



**CASCOS BLANCOS
CAPACETES BRANCOS
CASQUES BLANCS
WHITE HELMETS**

**FROM NEW ORLEANS TO GAZA:
AN APPROACH TO THE
THE WHITE HELMETS EXPERIENCE**

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**International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers
London, UK, May 21 2009.**



**MINISTERIO DE
RELACIONES EXTERIORES
COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL Y CULTO**

Humanitarian aid

- It was traditionally defined as material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises.
- Its primary objective is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity.
- It was distinguished from development aid, which seeks to address the underlying socioeconomic factors which may have led to a crisis, or emergency.
- **Prevention and mitigation.**

Modern humanitarian aid

- **Battle of Solferino (1859)**
- **International Committee of the Red Cross(1863)**

Before First World War

- Famine Relief Fund for British India (1877)

First World War and Interwar Period

- International organizations: League of Nations, Health Organization.

Second World War

- US neutral, relief to France and China (1939-41)
- **Oxfam** (1942)
- Berlin Airlift (1948)

Cold War to 1970s

- From relief to development: bilateral v/s multilateral assistance
- Biafran War, Médecins Sans Frontières (1968)

Modern humanitarian aid

1970-1990

- Rise of NGOs
- Refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos flee to neighboring countries where they are received by UN agencies like the UNHCR, and private non-governmental agencies (1978)
- Ethiopian famine. Massive relief response by the US and other countries (1985)

1990s and after

- Bosnia (1991-95), Somali civil war (1991-93), Irak 1 (1991), Rwandan genocide (1994), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001-), Irak 2 (2003-)
- Hurricane Mitch (Central America 1998, 11,000 died); Indian Ocean tsunami (2004); Katrina (2005)

Humanitarian Principles

- **Humanity**: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable population, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.
- **Neutrality**: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of political, religious or ideological nature.
- **Impartiality**: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief of the suffering must be guided solely by needs, and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.

Humanitarian Partners

- Host Government
- U.N. Agencies and Programmes and other International Organizations
- NGOs (international and local)
- Civil Society
- Red Cross Movement
- Military, including Peacekeeping Missions
- Donor Governments
- Private companies and individuals

UN main player: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OCHA's Mission:

- Mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international humanitarian actors in order to:
 - Alleviate human suffering caused by natural disasters and conflicts;
 - Advocate for the rights of people in need;
- Promote preparedness and prevention;
- Promote Information Management;
- Civil-military coordination in humanitarian operations.

A turning point. From Disaster Response to Prevention and Mitigation.

- ❖ **The Tsunami in South East Asia (Dec. 2004)**
- ❖ **The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Hyogo, Japan, Jan. 2005)**
- ❖ **Katrina (Aug.2005)**

Trends:

- **The number and severity of natural hazard are rising;**
- **The vulnerability to hazards is increasing.**

What is a disaster?

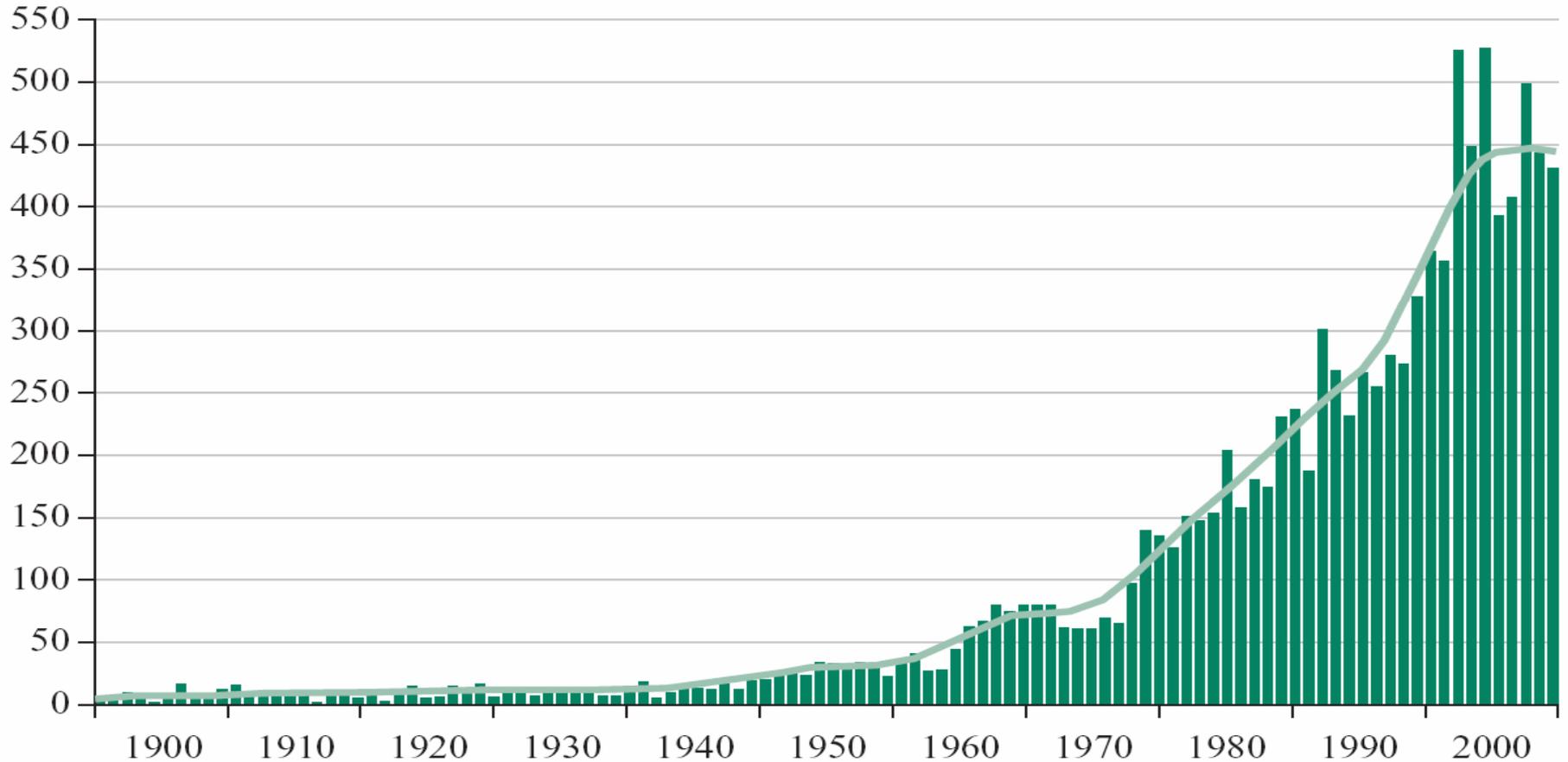
- Disasters occur when **vulnerable** societies or communities are exposed to hazardous events and are unable to absorb or recover from their impact.
- While these events are often described as **natural disasters**, both vulnerability and some hazards are a result of **human activities**.

