

# Project SAMETS

## Report on the third peer review workshop



15.04 – 17.04.2015

Neusiedl am See

Topic: Multicultural

Focus: Intercultural

Competences

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 How to use this document

This document summarizes the results from the third SAMETS (Social Affairs Management in the Emergency Temporary Shelter) peer review workshop on emergency temporary shelters (ETS). The topic of this workshop was multicultural and multi-ethnic issue in an ETS and especially the organizational and management challenges arising from those needs.

The workshop was conducted during two and a half days, with different emphasis on each day. The document structure follows this approach. In particular, this document contains the following sections:

**The introduction** section gives a short overview of the project SAMETS as well as the task, objectives and methodology underlying the workshop and this report.

**The workshop results** section describes in detail the results drawn from each day of the workshop. The first day started with a general introduction to the big subject area of intercultural competences and was then followed by discussion, idea creation and experience collection in the area of prejudices and stereotypes. The second day was focussed on the presentation of African States, African ethnic groups and an introduction to the pillars of Islam. A presentation of Best Practise about the management in multicultural shelter in Mirandola was another important part of this day. The last day of the workshop was dedicated to a discussion of human and material needs in the area of humanitarian aid especially on structural and organizational requirements.

**The summary and conclusion** section summarizes the findings of the workshop as well as the identified points for further research. Finally, conclusions and ideas are presented to be used as a starting point for an ETS guideline development with a focus on multicultural issues . The document itself offers some features that aim to guide the reader through the document and help to find information of the readers particular interest:

## 1.2 The project SAMETS

When a disaster has occurred – such as flood or earthquake – in many cases people are forced to leave their homes and live temporarily in emergency shelters. The project SAMETS (Social Affairs in the Emergency Temporary Shelter) is interested in guidelines and methodologies which have been implemented to deal with different situations and social affairs in such Emergency Temporary Shelters. The joint disaster relief project SAMTES is commissioned and funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO)

## 1.3 Task and objectives

Under the direction of the external expert Mag. Georg Ebner the 3<sup>rd</sup> peer review workshop with the focus “multicultural” started on the 15th of April 2014. Mr Ebner, who is main teaching officer and researcher at the Institute of Human and Social Sciences at the Academy of national defence in Vienna, took the leading and moderating part in this workshop.

The task was to prepare, conduct and analyse a workshop on special needs for multicultural and different ethnic groups in an ETS. The results of the discussion as well as the findings should be collected and reported after the workshop.

### **Day 1: Intercultural competence:**

The first part of the workshop was focused on the topics around intercultural competence. The participants of the workshop get a holistic overview about the deeper meaning of dealing with intercultural competence and what are the special problems around this topic.

### **Day 2: Presentation of African ethnic groups and introduction to the Islam:**

On this day the organisation “Fair und Sensibel” presented Africa and the different ethnic groups of Africa. The participants had the possibility to talk to African people and ask them about their experiences when leaving their home countries and getting a part of the society in the host country. In the afternoon followed an introduction to the broad topic of the Islam.

### **Day 3: Human and material needs in the area of humanitarian aid:**

On the last day of the workshop there was a discussion about special human and material needs in the field of humanitarian aid especially by managing an ETS or a camp.

In addition, next steps for the project should be defined in order to ensure a smooth transition from the workshop results to the project work.

## 1.4 Methodology

Each day started with a general introduction to the above mentioned topics and was then followed by a working activity of the participants. All participants were divided into small groups up to four or five persons who had to define special tags and themes.

The different groups were asked to collect ideas and experiences on large sheets of paper. After this brainstorming each group were asked to present their ideas and experiences in front of the other participants in order to discuss the individual idea.

The paper sheets were then collected on a board.

Finally, the identified and structured ideas and experiences were again discussed all together and this process then led to the conclusions for future guidelines and training.

## **2. Workshop results**

### **2.1 Day 1: Intercultural competence**

#### **2.1.1 Guiding questions:**

The first part of the workshop was focused on the topics around intercultural competence:

- What do we understand if we are dealing with intercultural competence and what are the different problems around this?
- How to define prejudices and stereotypes and how to deal with it?

First of all let us think about culture – what is it for us?

Geert Hofstede says that it is a software of our mind. Culture is the collective programming of the mind of members of one group or category of people, which distinguishes them from a different group or category. And he deals with five different dimensions e.g. Power distance, Individualism vs. collectivism, Masculinity vs. femininity, avoiding uncertainty, short-term orientation vs. long-term orientation.

Edgar Schein mentions that it is the way in which a group of people solves problems. Fons Trompenaars thinks that it is like an onion, to understand it; we have to unpeel it layer by layer. These are only a few different perspectives around the focus of culture but to step in and to deal with this theme it is normally enough.

Intercultural competence is a dynamic process between the own culture as an orientation system, the role distance, the tolerance, the communication abilities and the empathy. You need all of this to change your competence to structure and solve different problems.

Yousefi mentions that cross cultural competence is the ability describing process of acquiring information and behaviors, which helps us to cope with a task, meet a challenge or perform an activity in the intercultural field, Orientation towards norms and values and Concurrence of different ways of thinking, behavior patterns and lifestyles.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) developed a model to the ecological theory of development. In this model he shows us different systems during the development of a person. In this model we will find different systems that influence a person during his lifetime. These different systems are influencing the person but also the person can influence the different systems and so he can also influence culture. In the following picture we will see these different systems.

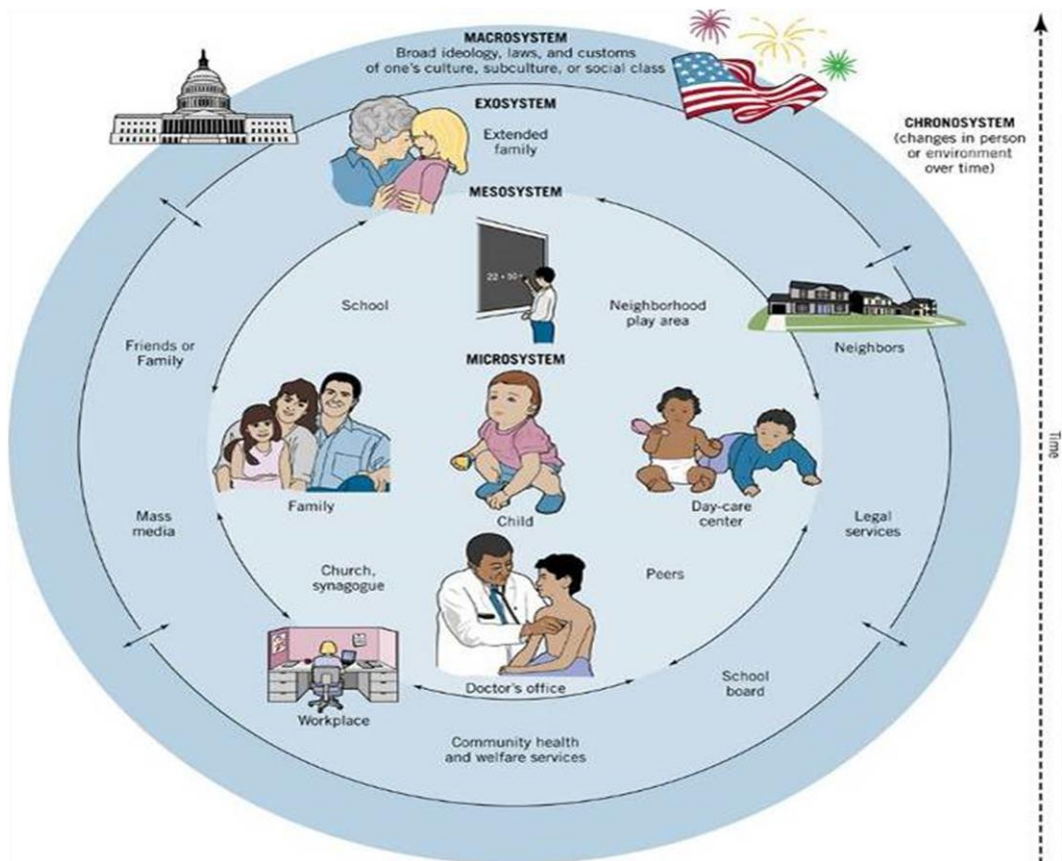


Figure 1: Urie Bronfenbrenner, Ecological Theory of Development

If we are using the iceberg model to describe intercultural competence we have to think about:

- 1) Artefacts: form on the surface (entirely visible). We can see them, but we cannot understand them without deeper knowledge of the culture in question. Our interpretations often lead to wrong conclusions. (Clothing, appearance; language, facial expressions, gestures; food; Folk music ...)
- 2) Norms: cultural norms are rules (some of them are visible) that are known to the members a group. Group members are expected to follow these norms, irrespective of whether they share these personal values or not. How I should be! (Rules; Guidelines; Ideals; Personal views)
- 3) Values: a value is a preference (partly visible) that is shared by a group. Values are always collective, describing things in categories, such as "good and evil" or "clean and dirty" – How I would like to be! ( Result orientation; Hospitality; Competition; Friendship; Harmony)
- 4) Fundamental assumptions: They are completely invisible (Human nature; Relationship with the environment)

Characteristics of intercultural competence are also to recognize adherence to culture, to overcome culturalism, to develop respect towards other cultures, to take into account divergences and convergences and to be tolerant with regard to ambiguity.

*Special topics you have to deal with are:*

- Family (males, females, children)
- Gender (male, female, transgender)
- Anti-discrimination
- Food (what ?, where?), Ramadan ...
- Training
- Holiday
- Alcohol, tobacco
- Language (empathy)
- Gestures, facial expressions, body language (touch?)
- Traffic and transport (cars & safety)
- Perception and use of time

*There is also a great field around cross cultural communication, for this you have to:*

- Dealing with feelings of strangeness and familiarity
- Sense of personal concern – previous experiences important
- Cognitive and emotional restructuring in perceiving and assessing others
- Need for social support for orientating oneself and ensuring one's identity
- Need for interpersonal consistency
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Body language
- Cultural background
- Man / woman / child / family
- Social norms and values
- Loudness of speaking
- Tone of voice
- Courtesy
- Friendliness
- Prejudices and stereotypes

*The problem areas are especially:*

- Language: common additional language, no common additional language, foreign language skills of a partner, mother tongue, ...
- Content level: Taboo topics, private topics, ...
- Relationship level: Power, social position, ...
- Nonverbal communication: Facial expressions, gestures, body language, eye contact, ...

*We can also find out differences in perception:*

The Ignorant: Everyone thinking or acting in a different manner than himself is considered to be either stupid, unwilling or unable. Cultural differences in behavior are not attributed any significance.

The Universalist: Assumes that people all over the world are basically the same. Cultural differences are, if at all, only of minor importance. He is convinced that all problems can be mastered with kindness, tolerance and assertiveness.

The Doer: To him, cultural influences on thinking or behavior are not that important. Decisive is to know what one wants, to have clear objectives and to be able to communicate them in a persuasive manner in order to assert them.

The Exponentiator: Assumes that each culture forms ways of thinking and acting, being learned and recognized as correct by the members of the respective culture. Cultural differences can be harmonised and intertwined so as to generate synergetic effects, from which one partner or both of them can profit.

## Prejudices

What are prejudices – what kind of prejudices do we know – positives vs. negative aspects – this was the first working activity around the second part of this workshop. The participants had to think about this in four groups and the results are shown in the following four figures.

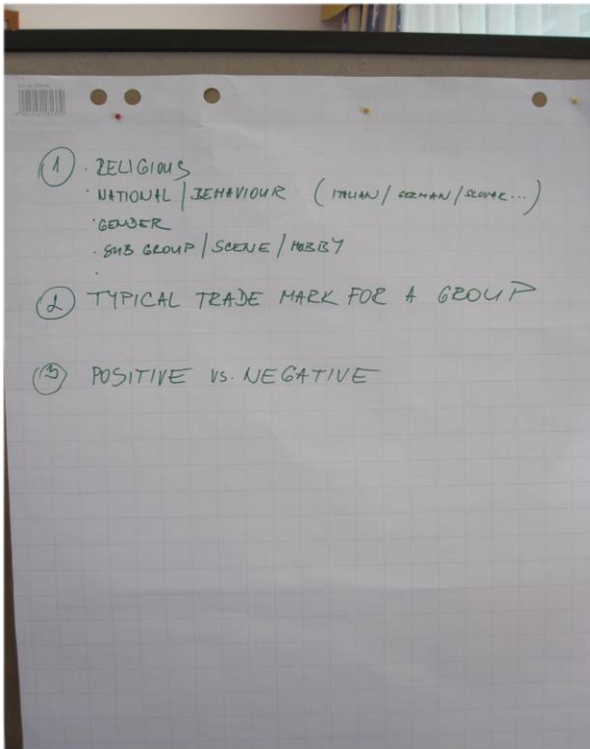


Figure 2: Prejudices Team 1

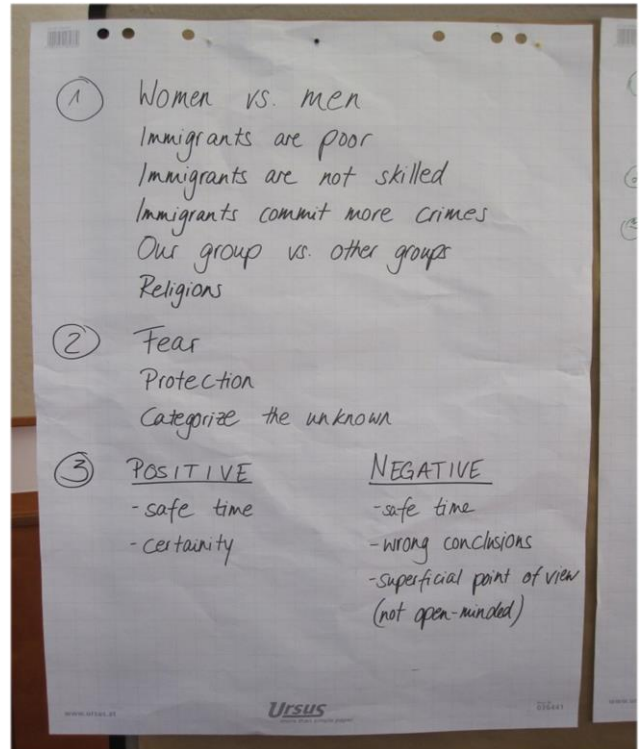


Figure 3: Prejudices Team 2



Figure 4: Prejudices Team 3

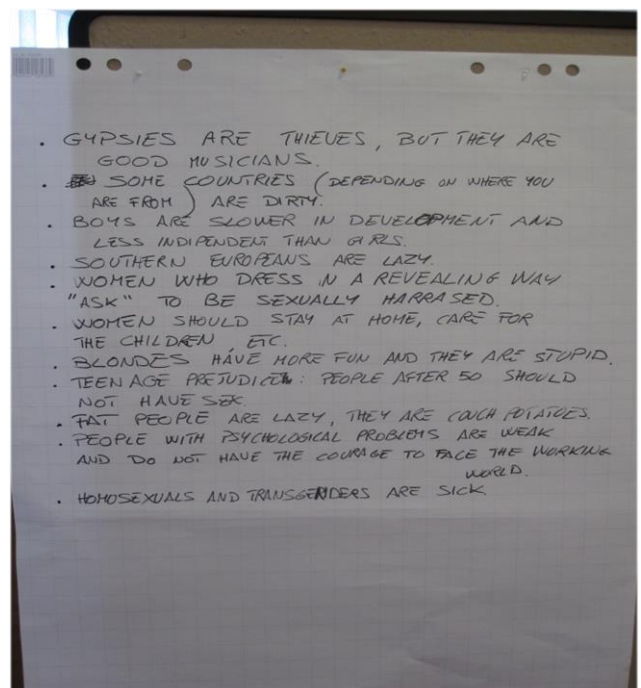


Figure 5: Prejudices Team 4

Petersen and Six are defining prejudices as following:

They are a pre-evaluative judgment that directs an action and in this sense is final. It is usually a little reflected opinion - without intellectual proper assessment of all relevant properties of a fact or a person. Unlike a judgment is the judgmental bias for the one who has it, often starting point for motif-driven actions, sometimes useful, other times inexpedient.

