



# Annual Report

2001

*Geneva*

centre for humanitarian dialogue  
centre pour le dialogue humanitaire

114 rue de lausanne  
ch 1202 genève  
t 41 22 908 1130  
info@hdcentre.org  
<http://www.hdcentre.org>

## 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 the alleviation of its effects through dialogue.

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

### 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.*

## Introduction

During the Centre's second full year of operation, its Programme Strategy was agreed by the Board. This strategy focuses on two main areas of work. Firstly, through humanitarian mediation in conflict zones, the Centre aims to bring together the parties concerned in order to reach agreements that reduce the human cost of the conflict, increase humanitarian security, and ultimately contribute to the resolution of the conflict itself. Secondly, the Centre uses this direct experience to identify situations in which international policy can contribute to a reduction of the harmful consequences of conflict. The Centre then strives to find and disseminate policy solutions to these problems, by working with others in various types of initiatives. These include: dialogue on approaches to humanitarian security, support for humanitarian negotiators, and supporting agreements for limiting the use of small arms and light weapons.

The Programme Strategy was developed and agreed by the Board, and approved by the Foundation Council. At their annual meeting in May, members of the Council helped to guide the Centre's humanitarian mediation projects and to focus its work on humanitarian policy issues through discussions about its work in Indonesia and Myanmar and on small arms and light weapons. They made suggestions for new initiatives in humanitarian policy discussions and endorsed and approved the programme of work.

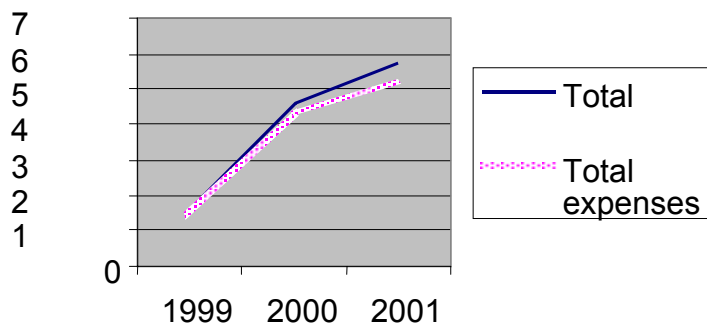
*The Centre will provide a much-needed independent forum to exchange information collected from field experience and, most importantly, it will help all parties involved to craft better, more sustainable solutions to present and future problems of humanitarian action.*

The Centre's outreach work with diplomats and humanitarian organisations has made more people within the humanitarian and donor communities aware of the Centre's reputation, and attracted interest and confidence in its work. This has resulted in a number of suggestions for new projects and the Centre now regularly briefs groups of diplomats in Geneva about its work.

The Centre has also been facilitating dialogue by providing a venue for other organisations to conduct meetings on humanitarian issues.

The Centre also attempted to further diversify sources of income from funds that are unearmarked, to provide a more reliable funding base. Funding grew rapidly from CHF 4,624,300 in 2000 to CHF 5,756,000 in 2001, reflecting the inclusion of new projects in the Centre’s portfolio, increased support from existing donors and the addition of new donors.

*Growth of income and expenditure (million Swiss Francs)*



*Distribution between projects and core activities (2001)*



The year 2001 was one in which changes and developments in the international arena had a dramatic effect on humanitarian mediation. In particular, the terrorist attacks in the United States of America on 11 September had a major impact. For example, in Indonesia the dialogue process suffered because members of the Government felt they needed to turn their attention to the domestic effects of the terrorist attacks and the ensuing war in Afghanistan, making dialogue more challenging and difficult.

## Programme activities in 2001

### Indonesia (Aceh)

The Centre continued to facilitate dialogue between representatives of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (GoI) and the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), with the aim of reducing violence in the province. This remains the Centre's largest project.

In January, representatives of both sides, encouraged by the Centre, agreed to establish mechanisms for finding lasting solutions to the conflict. They put in place security arrangements to allow a moratorium on violence, meetings among field commanders, and the creation of a framework for a process of democratic consultations on political participation by the people of Aceh. The representatives agreed to establish a Joint Council, supported by the Centre, to review progress, ensure adherence to agreements and address issues raised through the democratic consultation process.

When the first Joint Council met in February, both sides endorsed the agreements reached earlier between field commanders, recommended the extension of the mechanisms that had been put in place, and reaffirmed their commitment to preliminary consultations with the Acehnese people. Although violence did continue during the moratorium, the Joint Council hoped the field commander meetings would help reduce the number of incidents.

