

A PROPOSAL FOR SPANISH HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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Manuel Sánchez-Montero

Director of Operations, Action against Hunger Foundation

The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECI) entered the area of Humanitarian Action (HA) several years ago. So far, the results of its interventions have been very mixed, depending on the political guidelines behind specific interventions, which perhaps lacked a clear, strategic framework and continuity. The efforts carried out by professional groups alongside private agencies (NGOs) and public institutions (decentralised local organisms and/or other state - run institutions) have permitted HA to enter a mature phase though it still requires further structuring and dimensioning in order to continue to evolve.

Since the 1990s, Humanitarian Action has become an enormously attractive way to channel (even justify) intervention for political and economic ends, and different actors have emerged which should not be excluded although their contributions in this field should be regulated. The Armed Forces, the technical services belonging to regional and local governments, and even private corporations have begun to interact to such an extent that coordinating the intense (and welcome) traffic generated has become urgent.

This presentation distinguishes 2 levels with which to frame and articulate the role of future Spanish Humanitarian Aid.

Political Level

<p>A specific mandate – complementing that of Spanish development cooperation in general</p>	<p>A mandate centered on protecting the victims of war and/or natural catastrophes and preventing these by covering basic needs and respecting the principles of HA (linked to the IV Geneva Convention and the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative). Protection should include both <u>actions to alleviate basic needs</u> (acting on the effects) and denouncing and politically pressuring violations of International Humanitarian Law (acting on the causes).</p>
<p>Framework for intervention analysis - clear and measurable intervention criteria to avoid dispersion</p>	<p>Criteria such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of a 'degree of vulnerability' which implies that the population's basic needs are not being met as these needs exceed the population's ability to react. • The existence of social, political, economic, and/or environmental vulnerability which implies great risk of not being able to access basic needs -protection, food, water/water treatment, health, shelter. • The existence of basic needs not being met by local actors and/or other humanitarian actors (complementariness). • Prior identification of the target groups to focus intervention - social, political, geographically concentrated, and horizontal groups. • Intervention opportunity (adapting intervention the moment it occurs).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and direct access to victims, thereby avoiding having to intervene through conflict participants.
<p>Coordination – ‘Traffic’ regulations between the different Humanitarian Action actors</p>	<p>Two levels of coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between state-run public actors - AECI, institutions that depend on other ministries, decentralised local development cooperation organisms, regional and local government technical services (OTCs), etc. In this case, the institution designated by AECI should assume the responsibility for coordinating the efforts of the rest of public institutions and take the lead in defining the HA policy included in the Master Plan for Development Cooperation, and standardise the Master Plan and other development cooperation policies. • Between private actors - NGOs, private corporations, etc.: By promoting participatory forums, facilitating operative coordination where these actors are participating to complement the Humanitarian Action being carried out by AECI (through contractual collaboration, rendering mutual services, etc.).
<p>Innovation – promoting research in technical, social, and management areas</p>	<p>It would be worthwhile to develop sectoral and transversal axes to make the most of synergies with political, social, and technical initiatives to reinforce Humanitarian Action's added-value.</p>

Operative Level

- There is a need for a mechanism with the necessary and autonomous human and financial resources (with respect to other governmental cooperative structures).
- It is essential to interact and coordinate with experienced humanitarian actors in tasks such as information management, research, execution, and assessment of the Humanitarian Action fomented by AECI.

Intervention Axes

A. Prevention

Objective: Reduce the effect of crises and natural catastrophes on the affected populations by means of intervention which reinforces preventive mechanisms.

Coordination and Players:

1. Identify the areas and types of risks. Exchange information regarding vulnerability risk.

- Financial support and/or collaboration between OTCs, AECI, research centres, specialised observers, and NGOs (for example, catastrophe risk observatories, conflict observatories, etc.).

2. Direct intervention by the Agency or by means of multilateral agencies and NGOs.

- Carried out by AECI and OTC technicians (if available).
- Financial support through ordinary projects (open bids).

3. Reinforce local abilities

- Financial and/or technical support for authorities, technical agencies or local NGOs

B. Emergency Response

Objective: Offer quick and adequate response to the basic needs of the population affected by a crisis or natural catastrophe.

Coordination and Players:

1. Coordinate intervention decisions in international forums and *in situ*.

- Participate in international forums (for example, donor country conferences, OCHA, UNHCR, ECHO) and in the country through specialised authorities.
- Promote coordination for emergencies among decentralised local development cooperation organisms by means of emergency cell groups.

2. Make emergency decisions.

- Emergency cell group operative in 24 hours.
- A flexible budgetary margin for quick decision making.

3. Direct emergency intervention by AECI by means of specialised technicians.

- Endow them with the ability to quickly identify their own needs (technical equipment for rapid response, methodology for quick identification).
- Launch a Contingency Plan with specialised technicians, material, and transport, ready to be deployed in 24-48 hours.
- Turn to the Armed Forces for transport logistics, limiting their presence to these contexts without any other type of Spanish military activity and subordinating their intervention to AECI decisions.
- Coordinate the Contingency Plan with those of other agencies and NGOs at the national level.