They despite efforts to the contrary, the term "prejudice" in everyday language is most often referred to pejoratively and any kind of negative criticism, which is practiced in one thing.

Psychologically: the term an attitude towards groups with negative affective (hostility), cognitive (stereotypes) and behavioral components (discrimination).

- Prejudice:
- usually refer to marginalized groups
- usually negatively evaluated settings
- all member of this group are attributed to the same characteristics
- are usually the motivation processes (self-appreciation)
- are usually the problems (skin colour, language, clothes, ...)

There are four great scenes for prejudice:

- racism
- sexism
- age
- stigma



Figure 6: Prejudice

## Stereotypes

The next step during this workshop was to talk about stereotypes.

For this the participants had to think about them and they had to design a flip chart with following content:

- What kinds of stereotypes do you know?
- What do they stand for?
- Participants from Austria have to think about Italian, Slovakian and German participants
- Participants from Italy have to think about Slovakian, German, South Tyrol and Austrian participants
- Participants from Germany have to think about Italian, Austrian and Slovakian participants
- Participants from Slovakia have to think about Italian, German and Austrian participants
- Participants from South Tyrol have to think about Italian, German, Austrian and Slovakian participants

The flip charts are shown in the following figures:

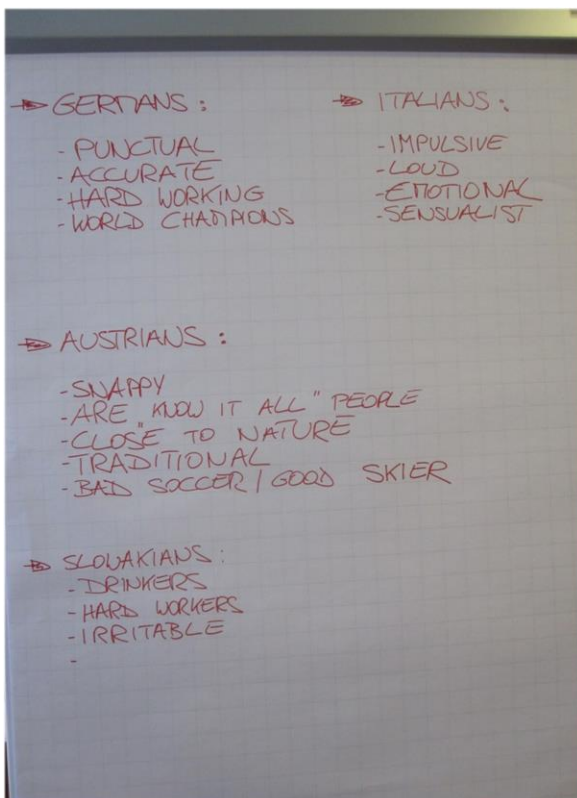


Figure 7: Stereotypes Team 1

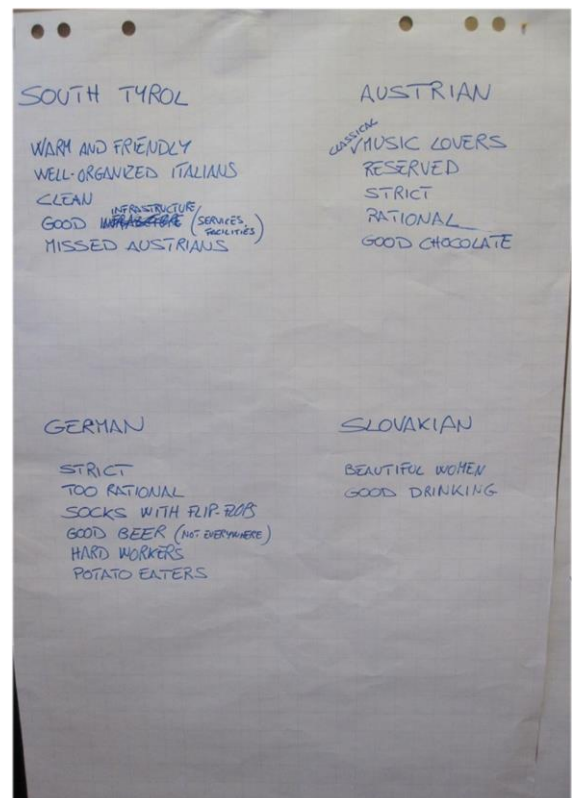


Figure 8: Stereotypes Team 2

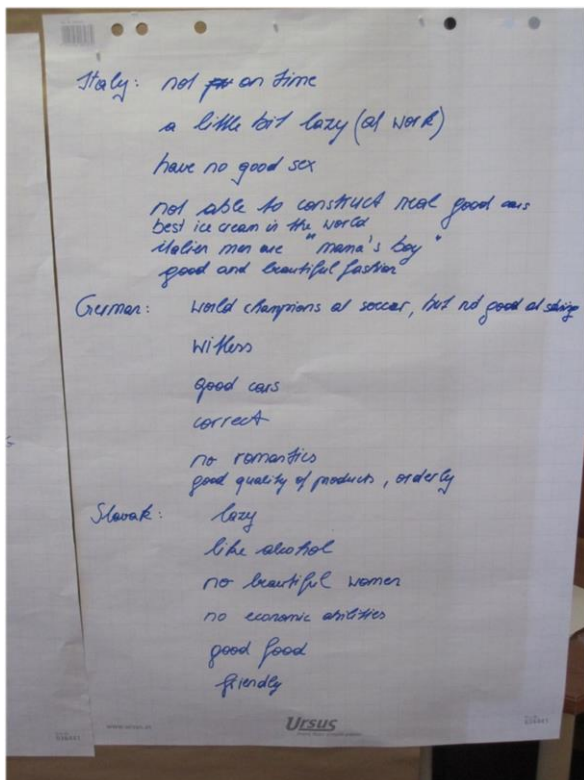


Figure 9: Stereotypes Team 3

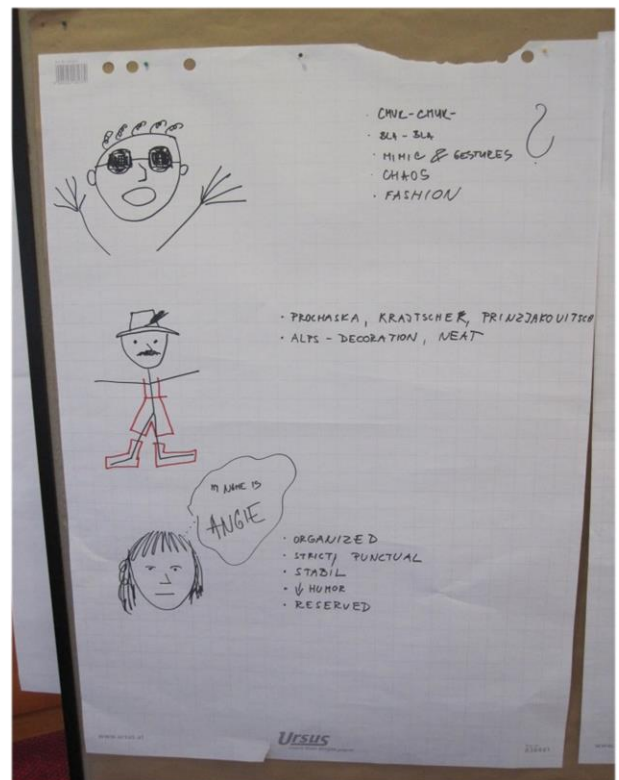


Figure 10: Stereotypes Team 4

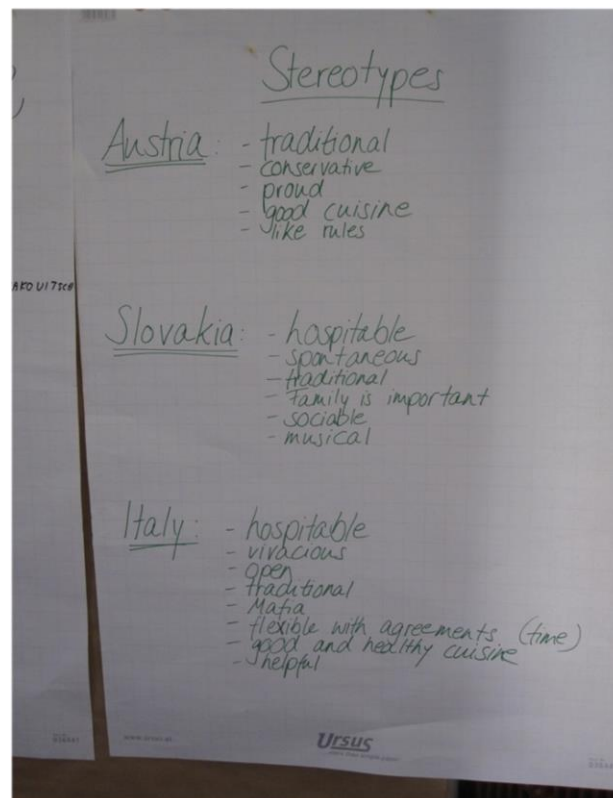


Figure 11: Stereotypes Team 5

And below the respective Teams:



Figure 12: Team South Tyrol (Team 1)



Figure 13: Team Italy (Team 2)



Figure 14: Team Austria (Team 3)



Figure 15: Team Slovakia (Team 4)



Figure 16. Team Germany (Team 5)

Petersen and Six are defining stereotypes as follow: ... (griech. στερεός, *stereós*, „solid, durable, spatially“ and τύπος, *týpos*, „-behaved“) is a constant or frequently occurring pattern. Within this framework, it appears in different contexts with different meanings. A stereotype can be used as a catchy summary of characteristics or behaviors are considered, which often has a high recognition value, but it made a rule for himself the facts meant very simplified. Thus, it is closely related to the importance stereotype or prejudice.

- Person perception: processes that lead to the formation of opinions and / or reviews (Settings) with respect to other people.
- For some observed stimuli (facial expression, behavior) is closed on unobservable variables (mood, personality).

Opinions and attitudes towards other people influence the behavior of people towards this:

- negatively evaluated person is shunned
- nice people is rather helpful
- collaboration with a cooperative rather than people with an aggressive

How to deal with stereotypes:

- They are usually very resistant to change: supposedly aggressive person who is friendly adjusted is doing it
- There is a tendency to avoid negative feedback persons
- Actions will be increasingly performed confirming the opinion of a person
- There are also a lot of cultural differences such as:
- Both partners have different orientation systems, thereby one's own culture and their own life context (natural and social environment) understandable, manageable, influenced and controlled.
- each orientation system differs significantly from other people

One great problem with stereotypes is also the aspect of generalization. Because both partners believe that their orientation system for all others is equally valid, and has to be valid.

Routinization can also influence persons because both partners have become their culture-specific orientation system for granted and requires no reflection or critical control (more).

There are also mental images that influence our thinking, judge and act:

- external image: knowledge, assumptions, information about the other
- self-image: what I put in the encounter
- suspected foreign Pictures: what does the other mean about me

Intercultural experience needs different activities. You have to deal with each other, talk to each other, make arrangements to conduct negotiations. Their own orientation system is provided here to the test and special problems are the prejudices and stereotypes. Be aware that they are always and everywhere.

