

Chapter 14

Non-government organisations

14.1 In this chapter, the committee's focus shifts to non-government organisations (NGOs). The committee looks firstly at the role and function of NGOs in peacekeeping operations and the pre-deployment training and preparation of NGO personnel. In the context of peacekeeping operations, it then considers the working relationship between the government sector and NGOs.

Role of NGOs

14.2 The role of NGOs in peacekeeping operations is very different from that of the ADF or the AFP. NGOs engaged in humanitarian or development work are, according to the Australian Red Cross, motivated by the objective of reducing human suffering. It observed that these NGOs:

...are often engaged in a peacekeeper's 'area of operation' long before military forces arrive, and often remain long after military and other government forces retire. They are able to undertake their operations...on the basis that they act in a neutral and impartial manner, and provide their aid on the basis of need alone.¹

14.3 The committee took evidence from a number of NGOs engaged in humanitarian work, including World Vision Australia (WVA), Oxfam Australia, the Australian Red Cross, Austcare and Christian World Service (CWS). Their activities range from poverty reduction and local capacity building to conflict and disaster relief.² Humanitarian NGOs build relations across the local community, including churches, women's groups and educational organisations.³

14.4 These unarmed NGOs work in conflict and disaster situations, often in 'some of the most dire humanitarian situations'.⁴ They are limited in the physical protection they can offer to their operations and, according to Oxfam, 'are dependent on a base level of security to ensure staff safety and the safety of the people who benefit from our programmes'.⁵ In many cases they work alongside Australian peacekeepers.

1 *Submission 22*, p. 2.

2 See for example, Austcare, *Committee Hansard*, 6 September 2007, p. 23; WVA, *Submission 19*, p. 2; CWS, *Submission 31*, p. 3; Oxfam Australia, *Annual Report 2005–06*, pp. 8–9, http://www.oxfam.org.au/about/annual_report/2005-2006.pdf (accessed 29 October 2007); and Oxfam Australia, <http://www.oxfam.org.au/getactive/work/volunteer> (accessed 21 January 2008).

3 DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, p. 51; and AusAID, *Submission 26*, p. 14.

4 See Oxfam, *Submission 24*, p. 2/12.

5 *Submission 24*, p. 2.

14.5 When considering their role in a peacekeeping operation, an important feature of NGOs is that, although they subscribe to broad principles to relieve human suffering, they are a diverse and heterogeneous group and approach a peacekeeping operation from their own particular perspectives. Each has its own charter, international affiliations, objectives, work culture and area of operation. Because of their specific focus and limited responsibility, they may not be in a position to appreciate the complexities of an operation as a whole.

Importance of pre-deployment training and education

14.6 As has long been acknowledged, training is also important to NGO personnel.⁶ For example, Mr David Brown, Asia Manager, Australian Red Cross, noted that peacekeepers with particular technical expertise, such as in water and sanitation or food relief, do not necessarily have an understanding of international humanitarian law nor of the preparation required for working in a complex environment.⁷ Austcare noted that Australian NGOs have more to learn about UN doctrine and procedures that apply to complex emergencies and peacekeeping. It observed that, 'It is too late and inefficient for NGOs to learn this in an ad hoc manner on the ground when operations have commenced and people are most in need of humanitarian assistance'.⁸ It is essential therefore that NGO personnel undergo appropriate preparation for a peacekeeping operation.⁹

Preparation

14.7 While a number of NGOs commented on the efforts made by government agencies to increase the skills of their peacekeepers, NGOs provided little detail on the training of their own personnel.

14.8 The Australian Red Cross noted that Australian NGOs tend to recruit and organise training for their peacekeepers.¹⁰ For example, the training program for WVA's global rapid response team, which responds to major emergencies, includes components such as team building, cultural awareness, and health and wellbeing.¹¹

6 See for example, ARF CBM Workshop on Peace Arrangements Ensuring Stability and Security Including Civil–Military Cooperation, 22–23 March 2005, Tokyo, p. 4.

7 See for example, *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 6; and Report for the Conference on the EC Project of Crisis Management, Madrid, Spain, 27–28 May 2002, p. 21.

8 *Submission 11*, p. 12.

