

# Helping Out: Humanitarian Policy for Global Security

*Policy Possibilities for Public Discussion*



Edited by Dennis Boyer  
*Fellow of the Interactivity Foundation*

## Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License 3.0

This work is provided under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution, Noncommercial, Share Alike License, the basic terms of which are summarized below. To view a copy of this license and a link to its full legal code with all its terms, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>. This work is also protected by copyright and/or other applicable law. Any use of this work other than as authorized under this license or copyright law is prohibited.

### Generally, under the terms of this License, you are free:



**to Share** — to copy, distribute, and transmit the work



**to Remix** — to adapt the work.

### Under the following conditions:



**Attribution** — You must attribute the work in the following manner *Helping Out: Humanitarian Policy for Global Security*, published by the Interactivity Foundation and available under a Creative Commons Attribution, Noncommercial, Share-Alike License. Copyright © 2011 Interactivity Foundation. You must not in any way suggest that the Interactivity Foundation endorses you or your use of the work.



**Noncommercial** — You may not use this work for commercial purposes.



**Share Alike** — If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.

### With the understanding that:

**Waiver** — Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the Interactivity Foundation.

**Public Domain** — Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by the license.

**Other Rights** — In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:

Your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exceptions and limitations

The author's moral rights

Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.

**Notice** — For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do this is with a link to the following Web page: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>.

**Project Manager & Editor:** Dennis Boyer

**Copy Editor:** Chana Garcia

**Publication Design & Layout:** Calida Rawles

**Photographs:** © 2011 Joann Kingsley

Printed in the United States of America by the  
**Interactivity Foundation**

P.O. Box 9

Parkersburg, WV 26101-0009

[www.interactivityfoundation.org](http://www.interactivityfoundation.org)

# Table of Contents



**The Basic Policy Vision** ..... 1



**Addressing the Suffering** ..... 4

- A. Speedy Response* ..... 5
- B. Stop Crimes Against Humanity* ..... 7
- C. Protect the Displaced* ..... 9



**Addressing Underlying Conditions** ..... 12

- D. Protect Resources* ..... 13
- E. Strengthen Infrastructure* ..... 15
- F. Build Resilient Societies* ..... 17

# *The Basic Policy Vision*

**The United States is a major player when it comes to global security issues. Although most security issues could be considered collective responsibilities, the United States is uniquely positioned to provide leadership and to take action. Policies in this area may be motivated by a variety of visions, including moral responsibility and self-interest. The policy possibilities in this report go beyond particular humanitarian approaches to express a combination of strategic visions and projections of how the United States wants to be perceived by others and how its citizens regard themselves.**

## **Humanitarian Policy as a Global Security Concern**

This report is for the public discussion of policy possibilities that address the values and priorities of the United States and its citizens. In particular, it examines how our priorities shape our responses to humanitarian crises abroad and the global security issues that these crises bring to mind. The United States has a long history of humanitarian outreach, and such efforts are generally considered “the right thing to do.” In practice, these responses present mixed results, at times appearing to be ad hoc and not part of a well-thought-out strategy. Global security issues in this project include human suffering at levels that pose threats to broader populations or those that threaten to spill across national borders. This includes hunger, genocide, pandemics, societal collapses, and conflicts.

Discussions focused on situations that are likely to arise in developing nations, but participants agreed that most nations are but a calamity away from a severe breakdown that could create conditions ripe for humanitarian crises. Participants in this project did not attempt to devise solutions to particular humanitarian problems, but rather they tried to explore and develop a number of contrasting policy approaches that might help when publicly discussing these concerns. In the case of each possibility listed in the following summary, it is understood that arguments can be made for or against adopting such policies.

Participants were organized in two distinct panels that met throughout 2009–2010: One convened in south-central Wisconsin and included citizen-generalists with a wide range of experiences abroad. The other panel carried out its interaction via the Web and consisted of specialist-experts with backgrounds in international relations and major relief operations. Both panels ultimately came together to provide guidance on the drafting of this report. The general sentiment was that there will always be a need to respond to humanitarian crises. Participants also felt that this policy area could benefit from an increased awareness of the choices that might shape our thinking and the most effective responses.







# Addressing the Suffering

- **Move quickly to prevent loss of life and suffering**
- **Plan and prepare for such responses**
- **Prepare to intervene to stop genocide and protect aid workers**
- **Organize specialized forces capable of performing this mission**
- **Assist displaced populations in meeting human needs**
- **Provide political and developmental support to resettlement of displaced populations**



## A. Speedy Response

This policy envisions humanitarian aid along the lines of trauma care, with its recognition of the “golden hour” for medical intervention. It calls for rapid intervention on a large scale—with emergency assistance delivered at the community level rather than an individual level. Bureaucratic requirements and arguments over “who’s in charge” often slow humanitarian responses. This policy possibility looks toward the most effective ways to protect lives and to prevent suffering now.