The number and severity of natural hazard are rising

- **Disaster losses are rising. This is due to increased risk, a product of the rise both in the incidence and in the strength of hazards, and growing vulnerability of human settlements.**
- **The number and severity of hazards are also increasing due to Climate Change.**
- **Global warming will further increase the incidence and intensity of weather-related natural hazards**
- **The changing climate may also cause weather related hazards in previously unthreatened areas.**
- **Other likely impacts of climate change include changes in precipitation patterns.**
- **Another important challenge is the destruction of glaciers in the Andean region, which will have an impact on the supply and distribution of freshwater.**

Trend of natural disasters (1900-2007)

Gráfico 1. Tendencia de los desastres naturales (1900-2007)



Vulnerability is increasing

- A natural hazard event is transformed into a **disaster** when it comes into contact with a **vulnerable** population.
- **Vulnerability** is the **key link** between natural hazard events, disasters and a country's economic and social development. Vulnerability describes the relationship between the exposure to external stresses and the capacity to respond.
- Common drivers of vulnerability are **poverty**, social **inequalities**, and **weak institutions**.

Gráfico 2. Número de víctimas mortales ocasionadas por desastres naturales (1991-2005)³



Fuente: EM-DAT: the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database. www.emdat.be. Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, Belgium.

Lessons learned by the international community after 2005.

The main guide: Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

Strategic goals:

- ❑ The integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning;
- ❑ Development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build **resilience** to hazards; and
- ❑ The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes.

Lessons learned

- **Disaster Risk Reduction**
- **Supporting Local Capacity**
- **Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger**
- **Ensuring environmental sustainability**
- **The need for coordination**
- **Developing a global partnership for development.**
- **Regional Collaboration.**
- **Other Lessons:**
 - Funding**
 - Relationship with the Military**
 - Achieving universal primary education**
 - Promoting gender equality and empowering women**
 - Reducing child mortality and improving maternal health**
 - Combating diseases**

Glossary

- **Disaster** – A serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread or serious human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the coping ability of the affected society using its own resources.
- **Disaster Management/Emergency Management** – The management of resources and responsibilities in order to deal with all aspects of response to disasters/ emergencies including preparedness, contingency planning and rehabilitation.
- **Disaster Risk Management (DRM)** – The systematic process that integrates risk identification and mitigation, as well as disaster preparedness to reduce the impacts of future disasters. It incorporates emergency response, rehabilitation and reconstruction to lessen the impacts of current disasters while avoiding rebuilding vulnerability.
- **Disaster Risk Management System** – The formal and informal interaction between institutions, regulations and policies.

- **Mitigation** – Structural and nonstructural measures undertaken to limit the adverse impact of natural hazards, environmental degradation and technological hazards.
- **Natural Hazard** – Natural processes or phenomena that have an impact on the biosphere and may constitute a damaging event. Such hazards include: earthquakes, windstorms, hurricanes, landslides, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, floods, forest fires, and drought, or a combination thereof.
- **Preparedness** – Activities and measures taken in advance to ensure an effective response to the impact of hazards, including the issuance of timely and effective **early warnings** and the temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations.
- **Prevention** – Activities to avoid the adverse impact of hazards and means to minimize related disasters.
- **Proactive Disaster Risk Management** - Addressing the development challenges that lead to the accumulation of human vulnerability in order to reduce the effects of natural hazards that otherwise would generate disasters.