*High-level, low-key dialogue among the principal humanitarian actors, stakeholders and aid recipients will enhance our understanding of acute humanitarian problems, now and in the future.*

The Centre continued to facilitate initiatives in Aceh to advance the process of finding solutions to the conflict. Attempts were made to set up peace zones, initiate humanitarian projects for devastated communities, pursue democratic consultation processes and extend the monitoring teams' activities to other districts. The Centre continued to lobby for a high-level meeting between representatives of the GoI and GAM, but this became increasingly difficult when the

Government increased military operations in April.

The Centre was eventually able to bring both sides together for a second Joint Council meeting in June, during a period of increasing violence in Aceh and of political uncertainty in Jakarta about the status of President Wahid. At the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue but dissolved the Joint Committee for Humanitarian Action (JCHA) and suspended the Joint Committee for Security Modalities (JCSM). However, they also offered to support humanitarian projects, appoint a high-level contact for security issues, and set up a Steering Committee to advise the process on democratic consultations.

In July, trust between the two sides weakened and despite meetings on the Joint Council directives they were unable to reach agreement on how to implement them. Local police had arrested six GAM members of the joint committees and monitoring teams, GAM Committee members and staff of the Centre were harassed and threatened by police, and provocative public statements were made, implying the end of the dialogue process. The Centre was concerned about the increasing violence in Aceh and the inability of both sides to implement and adhere to previous agreements, so it invited a group of international dignitaries to Geneva in July to act as its advisers.

Uncertainty and intimidation in Aceh decreased once Megawati Sukarnoputri had succeeded Abdurahman Wahid and had made cabinet appointments that seemed favourable to the dialogue process. These new ministers and presidential advisers assured the Centre of the new Government's commitment to the dialogue process, but they did not disclose any public policy on Aceh.

In September, the leaders of the GAM agreed to the integration of the Centre's international advisers into the dialogue process. They also issued a public statement, which, for the first time, acknowledged that the new framework agreed in January would focus on 'interim solutions', implying that the issue of independence could be deferred.

Meanwhile, the Centre continued its work in Aceh with members of the monitoring teams and representatives from civil society, local government, and non-governmental groups in Aceh. The people of Aceh called for a ceasefire and continuation of dialogue, but neither side had appointed representatives to the Steering Committee for Democratic Consultations or appointed contacts for security issues.

Since then, the Centre has regularly consulted both parties on ways forward and opportunities for negotiations, working closely with them to rebuild confidence and resolve the issue of the former GAM negotiators who had been arrested in July. The police had released them but they remained under close surveillance. Finally, the Centre secured agreement from both parties to meet in early 2002 to discuss a new framework for dialogue, taking into consideration the implementation and renewal of the Government's Presidential Decree No. IV, the ratification of the special autonomy law for Aceh and, most importantly, the alarming increase in violence across the province.

## **Myanmar/Burma**

The Centre is the only independent organisation in the country regularly meeting with the State and Peace Development Council (SPDC) and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It helps the UN Special Envoy facilitate dialogue at the national level and provides him with advice on issues relating to the ethnic nationalities. In addition, the Centre facilitates dialogue between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the SPDC.

During 2001, the Centre continued to support the work of the international community, impressing on the parties the importance of demonstrating their commitment to a negotiated political settlement by undertaking confidence-building measures before holding substantive discussions. It hopes that this will encourage reform, reduce the country's isolation from the international community, and lead to improved living conditions.

The Centre informally liaises between the SPDC, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the international community, and its unofficial role as in-country contact for international missions is recognised by both sides in Myanmar. The UN Special Envoy, with the support of the Centre, is persuading the SPDC to demonstrate its good intentions by gradually releasing political prisoners, easing restrictions on political activities and fully co-operating with the ILO and UN Special Rapporteur Commission on Human Rights visits.

The SPDC allowed the Centre only occasional access to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi while trust was gradually being established. It eventually became possible, by the second half of the year, to plan meetings in advance. Regular meetings between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the Centre, complemented by separate meetings with SPDC interlocutors, gave continuity to the face-to-face meetings between the parties engaged in the current round of talks.

## Armed groups

Humanitarian organisations often have to make difficult decisions when considering engaging with armed groups to ensure security of their staff and access to vulnerable populations. Many struggle with the dilemma this poses. The Centre therefore decided to conduct a major study on this problem that would be a useful contribution to the debate, by helping to clarify the issues.