4. Intervention in emergencies by means of multilateral agencies and NGOs.

- Flexible financial support for agencies (periodic subventions open to identifying specific projects – in cases of complex emergencies) and specific decisions for every crisis (simple format, decisions in 3-7 days, retroactive to the date the operation begins).
- Agency eligibility based on operative ability, opportunity, and the relevance of proposals presented. The nationality of actors or country of origin of subsidised materials should not be a condition (use criteria of operativity and availability instead).

C. Reconstruction

Objective: Guarantee adequate and sustained coverage of the basic needs of the population affected by a crisis or natural catastrophe until the context provoking the crisis has been stabilised.

Coordination and Players:

1. Coordinate intervention decisions in international forums and *in situ* (same as above).

2. Agency's direct intervention in reconstruction by means of specialised technicians.

- It is recommended that this intervention be carried out through multilateral agencies or specialised NGOs for better cost-impact factors.

3. Emergency intervention by means of multilateral agencies and NGOs.

- Programmed financial support to these agencies (periodic subventions open to identifying specific projects) and specific decisions in the Annual Global Plans by country (proposal approved in 2-3 months and retroactive to date proposals presented).
- Coordinated management with specialised AECI entities to ensure project adaptation and continuity during the development phase when the structural aspects of aid are a priority (co-management during transitory period).
- Agencies eligible based on operative ability, opportunity, and relevance of proposals presented. The nationality of the actors or country of origin of subsidised materials should not be a condition (use criteria of operativity and availability instead).

D. Development of Complementary Approaches

Objective: Reinforce the positive impact of the Agency's humanitarian aid by developing sectoral and transversal approaches to guide the aid itself.

1. Contribute to and coordinate initiatives with multilateral institutions, state humanitarian agencies, and specialised institutions (integrating existing approaches and contributing to their development during the second phase)

Potentially interesting approaches:

- Transversal:
 - Criteria and standards of technical excellence (Sphere, ALNAP, Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative).
 - Quality-impact control and evaluation of Humanitarian Action.

2. Financial aid and collaboration with research institutes and specialised agencies to develop sectoral and transversal approaches

Potentially interesting approaches:

- Sectoral:
 - Incorporate public health strategies (including AIDS), food assistance, water and water treatment, housing (habitat), shelter centres, etc., which will help better delineate and improve actions.
- Transversal:
 - Develop synergies between HA and parallel diplomatic initiatives (peace processes and conflict prevention through civil society), taking advantage of HA's role in reinforcing the prevention and management of conflicts which are one of the causes of population vulnerability.
 - Gender approaches in Humanitarian Action.
 - Respect for the environment in Humanitarian Action.

Conclusion

In my opinion, future Spanish Humanitarian Action is presented with both a challenge and an opportunity: to integrate public effort with that already carried out by other international development cooperation agencies and, at the same time, be on the same level as the best of them.

From the perspective of a professional and specialised humanitarian agency such as Action against Hunger, we understand that AECI must acquire the ability to self-



analyse, self-manage, and assess itself, thereby allowing it to select its objectives and start achieving them.

By the same token, the existence of qualified actors both at the national and international levels makes the search for complementariness not only desirable, but also necessary. The ability to analyse and research, to directly intervene, manage logistics, inform and raise awareness among the general public, and even finance institutes, operative agencies, and civil and military organisms makes it absolutely necessary for AECI to play a central role in coordinating and facilitating the contribution of these actors.

For this to occur, AECI needs to be endowed with the adequate mandate, means, and political and institutional leadership.

Strategic Coordination and Agreement

- Multilateral organisms (OCHA, European Commission, UNHCR, etc.)
- Other state-run humanitarian agencies
- Local and regional humanitarian agencies

Coordination of Pressure and Complaints

- Multilateral organisms
- Other state-run humanitarian agencies
- Operative humanitarian agencies with a presence in the field (NGOS)
- Specialised research centres



Research and Development

- Specialised research centres
- Think-Tanks
- Specialised and operative humanitarian agencies (NGOs)

Operative Action Coordination

- Multilateral agencies and organisms (UNHCR, WFP, OCHA)
- Operative humanitarian agencies present in the field (NGOs)
- Public development cooperation agencies (decentralised)
- Various actors (Armed Forces, private corporations)

Foroaod – Spanish Development Aid

FRIDE organised the project "Spanish Development Aid - Mid-term Review and a Proposal for a Participative Consultation" between June 2006 and April 2007. This project aims to develop a consultation process about the current Spanish government's development cooperation policy. We have created a forum for participation and debate, in order to assess the Spanish development cooperation reform agenda and to identify the main achievements and shortcomings in operationalising the initiatives based on the principle of "More Aid, Better Aid". A set of recommendation guidelines were developed, through participative methods, with the objective of putting into practice the aspirations of the Spanish development cooperation policy.

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