Special problems with intercultural encounter are:

- language, character
- social community of the interlocutors (nation, culture)
- different valuation of symbols (rites, rituals, religion, tradition, customs)
- misperception
- misinterpretations
- misunderstandings

The consequences for us are:

- beware of hasty and ill-considered judgments
- beware of accusations and hasty attempts at explanation, which imply the inability and unwillingness partners
- conscious and careful observation
- power, status, abilities, note ... (rank)
- intercultural competence is reflected in the ability cultural conditions and influencing factors in perception, judgments, feelings and actions to detect in himself and in other people, to respect, appreciate and productively use
- mutual adaptation
- tolerance of opposites
- development of synergistic forms of cohabitation, the world orientation and the design situation

Norms and values of young Muslims are:

- religion / faith
- respect for parents
- loyalty to family / relatives
- Obedience
- Hospitality
- good manners
- Helpfulness
- their own "mother" language
- a good education
- Honesty
- autonomy / independence
- self-esteem as an individual personality
- other languages

The code of conduct during different missions and activities could be:

1) Particularly respect:

- the importance of religion and family
- the pride of a freedom-loving and tradition-conscious people
- the vulnerability and the recent experience of suffering of the people

2) Avoid making:

- disdainful and discriminating remarks
- undisciplined or improper conduct (under the influence of alcohol)
- suggestive or obscene statements and gestures
- many locals understand the German language!

3) Discussions with attention to:

- salutation
- polite and cooperative style of behavior
- formulation of statements (please, thank you)
- basic vocabulary

How to reduce prejudice:

- diversity management (social diversity)
- information Management
- preparing for use
- countries and people
- culture
- language
- etc.

### 2.1.2 Identified challenges:

Managing and dealing with different ethnic groups in an ETS represents a major challenge and here it needs a lot of tact and empathy. People representing and belonging to a different culture also have their own traditions and customs. These differences are also reflected in the area of the management of an ETS.

The most important finding of the participants was that one first must overcome existing prejudices in dealing with other cultures. Therefore in the area of intercultural competence it depends mainly on the personal account of each individual. An operation without a corresponding knowledge and good preparation in terms of the different cultures would be fatal. The profound and comprehensive preparations as well as the knowledge of the many peculiarities of other cultures are indeed essential.

Special challenges with intercultural encounter are:

- Language, character
- Social community of the interlocutors (nation, culture)
- Different valuation of symbols (rites, rituals, religion, customs, tradition)
- Misperception
- Misinterpretations
- Misunderstandings

## **2.2 Day 2 (forenoon): African States and African ethnic groups**

### **2.2.1 People of Africa**

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world in both area and population. Area: 30 244 000 km<sup>2</sup> (11 700 000 mi<sup>2</sup>) including its adjacent islands it covers about 20 percent of Earth's total land area.

The population of Africa is incredibly diverse, made up of innumerable people of many social and ethnic groups. Some of these groups are made up of just a few thousand people while others consist of millions of people. Each group usually has its own language and culture. Many African countries have numerous ethnic groupings within their borders. For example there are more than thirty folks within Uganda. To give you a better idea of the diversity of the people of Africa here are some interesting facts:

- There are an estimated 3,000 Ethnic groups in Africa.
- There are over 2100 languages spoken in Africa (some estimate over 3000 languages).
- Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism are the main religions practiced. However many of the people practice traditional African religions. Some practice these alongside Christianity, Islam, or Hinduism. Judaism is also present in many parts of Africa.

