintained contact with ethnic nationalities inside and outside the country, holding two informal meetings in June and October outside the country with non-ceasefire groups to brief them on developments in Yangon;
- facilitated a second seminar on the Rights of the Child in Yangon in July, to create a forum where ideas could be introduced and developed as part of the reconciliation process;

- helped to secure an agreement granting the ILO permission to appoint a Liaison Officer in Myanmar/Burma by June 2002, as a first step towards providing for a long-term ILO representation in the country;
- provided advice on an informal basis to the Special Rapporteur, Commission on Human Rights, assisting with his mission to Myanmar/Burma in October.

VII. Humanitarian negotiators network

The humanitarian negotiators network (hnn) was created in 2001 to improve the practice of humanitarian negotiators by providing them with increased opportunities for exchange and learning. In 2002, membership increased to 49 people, including those from UN agencies, NGOs and donor governments.

In April 2002, the hnn held its second annual meeting; members discussed different negotiation techniques, participated in a simulation of an Ebola outbreak in Gabon, and analysed the characteristics of various negotiation counterparts. The Centre had also commissioned two papers for the meeting: a case study on humanitarian negotiation in Angola, and a generic study on the use of leverage.

During the summer of 2002, based on members' suggestions, the Centre researched the development and maintenance of the network, interviewed selected members, and recruited a part-time project assistant to provide continued support to network members. In April and August 2002, the Centre also held two one-week training courses on negotiation in Geneva and in New York in collaboration with the Centre for International Health and Cooperation.

More recently, the Centre has concentrated on:

- broadening the hnn member profile, to recruit more female field workers, government representatives and academics;
- encouraging sharing of experiences: in November 2002, the Centre began issuing monthly hnn newsletters, and a website with a private section and discussion forum was launched in December;
- training: since November 2002, the Centre has been planning and implementing an online training course on humanitarian negotiations, in collaboration with the Harvard Program on Negotiation and Oxford Brookes University; available training courses for members are being collated and shared via the hnn website, and free access to some of them has been arranged.

VIII. Forum for Dialogue

The Centre regularly organises and hosts meetings and conferences on humanitarian issues on its premises. Based in a villa by the shores of Lake Geneva, the Centre has three conference rooms which are regularly available to the humanitarian community.

In 2002, the Centre hosted over 25 meetings from various organisations including UN agencies, the ICRC, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, Minority Rights Group, and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response.

The following meetings were organised and co-ordinated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in 2002:

February 1-3	Aceh informal meeting
February 25	Friends of the Centre – Small Arms & Armed Groups
April 8-10	Humanitarian Negotiators Network Annual Meeting
April 10-16	Humanitarian Negotiators Training Course
April 22	Friends of the Centre – War on Terrorism & Consequences for Humanitarianism
May 5-7	Strategies for Human Security (Vevey, Switzerland)
May 9-10	Joint Council Forum (Aceh)
June 7	Board meeting
June 24	The New Humanitarianisms? A review of the global trends in international humanitarian response (co-organised with ODI)
July 8	Book launch, <i>Beyond Retribution: Seeking Justice in the Shadows of War</i> , by Dr Rama Mani
August 29-30	Board meeting
September 2	Friends of the Centre – Aceh, Indonesia
September 4	Informal meeting of Geneva-based organisations working on small arms
September 23-25	Political and humanitarian action project meeting
September 26	Board meeting
October 4	Meeting and lunch: ‘Negotiating Self-Determination’, policy briefing and discussion, presented by Eileen Babbitt and Hurst Hannum
October 10	Visit of Myanmar students to the Centre
October 15	Conference: ‘Quelle justice pour reconstruire la paix?’, réflexion sur le règlement de conflits récents en Asie, par le Dr Rama Mani
October 15-16	Proposal-writing training
October 17	Humanitarian Engagement with Armed Groups (Colombia)
November 8	Small-arms action: reflections and future action
November 25	Lunch: Friends of the Centre – Colombia
December 5	Board meeting
December 6	Council meeting
December 9	Aceh Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signing

The Centre was also used as a venue for dialogue for the following meetings:

January 17	Ville de Genève
January 25	Internal Displacement Unit Retreat (OCHA)
January 31	Protection training (UNHCR)
February 12	Inter-Agency Reference Group on Gender & Humanitarian Action (UNICEF)
February 22	Seminar (Hospice General)
March 7-8	Orientation day (OCHA)
March 14-15	Emergency Field Coordination Training (OCHA)
March 18	Review, Military and Civil Defence Unit (OCHA)
March 22	Seminar (Hospice General)
April 3	Review, Military and Civil Defence Unit (OCHA)
April 29-30	Review, Military and Civil Defence Unit (OCHA)
May 7	Section retreat, Office for Emergency Programmes (UNICEF)
May 13-14	Task Group on Human Resources Reform (UN Office of the Deputy Secretary General)
May 24	International Council Meeting (Minority Rights Group)
May 27	Section retreat, Office for Emergency Programmes (UNICEF)
May 28-30	Harmonisation of RSD procedures (UNHCR)
June 10	Policy Working Group Meeting (Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response)
June 3-4	Desk Officers Meeting (Norwegian Refugee Council)
July 4	Institute on Conflict Resolution and Humanitarian Action meeting
July 9	Protection SURGE Capacity Project – orientation session (International Rescue Committee)
July 18	Orientation workshop (OCHA)
July 26	Caux Scholars Programme in Conflict Transformation (Centre presentation to students)
August 8-9	Annual meeting of OP-PROT Division (ICRC)
August 23	Concours Pictet
September 11-13	Protection Meeting, Western and Central Europe and the Baltic States and North America (UNHCR)
September 24	When Internal Displacement Ends (Norwegian Refugee Council, Brookings Institute, Georgetown University Institute for the Study of International Migration)