9 See for example, Report for the Conference on the EC Project of Crisis Management, Madrid, Spain, 27–28 May 2002, p. 7.

10 AusAID informed the committee that it provides support to Australian NGOs to train, recruit and deploy civilians for peacekeeping operations. AusAID, answer to written question on notice 2(d).

11 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 33.

14.9 Austcare sends aid volunteers overseas through partnering with volunteer organisations such as the Australian Volunteers International (AVI).¹² AVI delivers pre-deployment training, including a three-day comprehensive briefing on aid and development, capacity building, health and security advice, and cultural effectiveness training. Their orientation program in-country may include language training.¹³

14.10 The Australian Red Cross runs a compulsory six-day basic training course for potential volunteers as part of the selection process, 'after which successful applicants are placed on the database' to wait to go overseas. Participants are taught about the Red Cross movement, international humanitarian law and the work in the field.¹⁴ Mr Robert Tickner, CEO, Australian Red Cross, explained that the 'conduct of a basic training course for delegates is a precondition to the International Committee of the Red Cross accepting our people'.¹⁵

14.11 The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the umbrella organisation for Australian NGOs in the field of international aid and development. It provides training and information services for its members, including Red Cross, Oxfam and World Vision.¹⁶ According to ACFID, the training is tailored to meet the members' needs on various topics, including communications and fundraising, governance, gender equality, capacity building and evaluation.¹⁷

14.12 The Australian Red Cross informed the committee that although 'centralised' training is available through ACFID:

...there is no standard, accredited training that every person from the variety of different NGOs will do.¹⁸

14.13 The committee also received evidence on NGOs developing joint training programs. Mr Geoffrey Shepherd, Head, Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, WVA, referred to attempts to develop a joint training exercise involving NGOs.¹⁹ However, for the Australian Red Cross, joint training might not always be feasible. Mr Tickner said:

12 Austcare, <http://www.austcare.org.au/get-involved/volunteerinternships.aspx> (accessed 21 January 2008).

13 Australian Volunteers International, <http://www.australianvolunteers.com/work/index.asp?menuid=250.010.020> (accessed 25 February 2008).

14 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 6; and Australian Red Cross, http://www.redcross.org.au/ourservices_aroundtheworld_overseasdelegates_btc.htm (accessed 21 January 2008).

15 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 12.

16 *Committee Hansard*, 6 September 2007, pp. 13 and 19.

17 Australian Council for International Development, *Annual Report 2007*, p. 5.

18 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 12.

19 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 34.

Obviously we have pretty active dialogue with the major agencies, and essentially good personal relationships. Whether or not we are able to move to some common training is a bit problematical for us at least in one sense, because the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has particular modes of operation which are quite identifiably different from those of many other agencies.²⁰

14.14 The Australian Red Cross advised the committee that it is developing an international humanitarian law seminar together with ACFID. It will concentrate on 'the obligations and the rights of humanitarian workers in the field, particularly under humanitarian law, and then to give broad guiding principles similar to those in IHL [International Humanitarian Law]'.²¹

14.15 RedR Australia, a not-for-profit humanitarian organisation, delivers training for many government and non-government organisations, such as Oxfam Australia, Australian Red Cross, World Vision Australia and AusAID.²² Mr Shepherd acknowledged the role of RedR, indicating that it offers the main humanitarian course in Australia and is funded by AusAID. It also conducts a security training course, which runs over three to four days.²³

14.16 In addition to domestic training, Ms Melanie Gow, WVA, explained that there are international training opportunities for NGO staff:

There certainly are courses internationally that you can attend through which you can be certified and recognised for your humanitarian expertise and practice...But in Australia, to my understanding, it is much more informal.²⁴

14.17 While there are training opportunities in Australia and overseas for NGOs involved in peacekeeping operations, they are neither mandatory nor fit into a comprehensive preparation regime for the deployment of personnel to a peacekeeping operation. For example, the Centre for International Governance & Justice (CIGJ) at the ANU noted that Australian civilians are not systematically recruited to peacekeeping operations but 'tend to find civilian peacekeeping opportunities at their own initiative'.²⁵ According to CIGJ, Australian civilian peacekeepers 'draw upon their own varied personal experience and training in relevant fields'. It argued that 'Australia should pay greater strategic attention to the training and development of nationals involved in civilian peacekeeping activities'. In its view, the establishment of

20 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 12.