### **Cultural Features**

#### **Ask, listen, observe and learn**

Do not assume that what is normal to you will be the normal way of doing things or looking at things. You are a stranger, a visitor; therefore, the responsibility is on you to accept the role of being a learner and showing the greatest respect for the local way of thinking and approaching whatever situation you are in with an open mind and submissive spirit. It is your obligation to submit to the advice and leadership in situations where decisions have to be made, especially where those decisions will have effect on the work of the churches. Be humble and respectful. You are entering a society that had its shaping foundations laid over 1000 years ago, thus it is an ancient and noble culture.

## **Patience, tolerance and understanding**

Cross-cultural situations are often filled with stress. This stress comes from being in a different setting than what you are used to. The climate, the languages, the living styles and standards, and just about everything you experience will be different. Your obligation is to be patient, tolerating the differences and possible discomfort. Many Africans will go to great lengths to make you comfortable and cater to your needs; however, the responsibility is still yours to adapt to and accept the situations in which you find yourself.

## **Ethnocentrism**

This is the problem of people from a culture thinking that theirs is the best of all cultures, or being close minded to learning and adapting to new situations. Judgmental attitudes and insensitive comments are very damaging and hurtful. For instance, you are in Ghana purely on a partnership basis that is to work with Ghanaian brethren and friends as co-workers; therefore, it is your duty to watch your attitudes and speech. Do not criticize, mock or ridicule anything or anyone. Be mindful of how many sentences you began with the expression, "In Europe..." or "In my country...." Your status as an outsider being in the country means in all likelihood that you do not have the inside knowledge nor the cultural experience that would enable you to pass informed judgments on culture and custom.

## **Language**

There are thousands of major languages and dialects. Each language is very complex and adequate in its particular setting. Many Africans speak many different languages, demonstrating a linguistic skill that is totally unknown to most Europeans and Americans. You will do well to attempt to learn as much of the local languages as you can. Africans are very encouraging of this and feel honoured when you show this level of respect and concern. Language is the primary tool of constructing meaning in any culture, so you will benefit greatly from paying close attention to the beauty and wealth of expression in the various languages. You will find that the English or French spoken in many countries in Africa are quite different in tone, pronunciation and vocabulary from English in other countries like America, Australia and England. Take time to learn the local ways of speaking English or French. This will prevent much misunderstanding.

## **Communal values**

Every society sets its standards of acceptable behavior and what it values in interpersonal relationships. Africa in general place much emphasis on communal values like extended family, nuclear family, respect for the elderly, honoring traditional rulers like chiefs and elders, and the importance of dignity and proper social conduct. What one person does is seen as having impact on his entire family, social group and community; therefore, everyone is expected to be careful, respectful, dignified and observant and every public setting and in every aspect of life. There is not much appreciation or acceptance of the extreme sense of personal independence that people from Europe or America hold so dear. An attitude of "I don't care what others think, I will do it my own way" is judged as selfish, socially deficient and destructive. Everything is to be done by consensus-agreement after much discussion.

## **Spiritual values**

Religion is very basic in everyone's life, and the spiritual side of life is regarded as most important. Everything is seen through a grid of spiritual values and realities. This provides for a very receptive atmosphere and positive climate for spiritual work and interaction; however, as in all cases, take time to listen and learn. Ghanaian Christians generally have a far better understanding and appreciation of the spiritual and communal concepts of our faith than do Westerners. Your role as a visitor is to learn from the brethren here even as you are invited to teach.

## **Culture stress/shock**

Normally, one does not experience culture shock unless he is staying in a different culture for an extended time. However, culture stress is felt the moment you enter a strange environment. Changes in routine and context may cause varying levels of stress and discomfort especially if one experiences sickness or other stressful situations.

Hearing different languages, being surrounded by customs and settings that are very different as well as being far from your home may cause you to experience this culture stress or shock. At its deepest level, it is a disruption in your emotional and evaluative processes, and may lead to illness or depression. The greatest defence against it is to be aware that culture stress is normal, and to seek help from experienced people in understanding and coping with stressful situations. Depend upon the Lord, and he will lead you in every situation.

## **Friendship**

Making friends with people you like (especially those of the same gender and age group) will prove to be very pleasant and useful. African friends will be there for you if you feel lonely and they can explain and clarify cultural differences to you. They can offer you an introduction to their culture and to cultural events, such as weddings, funerals, et cetera. Friendships between girls and boys are less common in Africa. If you get very close to somebody of the other sex, the person would probably expect a relationship. Physical contact between people of the same sex however are more common than in Europe. Don't be surprised if somebody takes your hand or wipe some dirt of your face.

## **Hierarchy**

It is very important to respect people who are older than you and to follow their instructions. On the other hand, you can feel free to ask younger children to do something for you (usually they will offer to do this themselves). Age-based hierarchy is an important African value. You must obey older family members and in turn they will help you in times of need. Furthermore, you are always welcome to ask acquaintances older than you for advice. They can also mediate in disputes with others or in case you need something from someone. To pay your respects to an elder or to an otherwise respectable person you must kneel.

## **Cultural Etiquette**

1. Always greet people from right to left, always with your right hand. Remember that your palms are always properly aligned for greeting people when going right-to-left. Always follow this order, regardless of the age or gender or status of the people you are greeting. This will seem very awkward when you enter a room where everyone is lined up on the left wall because you will have to walk past everyone to start greeting from the furthest person.
2. Always use your right hand to give and receive items, and to eat. In this culture, your left hand is considered your 'toilet hand'. It is a common practice to give money with your right hand while at the same time receiving your purchase into the same hand.
3. Always greet people first when you enter an area. Otherwise, you may wonder why people are just looking at you when you enter a room. They are waiting for you to offer a greeting, which will be received with a big smile and a warm reply.

4. Never make derogatory remarks about any religious, political or ethnic group or behavior. Many African Countries are tolerant and respectful of all its diverse tribes, religions and customs. Always be respectful, especially to elders. The older the person, the more respect. However, always greet in the correct order, right-to-left, regardless of age or gender.

Remember to share. People in Africa do not live the independent lives of Western cultures. Sharing food and sharing stories are two of the best ways to join this culture of interdependence. It is acceptable to give small amounts of money (\$2 maximum) to children or the disabled, but usually not to beggars.

5. You should not be wasteful. Africa is a land where every little thing has value. Notice how small the rubbish cans are in homes and hotels. Feel free to offer anything that has no value to you to any person anywhere.
6. Direct, "let's get to business" conversation is considered rude. Always exchange pleasantries and inquire about family before beginning to transact any business. Even if you are just purchasing an orange.
7. Keep your demeanor and dress proper. For men, lightweight trousers are more proper than shorts during the weekday. Shirts with a collar are also the preferred dress during the weekday. Non-native men should not go shirtless except at the beach or poolside. Shorts and T-shirts are fine after the workday hours or on weekends, when it is casual time. For women, modesty is preferred. Always try to keep your shoes clean of dirt and dust.
8. Realize that starting times for events are not exact. An event will usually not begin until at least one hour after the noted starting time. It is called "Africa time", and if you arrive at the posted starting time, people will jokingly say you are following "European time".
9. When in rural areas and small villages, a visit to the local chief is the first stop you should make. When in the presence of the chief, remove your hat, keep your hands out of your pockets and do not cross your legs. When invited to greet the chief, approach just short of where they are seated and bow slightly. Do not offer your hand unless the chief invites you for a handshake. Always be sure to bring a small gift. Usually a bottle of schnapps is perfect.