- **Recovery** – Decisions and actions taken after a disaster to restore or improve the predisaster living conditions of the stricken community, while encouraging and facilitating adjustments to reduce future disaster risk.
- **Risk** – The probability of harmful consequences or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions.
- **Technological Hazard** – Danger originating from technological or industrial accidents, dangerous procedures, infrastructure failures or certain human activities, which may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Examples include: structural collapse, explosion, pollution and contamination or some combination thereof.
- **Vulnerability** – The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards.



THE WHITE HELMETS EXPERIENCE



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Resolutions
UNITED NATIONS (1994)
UNGA 49/139B

OAS (1995)
GAOEA 1351-XXV-O/95



WHITE HELMETS: 1994 - 2009

A MODEL BASED ON VOLUNTEERING

White Helmets is a tool used for **HORIZONTAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE** among countries, regions or institutions. Supported by local, international, multilateral, public and private founding, it is meant to **PREVENT OR RESPOND** in case of disasters caused by men or nature, and to contribute in the **STRUGGLE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY.**

It is based on the
STRENGTHENING and
MOBILIZATION of **VOLUNTEERS**

It promotes the articulation of
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
and **GOVERNMENTS**, through the
employment of **local capacities**.

International presence of WHITE HELMETS (1994-2009)

ANGOLA, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ARGENTINA,
ARMENIA, THE BALKANS, BOLIVIA, BRAZIL,
COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, CUBA, ECUADOR, EL
SALVADOR, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, FIJI ,
GRENADA, GUATEMALA, GUYANA, HAITI, INDIA, IRAN,
JAMAICA, KOSOVO, LEBANON, MOZAMBIQUE,
NICARAGUA, PALESTINE, PANAMA, PARAGUAY,
PERU, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
RWANDA, SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS, SOUTHEAST ASIA,
SURINAM, EAST TIMOR, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
URUGUAY AND VENEZUELA.

AN INITIATIVE ADOPTED BY THE UN (Res. 49 / 139B – 1994)



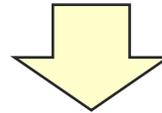
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OCHA

White
Helmets

UNV



- Work is carried out together with OCHA.
- Plans are executed in collaboration with UNV.
- HYOGO gives the framework for the WHI activity.

Global Strategic Alliances

- **OCHA**
- UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS (**UNV**)
- WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (**WFP**)
- UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (**FAO**)
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (**WHO**)
- INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION Support Group (**ISDR**).

WHITE HELMETS IN THE REGION

- Summit of the Americas Plan of Action (1994).
- ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (**OAS**) (GA Res. 1351-XXV-O/95).
- REGIONAL NETWORK OF HUMANITARIAN VOLUNTEERING
- **Focal Points:** ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA, BRAZIL, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, GUYANA, HAITI, HONDURAS, JAMAICA, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, PERU, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, URUGUAY AND VENEZUELA.

ORGANIZING THE WILL

Prevention and Response through Volunteering



1. Rapid response **with trained volunteers**
2. Construction of **preventive** tools
3. Attention to the population's **vulnerabilities**
4. Incorporation of civil society:
from “potential victim” to ACTOR
5. Constitution of the community as a **space of reduction and mitigation**

General Framework



From **WHITE HELMETS** we aim to:

- RECOGNIZE
- VALUE
- STRENGTHEN
- TRUST IN

THE CAPACITIES of Developing Countries



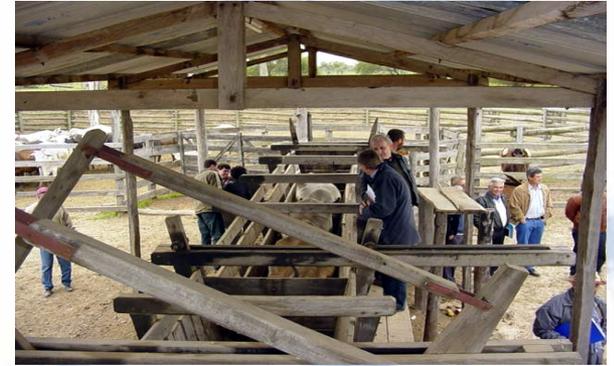
WHITE HELMETS STRENGTHS:

Does not replace
preexistent formal structures
Incorporates volunteers,
technicians, professionals,
and local organizations
Facilitates the participation
of Developing Countries

AN INITIATIVE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

HUMANITARIAN AID AS A HORIZONTAL TOOL

A model based on the capacities of those areas affected by emergency situations



Respect of humanitarian assistance
international principles

Some international WH missions:

Katrina; Iran; Tsunami; Pisco;
Ecuador; Haiti; Lebanon; Gaza





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