### An Imaginary Case Study

A poor island-nation experiences a severe earthquake. Its already weak government and infrastructure are devastated. Thousands are killed and many are trapped in the rubble. This nation is almost totally dependent on outside assistance. Because of a breakdown in governance and communication, there is much confusion about the nature of needs and conditions on the ground. At the nation’s main airport, there are disputes about aircraft landing priorities; at the shattered seaports, the repair effort is held back by diversion of heavy equipment to other roles. Arrival of aid workers and material aid is delayed.

### What the Policy Means

The United States, as a nation and as a member of international organizations, must take the lead in providing speedy responses to humanitarian crises. Its airlift and sea transport capacities are unique and central to many aid

situations. Its citizens and leaders value immediate and decisive action, especially when swift action can save lives. “Speedy Response” must be backed up by strong and insightful planning. Many areas of the world are susceptible to recurrent natural disasters, and in many nations, conditions of civil turmoil fester for long periods before they evolve into full-blown humanitarian crises. We can do a better job of anticipating many of these needs and prepare accordingly.

### What Might Be Done

Humanitarian-relief experts already have many ideas about planning and best practices. These ideas need to work their way into policy and receive sufficient resources. Implementing actions might include the following:

- **Maintaining a high level of readiness for humanitarian relief that focuses on rescue, emergency treatment, nutrition, and safety.**





- **Improving coordination with local organizations, non-governmental organizations, and protective security forces through prior agreements about roles and responsibilities.**
- **Developing protocols for transitioning to other forms of long-term aid and redevelopment assistance after initial emergency response.**



## Questions to Consider

Carrying out such policies will not be without difficulty. You may want to consider the following:

- **What do we do when conditions on the ground are complicated by civil war or general lawlessness?**
- **Might we be better off supporting a professional corps of international first-responders?**
- **Is there an unhealthy preoccupation with looting in such situations, and in the case of food, water, and medicine, should it be considered “emergency self-provisioning”?**

## Other Views

Not everyone will feel that “Speedy Response” is the best or primary way to respond to humanitarian crises. Some see this approach as Band-Aid work. Some worry that this approach distracts through “sexy photo-ops” and diverts resources so that longer-term approaches suffer. Still others are concerned that this type of approach overwhelms local societies and, if not done with sensitivity, erodes the sovereignty of the stricken nation.

## Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## *B. Stop Crimes Against Humanity*

**This possibility envisions a sense of collective responsibility on the part of nations to protect vulnerable populations that are threatened by more powerful groups. This responsibility is strong enough to necessitate action (including the use of military force) to ensure the delivery and rendering of aid and to prevent the occurrence of atrocities. This policy possibility is motivated by a belief in the active prevention of harm and the active protection of human life, especially from threats at the community level.**

### **An Imaginary Case Study**

A long civil war, based mainly on ethnic and religious divisions, is drawing to a close. Government troops are pushing rebel forces back into an enclave. Along with the rebels are many civilian refugees of the same ethnic group. Aid workers have been delivering assistance throughout this conflict, but now struggle more because of the intensity of the fighting. The government sees an opportunity for a decisive victory and unleashes total war on the enclave. Extensive killing of noncombatants results, and aid workers are effectively rendered ineffective and are themselves at risk. Outside international and human rights organizations are prevented from investigating conditions on the ground. There is evidence of intentional mass killing.



### **What the Policy Means**

The United States must not stand by while governments murder noncombatants and create conditions that make it impossible to render humanitarian aid to victims of conflict or disasters. Its citizens and leaders view “standing by” as running away from our responsibilities. We have the capabilities to intervene in such situations and could adapt many other resources to this role.

Stopping genocide and protecting aid workers must be considered a primary mission of our approach to global security. The United States and our international partners can attain a level of preparedness and demonstrated willingness to use force so that there is a deterrent effect. It is possible in some circumstances to contain violence and prevent greater human suffering.

### **What Might Be Done**

World War II can provide lessons about political leaders who tolerate or encourage the killing of noncombatants. Each incident prompts the declaration of “never again” from international leaders and has produced doctrines such as Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Will to Intervene (W2I), and effective coordination of development, diplomacy, and defense (3D). The United States and its partners must undertake an integrated policy review of such doctrines and develop their own coherent policy.