21 Ms Rebecca Dodd, *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 13.

22 RedR Australia, Training, Tailored courses, <http://www.redr.org.au/content/view/35/63/> (accessed 1 November 2007).

23 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 34; see also Chapter 12, paragraph 12.16.

24 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 34.

25 *Submission 29*, pp. 1–2.

a centre of excellence for civilian peacekeeping in Australia would provide an opportunity for Australian government agencies to offer more strategic support to civilian peacekeepers.²⁶ Such an initiative would provide 'specialised civilian peacekeeping training' and result in a more systematic training and support mechanism for civilian experts likely to be involved in peacekeeping operations.

14.18 The committee has already briefly referred to the proposal for establishing a joint education and training facility that would assist government agencies prepare their personnel for peacekeeping activities. It would seem sensible that such a facility would take account of the important role of NGOs in peacekeeping. The proposal for a joint training facility is an emerging theme in this report; it is mentioned later in this chapter and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 25.

Committee view

14.19 The committee notes the important role that NGOs play in pre- and post-conflict environments and commends their contributions to peace building. It recognises that training is important to prepare civilian peacekeepers adequately for their tasks. Even highly skilled technical experts from Australia require effective pre-deployment training to carry out their duties in accordance with international and Australian law and the operation's mandate. They should be aware of security risks and other dangers they may face, and they should have the skills to cope in a different cultural environment. The committee has concerns that, in general, training is not compulsory and is not universally provided to NGO volunteers.²⁷

14.20 While some of the NGOs were critical of the training and lack of cooperation and coordination of government agencies, they did not apply this same standard to the NGO sector. The committee has noted that NGOs are not a homogenous group and understands the difficulties they have in appreciating the range of responsibilities, roles and functions of others participating in the operation. The activities of an NGO affect not only other NGOs occupying the same space but the range of government agencies performing tasks such as providing security, enforcing law and order as well as building capacity.

14.21 The committee sees opportunities to improve NGO cooperation and coordination in peacekeeping operations. It urges NGOs to develop joint standards and training for these operations and to explore ways they can cooperate with each other in the delivery of training. It believes that Australian NGOs, under the guidance of ACFID, should review their training programs with a view to establishing standards for training peacekeepers. The committee encourages the government, through AusAID, to support the NGO sector in developing these guidelines and implementing

26 *Submission 29*, pp. 1–2.

27 The committee notes the requirement for Red Cross personnel to have completed its basic training. It also notes the role of ACFID and RedR in providing training to the NGO sector.

training regimes. It notes the proposal for the establishment of an Australian centre of excellence for peacekeeping.

14.22 Having noted the significant role of NGOs in peacekeeping, the committee now considers how effectively government and non-government agencies coordinate their activities in a peacekeeping environment. Given the weight of evidence regarding civil–military cooperation, the committee examines the relationship between the ADF and civilian sector in detail in the following chapter.

Government–NGO coordination

14.23 Modern peacekeeping operations with their broad range of tasks and activities create significant coordination challenges for the government and non-government sectors. NGOs are independent of government and their priorities or objectives do not necessarily reflect those of government. Even so, they often work side by side with government officials in a peacekeeping operation and, in some instances, government and non-government agencies rely on each other to deliver aid or assistance to local communities. It is important that the efforts of all organisations—government and non-government—are coordinated to achieve the best possible outcomes for those affected by conflict.

Importance of cooperation and coordination

14.24 The importance of coordination and cooperation between government and non-government sectors in peacekeeping operations is widely recognised.²⁸ Assistant Commissioner Walters stated:

...we are aware of the value of engaging with the NGOs and working through an enhanced program of consulting NGOs so both of us have an understanding of our roles and how we can assist each other more as we move further into this area of work.²⁹

14.25 AusAID stated that with the number of 'actors' involved in peacekeeping operations, 'effective coordination and coherence is essential'.³⁰

14.26 While submitters to the inquiry recognised the essential roles of government and non-government organisations in peacekeeping operations, they had different views about how effectively these organisations work together. In this section, the committee looks at the interaction between the two sectors at the strategic planning

28 See for example, *CIMIC in UN & African Peace Operations*, African Civil Military Coordination Programme, 2006, p. 30. See also UN General Assembly, Report of the Joint Inspection Unit, *Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping operations*, (JIU/REP/95/6), A/50/572, 24 October 1995. It noted that the UN accepts that humanitarian actors can play a useful role when 'linked and coordinated with peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building'.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, p. 40.