## Summary

There is a very deep sense of doing things in a formal, proper way. This means that too much informality, especially in public settings is not appreciated. For example, Italians tend to value informality, relaxed situations and interaction; however, in Ghana, proper, respectful conduct is expected especially from those who are in the presence of people older than themselves. For example, if you approach a group of people with the intention of speaking to only one of the group about something, you must first take time to greet the entire group before asking permission to speak to the one person. To walk up to a group and speak directly to one person only without first greeting the entire group is considered very rude. This sense of formality and concern for public conduct is also seen in the fact that eating and drinking during meetings, church services, prayer times, etc., is not acceptable, neither is chewing gum. The general rule is: "Do not eat or drink in the gathering unless you are offered something by the host. „This sense of formality and respect is also seen in the custom of removing sandals before entering a house (this includes flip-flops). Also, when you are entering someone's room (especially bedroom or private office), you should knock on the door or say "knocking" before entering, even if the person has already told you to come in. This evidences a respectful, careful attitude. Always remember to be cautious, respectful and observant so as not to be offensive. This is especially true when you are in the presence of authorities, elderly persons and in public settings.



**Figure 17:**  
**Working session**  
**Africa with**  
**Emmanuel**

**Figure 18:**  
**Working session**  
**Africa with Aliou**



**Figure 19:**  
**Working**  
**session Africa**  
**with Kojo**

**Figure 20:**  
Activity session with  
Aliou



**Figure 21:**  
Activity  
session with  
Aliou

## 2.3 Day 2 (afternoon): Islam

### A tentative list of to do and not to do in an intercultural context with focus on the Islamic dimension

Islam is the fastest growing religion and its demographic centres are located in South Asia. Indonesia, still the biggest Muslim country, might soon be overtaken by India. China is next in line. However, we associate Islam mostly with the Arabic civilisation. This is due to the cultural roots of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula and above all the importance of the Arabic language, in which Koran is still taught and read, thereby causing problems of basic understanding though not risking erratic translation, as has been the case with the Bible.

The following list is above all not exhaustive and it tries to avoid generalizations. This is a tight-rope walk; therefore, the author apologizes for all misperceptions such a requested guideline might cause.

#### 1. The omnipresent role of religion: internal strife, denial of atheism, superiority complex

a). Though Muslims to a certain extent recognize the preceding divine revelations by Judaism and Christianity, they do have fundamental problems with prophecies that came later and thereby put their **“final” interpretation** into perspective. This holds true, in particular, for Shia and all other syncretic religious traditions. The inner rift, the “fitna”, which started in 632 subsequent to the death of the Prophet, is the engine of current wars in the Islamic world from Syria to Pakistan and Central Asia.

**Conclusion:** Be aware of the many internal disputes, which can explode in a refugee shelter, a school dormitory etc.: outbreak of violence between followers of different Islamic currents has become a security issue also inside Europe: see Germany, Austria autumn 2014.

b). **Religion encompasses life** and is in total control on the human being. Therefore, the mere concept of atheism is inconceivable to a Muslim mind. This is one of the many reasons why Saudi Arabia with its religious extremism in the guise of Wahabite Islam has never signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, since it stipulates freedom of religion.

**Conclusion:** Be careful regarding the importance of religion if you wish to achieve a settlement of coexistence within a refugee camp etc. Unfortunately religious dogmas can supersede basic common sense, such as should women be saved from a fire even though they are not decently dressed – cases like these happened in radical Islamic societies in the recent past.

c). A certain **superiority complex** often accompanies those fervent Muslims who believe to behold the ultimate interpretation of Islam. Many schools of teachings concur with each other and therefore might create more confusion than reliable references for the respective follower.

**Conclusion:** It is quasi impossible to obtain the ultimate answer to certain religious affairs of daily life, stretching from matrimony to the role of education. Each school might offer a different answer and the importance of a digital Imam in a chat room actually supersedes the

elders of the established mosques. So the community might not take the Imam serious – this is also to be taken into account in relief work etc.

d). **Non-Muslims are often considered as minors**, they are to be put under a sort of protection according to Islamic law. The disdain for the Non-Muslim has mounted over the past decades, due to a rise of very conservative religious concepts, but also in the aftermath of Western invasions into Islamic countries, often coined “crusades”. The Re-emergence of an orthodox Islam and decline of all liberal forms of practice has also resulted in a trend of: The younger, the more conservative

**Conclusion:** One should be aware of the fact that the non-Muslim is considered inferior. Children might not be allowed to play with the “Non-Muslim children”. A Muslim woman is not supposed to get engaged to a Non-Muslim etc.

## **2. The many efforts to bridge religious rifts – the inflation of interreligious dialogue.**

a). To be engaged in **interreligious and ultimately intercultural dialogue** has been a priority of many European institutions, both on a national and supranational level. But decades of dialogue conferences have not yielded tangible results. On the contrary, Orient and Occident seem to be more alienated than ever before. In the absence of curiosity for each other and against the backdrop of on-going warfare: inter- and above all inner religious hatred has increased.

**Conclusion:** Political issues, such as the territorial disputes in the Middle East, the matter of power-sharing from Bosnia to Yemen etc., require political solutions. Pragmatism is urgently needed to tackle the many frozen and open conflicts.

b). **Civil and not religious representatives** should be elected and chosen instead of giving too much weight to religious leaders. In order to enable pluralism and genuine coexistence, especially with the exceptional circumstances of a disaster situation, priority should be given to those persons who can make people flock around a certain cause and not polarise along ethnic-religious criteria.

**Conclusion:** By giving priority to religious aspects, one risks to divide the group between believers and “infidels” – this ends up in a quagmire of more strife and hatred. One can watch tragic examples from Turkey to Iraq.

c). **Confessionalism on the rise:** What was once called “Lebanization” is currently shaping politics and society in many regions, namely the fragmentation of the republican system in the name of religious and ethnic particularities. European societies follow a similar trend by allowing the rise of religious privileges to the detriment of the wider bond of a civil legal structure.

**Conclusion:** Partners, persons of confidence etc. in a disaster relief situation should be chosen on the basis of meritocracy, not religious affiliations. Otherwise the entire group might be further fragmented.

### **3. Daily coexistence in exceptional circumstances and the role of religion:**

Religion is ultimately the last resort of hope. The rise of religious extremism should be understood in the light of corrupt political parties and bankrupt political ideas.

Religion can provide comfort and give perspective, since the human being puts hope into divine mercy. This can enable people in disastrous situations gain new confidence.

Pious people try to give a meaning to all setback and loss, being convinced that whatever happens is the will of God.

Such an attitude can sometimes make it easier to simply continue, also under dreadful conditions. However, it can also paralyse the believer who waits for God/the destiny to make things happen instead of being active and thereby change the circumstances.

This holds particularly true for followers of Islam who believe that God holds everything and that the individual should not challenge the destiny, but only read what is already written in the book of destiny.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, relief workers should strive to remain pragmatic and not succumb to religious demands for praying rooms. To build an efficient sanitary room is always the priority.

## 2.4 Day 3: Humanitarian Aid

The Humanitarian crises in the world are growing – growing in number of crises, growing in number of people affected and growing in the size of the damage. The effects cannot be denied anymore. At the moment there are more refugees in the world than during World War 2. Especially Syrian and Northern Africa are the Hotspots. “Safe continents” like Europe try to “protect” themselves more and more by building high fences and walls or using military operations to avoid refugees to come. But as long as there is so much pain and risk to those people, they will always try to overcome these obstacles to reach a safe place for them and their families.

The response to Humanitarian crises in any way is seen as one of the most important topics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is also a special point in the ongoing SDG discussions, high-level meetings like G7, G20, etc.

But the solution can never be a military operation or a wall. The solution can only be to solve the problems in the countries of the origin. A courageous policy is needed more than ever.

NGOs get more and more involved in conflicts. They take more and more the role of states in disaster responses. This includes also political touching points with governments, armies, etc.