In a workshop held at the Centre in July 2001, participants expressed the view that engaging with armed groups was a necessity. However, they also felt that they needed to engage with caution so as not to confer international legitimacy on actors viewed by some states as pariah organisations.

The next stage of the project will be a presentation to humanitarian actors and donor governments, autumn 2002, to be followed by discussions. The Centre will publish the findings of the study, after a wider consultation process among stakeholders. The work on this question of engagement with armed groups will continue with an analysis of a small number of specific armed groups and of the most appropriate ways for humanitarian actors to engage with them.

## Policy meetings

During the year the Centre organised two meetings on ethical and moral dilemmas in humanitarian action.

Following the bombing in Afghanistan, humanitarian organisations are re-examining the principle of neutrality and politicisation of humanitarian action. In a one-day discussion at the Centre, representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments and UN agencies debated the concept of neutrality and its relevance to modern conflict. Participants, voicing their organisations' and their own views, questioned the possibility of neutrality when confronted with terrorism and war crimes committed by belligerents, claiming that humanitarian

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

workers could not remain neutral. Some described neutrality as a tool rather than a virtue. They also argued that consistency in attitude was essential if humanitarian workers were to gain reputation and positive perceptions among stakeholders – belligerents and aid recipients. Although the meeting was not intended to produce a consensus, it reconfirmed in broad terms the importance to humanitarian

organisations of the principle of neutrality in a world where action by these organisations is sometimes subject to co-option by political actors.

The Centre also organised a discussion on minimum conditions for humanitarian action, focusing on response to the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as an example. Minimum conditions for humanitarian action were seen as an evolving concept, with different mandates and circumstances leading to different conclusions. Some participants said they based their decisions on needs, noting that they would not consider any change in policy until those needs were met. Others noted that the lack of access to the most vulnerable people meant there was no possibility of humanitarian action. In fact, without access, it is impossible to know whether the humanitarian assistance is reaching the most vulnerable. No consensus was reached. A summary report of the meeting was sent to participants in December.

## **Afghanistan**

The Centre was aware from an early stage that the process for establishing stability and preventing a resumption of conflict in post-Taliban Afghanistan was bound to be difficult. Therefore, in November 2001 the Centre established contact in Rome with the former King of Afghanistan, who may be well placed to play a key reconciliation role in the event of increased tensions in the country. The Centre continues to maintain a close relationship with the former King and his entourage.

## **Brcko**

The Centre visited Bosnia and Herzegovina in January 2001 to follow-up on discussions with the Office of the High Representative (OHR) on education reform, focusing on the Brcko District and facilitating dialogue in the Federation and the Republika Srpska. The Centre was asked to assist with educational reform and, in particular, with efforts to develop a multicultural education curriculum. The lack of co-operation in the field of education epitomised the issues challenging Bosnia as a whole.

The Centre invited education representatives from Brcko to Geneva, where it facilitated a discussion on education reform. Participants included newly appointed members of the Education Advisory Committee (EAC), the director of the education department in Brcko, and education advisers from the OHR and OHR/North.

The meeting considered the goals participants must set during 2001, the obstacles they would have to face, and strategies for dealing with them. The Centre was seen as a safe place where their work and discussions would be treated in a confidential manner.

The meeting report detailed responsibilities and a timeline for action. It was intended to equip the participants with enthusiasm and renewed collaborative spirit to combat common problems on their return to Brcko.

## **Colombia**

As a result of evaluations into the feasibility of humanitarian mediation in Central and South America, the Centre determined that it was in a position to facilitate dialogue in Colombia. It highlighted the need to narrow differences by clarifying concepts and identifying humanitarian issues of common concern to all sides in an eventual peace agreement and the most effective strategies for the Colombian context. Senior government ministers, politicians, and representatives from UN agencies, international bodies, human rights groups, the media and the corporate sector were therefore invited to attend an informal meeting in Geneva in June 2001.

The meeting served as a mechanism for sharing information about the humanitarian situation, and for broadening the debate. While the conclusions were not binding, they were intended to facilitate future consideration of humanitarian agreements between the parties. The Centre's role in the project was designed to end with the organisation and facilitation of this meeting.



## **Human Security and Small Arms Programme**

The Centre established this programme in April 2001, driven by its experience during its humanitarian mediation activities of the impact of small arms proliferation.

