

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
20 June 1997

Item 4. Update on sanctions study

Status Report

Research on Economic Sanctions and Humanitarian Impacts.

This is a report to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group on the progress and status of our research on multilateral economic sanctions and their humanitarian impacts.

Background

1. Since September 1996 a group of five researchers from three cooperating organizations - Larry Minear and Tom Weiss of the Humanitarian and War Project at Brown University's Watson Institute, George Lopez of the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, and David Conright and Julia Wagler of the Fourth Freedom Forum of Goshen, Indiana - have been working together to review the UN's capacity to anticipate the consequences of sanctions, to manage humanitarian activities in sanctions environments, and to monitor sanctions impacts. The project has received funds from WFP, FAO and UNDP. Financial pledges were made by UNICEF and DHA, but to date funds from these agencies have not been received.

2. The project presented its first status report to the IASC, through DHA on 8 November in advance of their 11 November meeting in Geneva. This first report included a draft outline for our project report, which will be completed in late September or early October 1997.

Research to date

3. To this point the project has conducted some 75 interviews with various UN agencies and department concerning their experience with sanctions. Those consulted have included representatives from DHA, DPA, FAO, ICRC, IFRC, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNV, UN Center for Human Rights, and WHO. Minear and Wagler conducted interviews and meetings with the various organizations mentioned during september and October 1996 in New York, Rome, Bonn, and Geneva. On 17 January, Minear participated in a discussion at UNICEF of Eric Hoskins' draft paper "A Study of UNICEF's Perspective on Sanctions". Hoskins' work on developing a methodology for measuring the impacts of sanctions on women and children has wider applications to other sectors and to the work of many UN organizations. A thorough literature review on sanctions experience and humanitarian condition has also been undertaken.

Issues Being Explored

Recent experiences with sanctions

4. From the initial round of interviews, we have learned that many agencies believe, whatever their view on the matter, that sanctions are a legitimate policy tool provided for by the UN Charter. The agencies further believe that the exemptions regime for Security Council-imposed sanctions managed by the Sanctions Committee is functioning better now than in earlier years. This view is shared by the UN Secretariat Staff. Some difficulties remain however, which we are reviewing. One of these concerns the status of agencies not affiliated with the UN system. We are hoping as a result of additional research to compile a list of recommendations for further improvements.

5. Humanitarian practitioners report that the regionally imposed sanctions against Burundi are creating major hardships for humanitarian organizations. In response to requests from UN organizations, the OAU's Regional Sanctions Coordinating Committee inserted some humanitarian pass-through provisions into the sanctions imposed on July 31, 1996. However, by early in 1997 the impacts on the civilian populations were reportedly serious, and aid organizations, themselves experiencing serious difficulties in maintaining operations, were advocating a relaxation. The situation raises the broader policy issue, which we will review and address in our final report, of whether some template could be developed to guide regional organizations in their imposition and management of sanctions regimes.

6. A major project initiative is now under way to assess the regional sanctions currently imposed on Burundi and will occupy considerable space. Our review of the Burundi sanctions case is a direct outgrowth of suggestions from the agencies in our first session of interviews this past fall. Eric Hoskins and Samantha Nurr, Canadian physicians with conflict zone research experience, investigated the Great Lakes region with particular emphasis on Burundi. Their field work ran from 27 January to 28 February and will result in an occasional paper in Brown University's series. The findings of their research will be in the final project report.

Methodological challenges and future research

7. Future research includes continued visits to NYC UN headquarters. The project will monitor developments on the UN's oil-for-food arrangements with Iraq. We are also monitoring the situation related to the potential imposition of economic sanctions by the Security Council on the Sudan.

8. The heart of the project's report will be the development of a methodology for assessing the potential humanitarian impact of sanctions prior to their imposition. The project will also recommend mechanisms for assessing and ameliorating humanitarian impacts after sanctions have been imposed. A checklist and series of indicators are being developed as tools for this assessment methodology. The task of assessing sanctions impact involves an analysis of the potential vulnerabilities of a target nation to external economic coercion. Among the factors that the project will examine as possible indicators of vulnerability are the following:

- a. the presence of a larger refugee/migrant population and its dependence on outside humanitarian assistance;
- b. the demographic and socio-economic characteristic of vulnerable populations within society: statistic profiles on children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups;
- c. the dependence of key economic sectors on foreign trade and finance, with special emphasis on the scale and degree of self-sufficiency of the agricultural economy;
- d. the nature of the health care delivery system and pharmaceutical industry and the degree of their dependence on external economic coercion ;
- e. the presence and scale of humanitarian assistance activities, both beforehand during sanctions, and the relationship of humanitarian agencies to the political leadership of the sanctioned country;
- f. the existing social services "safety net" for health, basic welfare, and educational needs of the population.

9. These and other factors will be examined with the goal of identifying specific quantifiable indicators. These indicators will then be aggregated and incorporated into a template that will give policy makers a tool for judging potential humanitarian impacts and taking steps to ameliorate severe hardships.

10. As mentioned in our 8 November status report, we are publishing a volume on multilateral economic sanctions in early fall 1997 entitled "Civilian Pain and Political gain: The Humanitarian Impacts of Economic sanctions". The volume, edited by Carright, Lopez, Minear, and Weiss, reviews recent experience with sanctions in Haiti, Former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and South Africa. In particular, chapter two attempts to present a theoretical framework of analysis for sanctions cases and will be a first cut at defining a useful methodology.

Next steps/timeline

11. Polishing the Pain/Gain volume and working with the Burundi report will run parallel to the completion of the IASC report. The project also intends to publish a companion volume which expands on the IASC report and will be available to a wider audience.

12. Suggestions and comments are requested from IASC representatives to help guide our work. A draft report will be completed by 15 August 1997 and submitted to the IASC followed by a workshop, scheduled for 9 September, drawing together staff from the various agencies. The final report will be completed in late September or early October. It will then be available for discussion at the 3 November 1997 meeting of IASC agency heads.