30 *Submission 26*, p. 9.

level and during pre-deployment preparations. It considers some of the pre-deployment activities designed to cultivate good relations between government and non-government agencies engaged in peacekeeping including joint planning, preparation and training.

Planning at strategic level

14.27 AusAID recognised that a fully consultative process between all actors, including NGOs, is needed at the planning stage of a peacekeeping operation. Such consultation ensures that:

...roles are well defined, and coordination mechanisms are established, while preserving critical distinctions between roles of contributing agencies (for example, maintaining a discrete level of independence of humanitarian actors that will ensure safety of both aid workers and those they seek to assist and encourage actors to maintain access).³¹

14.28 In the previous chapter, the committee noted the whole-of-government framework for planning and coordinating a peacekeeping operation. It referred to the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) and the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCONS); the Strategic Policy Coordination Group (SPCG) and standing interdepartmental committees (IDCs).

14.29 There is no formal arrangement for NGOs to be involved at this level of planning. Even so, government agencies consult with NGOs prior to deployment. For example, ACFID brings key people in the NGO sector to engage with government agencies, including Treasury, Finance, AusAID and DFAT, at a roundtable twice a year.³² Mr Shepherd, WVA, commented that these discussions have been very fruitful for enhancing relations in the field.³³ He explained that before the recent deployment to Solomon Islands, there was a whole-of-government meeting with NGOs to look at the broader issues.³⁴

14.30 While Mr March, AusAID, noted that NGOs are engaged in dialogue with AusAID before a mission, he suggested the situation could be improved.³⁵

Committee view

14.31 The committee notes that NGOs are not represented at the strategic planning level. It believes that deliberation at the IDC level is rightly the business of the government agencies that are able to speak freely and frankly on matters strictly the

31 *Submission 26*, p. 9.

32 *Committee Hansard*, 6 September 2007, p. 21.

33 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 42.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 38.

35 *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, p. 89. He cited East Timor as an example.

preserve of government. Some NGOs, however, will have local knowledge and an understanding of a particular conflict that should be reflected in advice to government. The committee believes that relevant government agencies must liaise with the NGO sector to ensure that this sector forms part of an effective whole-of-nation response to a peacekeeping operation.

Recommendation 13

14.32 The committee recommends that AusAID coordinate a consultation with DFAT, Defence, AFP, ACFID and key NGOs to establish a more effective mechanism for involving the NGO sector in the planning of Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations.

Joint preparation and training

14.33 Apart from that related to civil–police and civil–military cooperation, the committee received limited information on the measures taken to develop links and improve coordination between Australian government and non-government agencies at the operational level. The committee starts its consideration with the civil–police cooperation.

14.34 The AFP explained that it was looking to enhance its relationship with NGOs. Assistant Commissioner Walters provided an example of the evolving types of activities in which the AFP engages:

At a recent Austcare roundtable, the AFP had an opportunity to promote and explain its work and to listen to different speakers on issues relevant to Austcare. The AFP was also able to discuss how it could cooperate more closely with Austcare to achieve greater synergies in their work.³⁶

14.35 Commissioner Keelty provided another example of the AFP's approach to engaging with NGOs in order to gain from their experiences in the field. He referred to working with 'some of the religious NGOs' and also recalled a meeting with Greenpeace before deployment to Solomon Islands and how its local knowledge was of value to the AFP:

...if you were to think about that for a minute, there are not too many organisations in the world who have good intelligence networks on where logging and corruption in logging camps has taken place.³⁷

14.36 A number of NGOs are involved in coordinated AFP training through the IDG, including the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Australian Red

36 *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, p. 39.

37 AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty, Speech, Law Council of Australia, 35th Annual Legal Convention, Sydney, 23 March 2007.