But how can NGOs go on with their work?

### Humanitarian Principles

The Humanitarian system around the world is stretched to the limits. NGOs cannot face the work in the field on their own. They either need other NGOs or state officials, but in most cases they need both. So the way to cooperate is critical. But how can NGOs engage with officials, with states, even sometimes with dictators?

The guideline can only be found in the four humanitarian principles:

- Humanity
- Neutrality
- Impartiality
- Independence

Those humanitarian principles give a help. They must be kept real and taken in the middle of any response. As long as Staff and organizations follow these principles they will keep themselves out of the line of the state officials and possible troubles, that might come with this – especially in cases, where governments do not have the support of the majority of the people.

## Humanity

“Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.”<sup>1</sup>

The first principle puts Human beings in the middle of the response. It is clearly the first principle and in different cases might be one of the most difficult to follow. It gives the purpose for humanitarian aid.

## Neutrality

“Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.”

Especially in armed conflicts this is one of the most important and critical principles to follow. It can be the only protection of an NGO in environments like Syria. All sides in an armed conflict are affected; mostly of course the civilians are affected. So NGOs are not allowed to sort out. Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

## Impartiality

“Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.”

This principle tells that need is the only reason for help. This can also mean, that a soldier needs help more urgent, than a child.

## Independence

“Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.”

This point is getting more and more difficult. As mentioned at the beginning the response in Humanitarian Affairs is growing. The NGOs need more funds to provide the help so desperate needed. States play a more and more important role in the funding – this funding can include reasons of state. NGOs must not follow them, but make sure, that help is always independent.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\\_eng\\_June12.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf)

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Those principles are the result out of the Code of conduct of the International Red Cross, UN OCHA and other Un Organizations. They are completed by the Oslo Protocols, Humanitarian Charter, the Humanitarian Law and others. Up to date all nations and 492 international organizations have signed.

The Humanitarian Principles are a framework. Since all nations have signed them, NGOs can refer to them. The problem is hidden in the details. Still it is a loose framework and what they mean in the field will be a situation to situation decision. It is most important to define a staff member who is the leading connection to the state officials.

Talking about the officials it is easier for NGOs to cooperate with the civilian government, than with armies. The problem behind this is that the logistics of armies are often needed, but the cooperation brings lots of risks, like becoming a target or being used by the army for their own purposes. The cooperation with the army must always be handled more strictly, than any other. Clear rules are the beginning of a useful way of helping. World Vision has developed its own decision tool, the HISS CAM<sup>2</sup> approach. Any other NGO should do this as well.

The problem with the principles is the new form of conflict, which is coming up at the moment: asymmetrical conflicts. DAESH/ISIS or Al Qaida are not supporting these standards. This endangers the helpers in these areas in a high level. Due to this there are only very reduced possibilities for cooperation.

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<sup>2</sup> HISS stands for: Humanitarian Imperative, Impartiality and Independence, Safety, Sustainability; CAM stands for Compelling, appropriate and minimal negative impact.

Every World Vision officer in the field is supposed to measure a possible cooperation with an army against these points. Alongside there is a manual and a codex how a cooperation can be possible.

### Practical way:

#### What is needed to run a camp?

The necessities are approved by most international organizations and written down in a nutshell in the “SPHERE Standards”<sup>3</sup>.



Figure 22: The SPHERE Handbook

This book is a handbook to be used live in the field, the compendium in the pocket. It is divided into four key lifesaving areas:

- Water supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion
- Food Security and Nutrition
- Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items
- Health Action

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sphereproject.org/>

All areas have minimum level guidelines and practical hints for the work. It is meant as a “hands-on” book to be used during a response in the field.

Those guidelines can only be a red line to follow. The experience shows, that they need to be adjusted from response to response. While people in rather dry countries are quite used to get by with the amount of water recommended, people in countries with enough water have problems to reduce their use from an average of 120 liters to 10-15 liters a day.

The standards can be read in the book or online. It would be of no sense, to write down all standards.

Let’s have a little bit more practical look at it. The SPHERE Standards are the Minimum requirements. NGOs need to think in the planning about these points:

- Spot/Location
- Staffing
- Standards in the field – see SPHERE Standards
- Cooperation
- Logistics
- Communications

#### **Spot:**

The first challenge is to find the right spot. There are some factors, which need to be considered:

- Security: The space must provide security for the people affected as well as for the helpers
- Infrastructure: It must be possible to reach the camp for logistic reasons
- Size: At the beginning a place might be big enough. The longer a crisis is going on, the more people are coming and the camp will grow and exceed the size or even boost the limits.
- Sight: It should be possible to divide the camp in different parts. If the units become too big, it will be the reason for troubles.
- Climate: Here things, like wheatear, water, etc. should be considered. This makes this point one of the biggest and most difficult.

Even considering all this points, there is one factor which changes everything: Normally local governments decide where a space is provided. The Syria crisis shows this in a special way: The government of Lebanon was prohibiting camps. The reason for this is the Palestinian war in the 1980s. The camps from this war still exist and they became cities within cities. The situation without camps makes it more difficult to reach the persons in need. They are spread out over a wide area, most of them in the Bekaa valley.

The government of Jordan agreed to open up camp Azraq to disencumber Zaátari. Azraq is now a huge new area, located in the desert in one of the driest countries in the Middle East. This stretches the logistics of the helpers to the limits. Millions of liters of water need to be transported to the camp every day and millions of tons of disposal need to be transported from the camp.



Figure 23: Satellite picture of Camp Azraq in Jordan

## Staffing

The staff will be fitting to different observations:

- Size: How many people do you want to help?
- Type of response: Are you assisting in the field or only the refugees, e.g. in an earthquake
- Sector: Which sector are you in? Logistics, registration, etc.
- Time: Is it a long ongoing humanitarian crisis? Is the response planned for more years?
- Experts: Do you need special experts for different tasks? E.g. translators, water purification, etc.
- Climate affairs

All this factors have a straight impact on your staffing. The most important formula is: Plan big and then even bigger! Unfortunately only the smallest part of humanitarian responses can be planned. So it is crucial to include the surprise.

There are no international agreements standards for staffing. Every organization needs to build up its own plan. More important and difficult is to have experts in the sectors an NGO works. They either need to be found or trained. Both takes at least time and resources.

The experience teaches us, that there are various advantages in hiring assistant staff from the people who live in the camps: they know the cultural affairs of the people, they speak the language, they are used to the climate, etc. A sometimes underestimated factor is: They will have a job; they will have a sensible task during their stay. They can earn a little money, they have something to do, instead of sitting around, etc. The problem might be to choose the right persons.

Experts are a central need in case of a humanitarian operation. They need to be trained, educated and available. Any organization should concentrate on special matters. As written in the beginning the crises we face at the moment are becoming too big for one organization to run the whole response alone. Organizations and even states need to cooperate nowadays. Just think of the response like the Syrian refugee crisis or the Nepal earthquake. In both cases millions of people need help, in Nepal the help became necessary within some seconds.

This gives the organizations the change for specialization. MSF, the Red Cross are already high specialized. Also World Vision has its own field, where we can provide a special expertise: it's the child focused work and the agenda of recovery with the focus of sustainable development, which might be necessary afterwards.

#### Training:

Trainings should be provided in the way, that it includes more than one organization. Cooperation is the key. The members of the organizations need to learn this from the beginning. Ideally it should also include the cooperation between authorities and NGOs.

One special point in the trainings should be the security training. The number of conflicts worldwide is growing, in the same way the number of people in need because of an ongoing conflict is raising as well. The fragile context is a growing reality now for the NGOs to work within. Training can give hints and ideas, but never be a "shield" forever – thinking of asymmetrical warfare as it is today more the case, than any other.



Figure 24: Staff from World Vision during a hostage training situation in HEAT – Hostile environment awareness training

**Cooperation:**

For some NGOs an independent camp would be the best solution. This might be true. The problem is that there will be no camp without the permission of the local authorities.

The second point is that support from local government can make a huge difference for the people in need. Logistics, water supply, support like the permission for children to visit local schools or waste management.

Especially the logistics part is important. To provide enough food, water and shelter for a high number of people is extremely difficult. Most NGOs do not have enough trucks, water trucks, tanks or containers to run a camp. In the response to the earthquake of Nepal we also see another point: the governments are providing the helicopters, in cooperation with private companies. They are absolutely crucial to the response, since most of the areas cannot be reached by cars and it would take too long to transport the necessary materials on the small trails across the mountains.

**Logistics:**

In the most crises we have right now, there are a lot of refugees, mostly thousands in one spot. This stretches the local systems to the edges, sometimes further. Help is needed fast, big and well planned.

This is a big problem for NGOs. On one hand a financial one – all materials should be available at any time, so you need big stores. On the other hand transportation to get all the materials to the place where they are needed – here another time cooperation is needed, either with armies or companies. An example can be World Vision Germany. They have an agreement with “Lufthansa”. If a major crisis like the earthquake of Nepal occurs, Lufthansa is providing a transport plane in Frankfurt within 24 hours, where World Vision has got a central logistics center.

**Communications:**

How can you make sure that politics care about the situation and your response?

This is one of the most difficult things in a response. Especially in long-lasting things like the Syria crisis or the refugee crisis happening in the Middle Sea it is critical to keep the attendance high. As much as it is critical, it is difficult. The public and the media will lose the interest after some time. And normally politicians listen more to the public opinion, reflected in the yellow press, than to NGOs or consultants.

The communications department will play a key role. Especially to raise awareness, to guarantee so, that funding is going on, to make sure, that the responsible officials support the response and “stay to their words”.

The tasks change a little bit, depending on which kind of disaster you are facing:

- Slow onset/long ongoing disaster: war, refugee crisis, famine
- Fast onset disaster: earthquake, tsunami

The biggest problem is to keep the attention, to keep media curious. This means on the ground: deliver, deliver, deliver – stories, pictures, interviews, background stories, etc. For staffing this is an important calculation. This is the most crucial part, because the need of information and the interest is dropping very fast, especially in the fast onset disasters. We have just seen this in the Nepal earthquake; there it was the case just after two weeks:

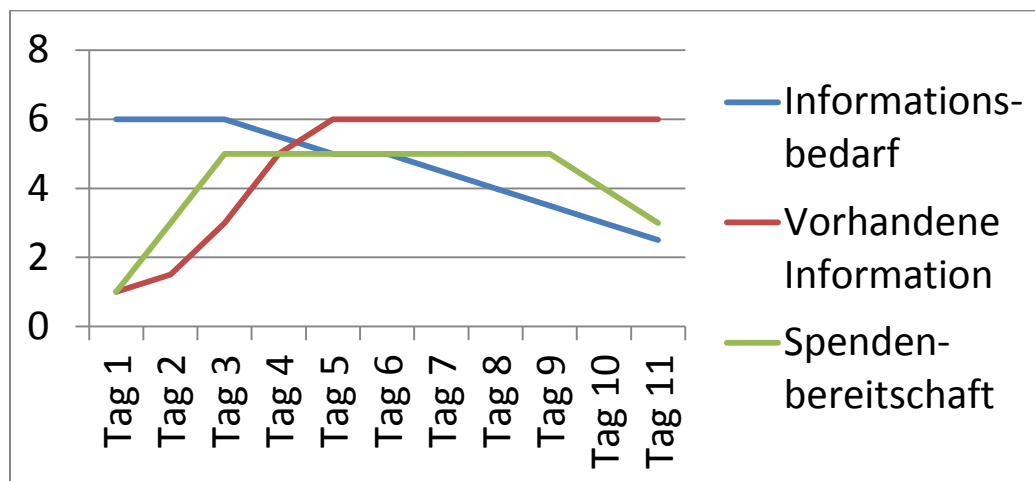


Figure 25: The blue line shows the need of information or the interest; the red line shows the available information and the green line the willingness to donate.

The graph shows the flow of information and the most important thing: the decrescent need for information and willingness to donate. The longer a crisis and a humanitarian response is going on it is absolutely necessary to stall the moment those two are going down. The only way to do so is creativity. As an example, what it means if a crisis is dropping out of the attention: In the Syria conflict 2013 75% of the response was funded, 2014 52% and 2015 only 12%.

It is a very interesting point, that people in the countries, like in Europe, who are supposed to donate, donate more, if somebody from their home country is explaining the crisis on the ground in the affected country. That means, you can have hundreds of the best local experts, but you might need to send somebody else from your country of origin to talk about it.

To keep the attention includes also the engagement with officials. Experience shows that it is absolutely important to include the politicians. We need support by the officials, especially public funding. So an invitation to a refugee camp to show them the actual situation is one wonderful tool. Attention: At the same moment it is most important to include all politicians, not only those, we like or who are sympathetic. Neutrality is a human principal. This is a thin red line!!!!

The political engagement becomes more difficult in non-democratic states. But still it is important to include the politicians in an open and fair way.

So in short points:

1. Information for all!
2. Start the engine: Find the roles, the channels and the actions
3. Do it!
4. Reinforcement
5. New action and so on!

**Conclusion:**

Today's humanitarian responses are getting bigger and more difficult. NGOs face growing problems, like funding, logistics and staffing. Cooperation is the only available solution – in different directions: between NGOs, NGOs to officials, between governments, etc.

At the end it is the duty of the NGOs to keep disasters – in any way – in the head and mind of the people! People need to know, what happens to people and why. This is the only way to get officials and people involved and help to run on!

The points mentioned above are not limited! They have lots of different sub-groups etc. The main thing is to get the right people to do the jobs.

### 3. Summary and Conclusions

In general, interculturalism is a phenomenon of interactivity between at least two different cultures including their perception of each other. It follows that in this environment, a great deal of capacity-building of the individual concerned is necessary in order to enable a positive approach. Only a corresponding openness and the will to deal with these challenges allow a common togetherness. The more different cultures interact with each other, the higher the demands on all involved.

In our minds there are existing prejudices and stereotypes about people coming from foreign countries, which have a great influence about our opinion. Prejudices and stereotypes often contain negative aspects of the out-group, while the in-group is better rated. Prejudices usually refer to marginalized groups and negative evaluated settings. All members of this group are attributed to the same characteristics. Every kind of prejudice regarding to other cultures must be overcome to enable a peaceful coexistence. Therefore, intercultural competence has become one of the key skills (generic competence; soft skills).

Because of this reason intercultural experience needs different activities. You have to deal with each other, talk to each other and make arrangements to conduct negotiations. In the area of intercultural competence it depends mainly on the personal account of each individual. An operation without a corresponding knowledge and good preparation in terms of the different cultures would be fatal. The profound and comprehensive preparations as well as the knowledge of the many peculiarities of other cultures are indeed essential.

Characteristics of intercultural competence are also to recognize adherence to culture, to overcome culturalism, to develop respect towards other cultures, to take into account divergences and convergences and to be tolerant with regard to ambiguity. Intercultural competence is reflected in the ability to detect cultural conditions and influencing factors in perception, judgements, feeling and actions in one self and in other people to respect, appreciate and productively use.

These special needs should therefore constitute a central role in the management of an ETS and it should also be considered in the infrastructure of the camp. In addition to the logistical challenges there are huge demands in terms of intercultural competence of the individual actors. Every single person in charge in the area of an ETS must be aware of this and should have no fear of getting in contact with foreign cultures. A successful management of different ethnic groups in an ETS is only possible if basic intercultural skills are present.