The programme is designed to build a greater understanding of the human cost of the proliferation, use and abuse of small arms and light weapons, and develop options to address the crisis. By facilitating dialogue, the Centre seeks to bridge the gap between the disarmament and humanitarian communities, and it employs a variety of other approaches, including research, advocacy and regional initiatives to promote governmental and non-governmental action.

In June, the Centre brought together a small number of organisations to discuss the potential value of creating a Humanitarian Coalition on Small Arms. This would complement the work of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), whose membership would overlap with the Humanitarian Coalition. The meeting agreed to explore this concept further, and in November the Centre was involved in co-organising a meeting in Nairobi on 'Small Arms and the Humanitarian Community – developing an agenda for action'. At this meeting, a much larger group of organisations participated, giving additional impetus to the nascent Humanitarian Coalition.

In July, the Centre attended the UN conference on the 'Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects'. A 'Humanitarian Statement of Concern', signed by more than 70 organisations, called on member states attending the conference to give priority to the security of civilians. The Centre also helped to convene a meeting between governments in the Human Security Network and humanitarian NGOs, as a first step towards a more active partnership on the issue.

In November, in coalition with the Small Arms Survey, the Centre organised a workshop intended as a first step in launching a survey of humanitarian and development workers, analysing their perceptions of the small arms issue and how it affects their work. The meeting provided advice on survey design and process, and on which organisations should participate in the survey. The latter will be carried out in the Balkans, West Africa and South East Asia, in parallel to a study by Johns Hopkins University.

## **Humanitarian Negotiators Network and training programme**

In 2001, the Centre created a network of humanitarian negotiators to which it provides support and which it hopes to be able to draw upon when needed. The first of the annual meetings, to build identity, was held in March 2001, in collaboration with the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research. Members were selected from UN agencies, NGOs and donor governments and included some with many years' experience and others with a potential to develop into humanitarian negotiators. This meeting provided an opportunity for members to share experiences, discuss the problems they face on a daily basis and improve their working practices and relationships.

As a result of the meeting the Centre will also launch in April 2002 a one-week negotiation training programme aimed at humanitarian workers. This will be the first of what are planned to be twice-yearly programmes organised in partnership with the Centre for International Health and Cooperation.

## Forum for dialogue

The following meetings were organised and co-ordinated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in 2001:

Jan 6-9	Exploratory talks on Aceh
Feb 14-16	Aceh Joint Council meeting
Mar 9-11	Annual Meeting: Humanitarian Negotiators Network
Apr 27-29	Brcko Education Reform
Jun 22	Human Security and Small Arms: Working Together and Moving Forward
Jun 30 – Jul 1	Aceh Joint Council meeting 2
Jul 27-29	Humanitarian Challenges in Colombia
Jul 31	Humanitarian Agreements with Armed Groups: Practice and Principles
Nov 5-6	Small Arms and Humanitarian Staff
Nov 23	Striking the Balance: Truth, Justice and Reconciliation
Dec 6	Minimum Conditions for Humanitarian Action: Practice and Principles
Dec 11	Neutrality in Humanitarian Action: Practice and Principles

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

Jan 22	Private Sector Engagement in International Peace and Security (IASC)
Jan 23	The Relationship between Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding (OCHA)
Jan 25	Reflections and Strategies (Association for the Prevention of Torture)
Mar 13-14	Inter-governmental Meeting on Anti-vehicle Mines (ICRC)
May 9-11	Landmine Survivors Training (ICBL/LSN)
May 28 – Jun 1	CAP Training Tools (OCHA)
Jun 5-6	Review and evaluation (Sphere Project)
Jun 8	Provision of health and social services in failed states (IFRC)
Jul 9-11	Armenian–Turkish Reconciliation Commission (USAID)
Aug 8-9	DR Congo Brainstorm (Media Action)
Aug 14-17	EFCT Redesign Workshop (OCHA)
Oct 8	Information Planning for IDPs and Refugees in Afghanistan (Media Action)
Oct 16-18	Conference evaluation (Global Forum for Health Research)
Oct 25-26	Orientation (OCHA)
Nov 8	Emergency Operations Work Plan Review (UNICEF)
Nov 28	Strengthening NGO/UNHCR Partnership (UNHCR)
Nov 29-30	Human Rights training for humanitarian workers (ICVA/OCHR)
Dec 5	Strengthening NGO/UNHCR Partnership 2 (UNHCR)
Dec 18	Emergency Services Branch Retreat (OCHA)

## Donors

The Centre received funding for its work in 2001 from the governments of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Red Cross Movement, private institutions and individuals also provided funding.

One or more donors also provided confidential funding.