Cross, Greenpeace and ACFID.³⁸ ACFID, for example, has once a month for over two years briefed AFP officers deploying to RAMSI. Ms Neva Wendt, ACFID, explained:

We try to impart some information about the development challenges that face the Solomon Islands. We try to advise the police of who they are likely to come across in the Solomon Islands... We try to give them an idea of the views by civil society... of the RAMSI intervention.³⁹

14.37 In addition, the Australian Red Cross provides ongoing training for the IDG.⁴⁰ The Red Cross noted that the IDG provides an opportunity for it and other NGOs to give presentations at IDG's training programs so that 'those deployed are aware of the roles and mandates of these organisations'.⁴¹ In its view, the provision of such training to all involved in a peacekeeping operation is invaluable if they are 'to fully understand the environment in which they will be asked to operate'.⁴²

14.38 AusAID informed the committee that together with government and non-government partners, it continues to improve training and preparedness of Australians for peacekeeping operations; however, the focus still appears to be an informal process.

14.39 In its submission, the Australian Red Cross referred to a recommendation made by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in 1994 that humanitarian and other organisations should be involved in general and pre-deployment training. The Red Cross observed that while NGOs are involved in joint training, it 'does not appear to be a uniform practice'. Overall, it found that apart from the IDG course, which all deploying AFP personnel must attend, other training programs target only a limited number of personnel who may be deployed. It concluded:

The vast majority of a peacekeeping contingent is therefore unlikely to have a clear understanding of the humanitarian organisations and their legitimate roles in the area of operation. This raises squarely the need for more uniform training of *all* Australian personnel deploying on peace operations.⁴³

14.40 The Australian Red Cross advised the committee that it was not involved in training other government departments and agencies, although it would be interested in pursuing other collaborative arrangements.⁴⁴ It indicated that it 'would support a

38 AFP, answer to question on notice 8, 25 July 2007.

39 *Committee Hansard*, 6 September 2007, pp. 15–16.

40 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, pp. 3 and 5.

41 *Submission 22*, p. 4.

42 *Submission 22*, p. 4.

43 *Submission 22*, p. 4.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 21 August 2007, p. 5.

review of the scope and effectiveness of training available to all agencies and personnel deployed on peace operations'. It made clear it needed to be involved in that training and pre-deployment briefings.⁴⁵

14.41 The committee also heard from a number of universities that offer various courses or are undertaking projects relevant to peacekeeping. The four main peace studies centres are based at the University of New England, the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney, and more diffusely within the Australian National University.⁴⁶ The committee believes that such institutions could be included as part of a whole-of-nation approach to preparing Australian peacekeepers for deployment.

Committee view

14.42 The committee considers it important that ample opportunities are available for NGOs and government agencies to share knowledge, ideas and concepts and to develop mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's work. It believes that having NGOs as regular presenters in pre-deployment briefings, seminars or training courses run by government agencies, as well as inviting them to participate in training exercises or workshops, should become a standard feature of the government's pre-deployment training regime.

14.43 The committee believes that there is scope for both DFAT and AusAID to improve cooperation and coordination between the two sectors especially by extending activities beyond briefings to joint training and collaborative planning. It commends the AFP's commitment to involve NGOs in its training programs and to explore opportunities to cultivate stronger links through pre-deployment engagements. The committee supports the AFP in these endeavours. NGOs should also be actively pursuing ways to build stronger relations with the government sector.

Recommendation 14

14.44 The committee recommends that a whole-of-government working group, such as the Peace Operations Working Group, arrange to hold regular meetings with representatives of NGOs engaged in peacekeeping operations to discuss and develop training programs and courses that would improve their working relationship. The committee recommends further that, in consultation with other government agencies and relevant NGOs, DFAT and AusAID review this arrangement in 2010 to assess the value to each organisation involved, and how it could be improved. The results of the review would be contained in DFAT's annual report.

14.45 The matter of civil–military relations dominated the evidence concerning government coordination with humanitarian NGOs. In the following section, the

45 *Submission 22*, p. 5.

46 See Professor Helen Ware, *Submission 38*.

committee provides detailed consideration of the coordination and cooperation between the ADF and NGOs.