## *C. Protect the Displaced*

**This policy envisions a collective responsibility to provide a safe haven to sustain displaced populations. In some regions, displacement has become more or less permanent, and the possibilities for resettlement in the areas of origin are remote at best. The motivation here is a belief that a stable sense of place or home, and the material conditions for such stability, is vital to the well-being of human populations. This policy possibility looks toward improving the basic assistance provided to displaced populations and tackling the root causes of displacement.**

### **An Imaginary Case Study**

An ethnic or tribal group's area of origin is now divided between several nations as a result of territorial divisions after several wars in the region. Policies by these nations toward the group vary, from forcing them to assimilate to outright repression. International aid groups help maintain several massive refugee camps, but living conditions are poor. Many group members live abroad as political exiles and some operate as guerilla bands in remote border areas. The citizenship status of group members is also very confusing, with relevant nations treating them as stateless people without rights to passports, the ability to travel, or claims to societal benefits such as an education or social services.



### **What the Policy Means**

The United States, as a nation and as a member of international organizations, must commit to alleviating poor conditions in areas hosting displaced populations and work toward long-term resolutions and the prevention of future displacements. Its citizens and leaders recognize both the humanitarian needs among such populations and how deplorable conditions can create breeding grounds for violence and terrorism. Displaced people need a strong advocate and ally.

Protecting the displaced seeks to reduce suffering and eliminate refugee settings as recruiting grounds for terrorism. Many host nations of displaced populations are ill-equipped to serve their own citizens, much less refugees who speak other languages and come from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The United States and other developed nations have a responsibility to these displaced populations and are capable of organizing meaningful relief and resettlement opportunities.

### **What Might Be Done**

The humanitarian needs of displaced populations are well known to international aid workers. Greater coordination and commitment of resources could make a difference on the ground, and greater political resolve







# Addressing Underlying Conditions

- **Intervene to prevent environmental damage**
- **Support sustainable management of resources**
- **Help build the facilities and networks that promote economic and social development**
- **Coordinate such assistance with self-help and emergency responses in mind**
- **Build societal capacity through support of traditional structures and through the use of proven developmental models**
- **Build leadership and practical skills among local communities**

## *D. Protect Resources*

**This policy re-envision humanitarian aid in the broader context of the protection of entire ecosystems. Threats to ecosystems may flow from multiple sources, including poor environmental practices, population issues, conflicts, and breakdowns of society and infrastructure. Environmental degradation can be both a cause and effect of humanitarian crises. Such degradation can reach tipping points, after which it is extremely difficult to provide remedies. This possibility is motivated by a collective responsibility to prevent environmental damage, remedy damage, and enable sustainable management of natural resources.**

### **An Imaginary Case Study**

A large developing nation is experiencing fast, unregulated growth. It has a large territory and is rich in resources, but it has not effectively extended governance into many of its fastest growing areas. It is an ethnically diverse nation, with many indigenous people who are brutally exploited by developers and extractive industries. Mining for metals has polluted a major watershed, ruining the fisheries and reducing water available for agricultural and human use. Clear-cutting of timber has caused severe soil loss and increased the frequency of damaging floods. Displaced rural people are migrating to large urban slums, and a nation that exports food to pay its international debts now has trouble feeding itself.



### **What the Policy Means**

The United States, as a nation and as a member of international organizations, must provide leadership in protecting natural resources. Its citizens and leaders recognize that environmental woes do not respect national boundaries. We have the tools to provide assistance in the stewardship of such resources in ways that provide sustainable development for resource-providing areas.

Protection and sustainable management of resources may involve components of emergency response and long-term planning and development assistance. Preservation will require recognition by the leaders of developed nations that many countries could be, in effect, biological reserves and that development assistance and global trade must regulate and compensate accordingly.

### **What Might Be Done**

Conservation and stewardship practices are already widely understood and practiced in developing nations. Many of these practices could be helpful to developing nations, especially when adapted to traditional, local knowledge of ecosystems. Implementing actions might include the following:

- **Halting the predatory practices of extractive industries and exploiting nations while funding remedial programs.**
- **Supporting sustainability and biodiversity through requirements in trade agreements and international finance arrangements.**
- **Supporting the creation of biological reserves with the cooperation of indigenous people.**



## Questions to Consider

Changing resource-protection and management practices will not be easy in the “Wild West” atmospheres of resource-extractive areas. You may want to consider the following:

- **When do we attempt to override local, traditional practices if they are clearly creating negative environmental effects?**
- **What are some ways to approach problems that cross national borders such as desertification and ocean dead zones?**
- **What do we do when the environmental degradation has reached the point where no reasonable amount of resources can repair the damage?**

## Other Views

Some will feel that “Protect Resources” is a feel-good policy approach driven by other agendas. Those in developing nations might see it as a way of hindering their progress toward material affluence. Still others may feel that an international regulatory environment is too weak to reach many of the problems this possibility hopes to address.

## Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## *E. Strengthen Infrastructure*

**This policy possibility envisions a long-term and material perspective on humanitarian aid, with aid functioning as a way to help communities help themselves. It focuses on the local capacity to move, feed, house, and medically treat victims of humanitarian crises. It is motivated by a belief that such local capacity is more important than affluence or an ability to project power, and that those who possess it will weather crises with less suffering and recover more quickly than those nations that have focused on their elite or their military. This policy possibility looks toward assisting those who want to build this capacity and their level of preparedness so that they are better able to respond to their own humanitarian emergencies.**

### **An Imaginary Case Study**

Two neighboring developing nations have similar situations in terms of resources and obstacles to development. They are in a region that experiences earthquakes and devastating tropical storms and have recently emerged from a long period of insurgency against dictators. Nation A has adopted a long-range development plan and works closely with international agencies and NGOs to bring services and resources to its people. Nation B is a “narco-state,” and public funds are funneled mostly into the affluent district of the capitol city and offshore accounts. A 7.5-magnitude earthquake strikes populated areas in both nations, with tremendous damage and a great number of people injured in both nations. Decades later, collapsed bridges have not been rebuilt and commerce is stagnant.

### **What the Policy Means**

The United States, as a nation and a member of international organizations, must support humanitarian policies that tackle deeper problems of governance and economic development in developing nations. Its citizens and leaders understand infrastructure as a foundation to almost

any imaginable form of developmental capacity. We have the resources to provide technical assistance and funding to large projects and the leadership position to encourage locally and culturally matched microprojects that provide models.

Strengthening the infrastructure strengthens developing nations in multiple ways in good times and in bad. The economy is built up through well-planned infrastructure development and the capacity for concrete self-help is increased. We can help prevent the downward spiral that often afflicts nations in the throes of humanitarian crises by getting ahead of the disaster curve with tailored assistance and investments.

### **What Might Be Done**

Development specialists in governmental and non-governmental organizations are experienced in the sorts of projects that can strengthen a given society. Unfortunately, they have often been distracted by emergencies that compete for resources with infrastructure-development projects. Long-range implementing actions might include the following:

- **Improving coordination between aid agencies and international finance organizations so that comprehensive planning can achieve reasonable and useful development goals.**
- **Breaking patterns of corruption, favoritism, and theft in the allocation of aid and instituting performance and compliance standards.**
- **Upgrading safety and health standards so that physical infrastructure is more capable of withstanding shocks of various types.**



## Questions to Consider

Pursuing such policies might be difficult in the short-term environment of politics. You may want to consider the following:

- **Will long-term developmental policies survive political transitions in different administrations and the attention pressures of the 24/7 news cycle?**
- **Will we find that some nations are so dysfunctional that infrastructure aid planning must be implemented by trustees?**
- **What system of priorities can be used when we discover that the needs outstrip resources?**

## Other Views

Many will find the policy of “Strengthening Infrastructure” to be the logical approach to assisting other nations but will point out that many Americans dislike foreign aid. Some will point out that this approach strengthens potential economic competitors and that economic resources are best kept at home. Some might even find this possibility to be naïve unless linked to political deals that align recipient nations with the United States.

## Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## *F. Build Resilient Societies*

**This policy possibility envisions a long-term cultural perspective on humanitarian aid. The skills of a people and the collective strengths of their communities can be major factors in emergency response and recovery. This capacity needs more than just tools or resources; it depends more on strong cultural and belief systems that will utilize the tools and resources. Here the motivation is a belief that indigenous cultures and civil society institutions are best positioned to serve as the instruments of this empowerment. This policy possibility looks toward the support of resilient societies that have the capacity to bounce back.**

### **An Imaginary Case Study**

A small nation that emerged out of the breakup of a larger nation is hit by a severe storm, causing extensive damage to infrastructure and many casualties. While nominally a democracy, the nation is emerging from a long authoritarian past and has few surviving volunteer organizations. Its traditional governance structure of village elders has been shattered. Its educated class fled abroad during the prior upheaval, and international aid was backed up in warehouses even before the latest difficulty. The population is extremely dispirited and unmotivated. People are waiting for outside help.

### **What the Policy Means**

The United States, as a nation and a member of international organizations, should assist in the building of human capital and civil society

in developing nations, which will make those nations more resilient in the face of crises. Its citizens and leaders feel that this is best done through the reinforcement of existing societal structures and the introduction of proven developmental models. We have the capacity to organize aid projects around this approach in many areas of the world and the resources to be effective partners elsewhere.

The building of resilient societies must be supported through long-term commitment and the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of programs. The objectives here include not only response capability, but also increased senses of empowerment and social unity. We can assist in such objectives through the improved coordination of programs that build confidence and leadership.

### **What Might Be Done**

Non-governmental organizations and donor organizations have identified many local networks that help build human capital and many programs approaches that are appropriately scaled for a variety of cultural situations. Matching these connections and knowledge to particular situations requires skill and sensitivity. Implementing actions in the wide array of developmental circumstances might include the following:



