

Humanitarian Negotiations Initiative May 2016

Overview

Conflict Dynamics International (CDI)'s Humanitarian Negotiation Initiative serves to advance the policy and practice of humanitarian negotiations. This initiative's overarching objective is to enhance the capacity of humanitarian actors to secure better humanitarian outcomes for civilians affected by armed conflict and other crises. Through this initiative, CDI develops policy guidance and delivers trainings to prepare humanitarians to conduct humanitarian negotiations and to navigate various dilemmas related to this type of engagement.

The Humanitarian Negotiation Initiative comprises four interrelated components: (i) policy development; (ii) delivery of advanced training; (iii) provision of 'technical support' on specific negotiation challenges; and (iv) outreach and dissemination activities.

This multi-faceted approach places CDI in a unique position to understand the complexities of humanitarian negotiations and to support partners across multiple dimensions of humanitarian negotiations. CDI is the only organization offering training modules that reflect the official UN-endorsed guidance on humanitarian negotiations. CDI focuses its efforts on getting practical guidance into the hands of practitioners in the field and utilizes their feedback to further develop and refine policy and training modules. Furthermore, this initiative leverages CDI's pioneering work in the field of humanitarian negotiations, ongoing since 2004, as well as its direct experience in humanitarian negotiations with a range of actors including State forces, national authorities, and humanitarian organizations.

The Humanitarian Negotiation Initiative's program methodology brings innovative and forward-looking solutions to the policy and practice of humanitarian negotiations. CDI leverages knowledge from its work on several related areas of humanitarian policy development, including humanitarian access in situations of armed conflict and children affected by armed conflict.

Context

The effective and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance is directly linked to the ability of humanitarian actors to engage with all stakeholders in the areas in which they operate. Stakeholders include affected communities, government authorities, civil society, donor organizations, UN bodies, development actors, State and non-State armed forces and groups. Following a request from the UN Secretary-General, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) led the development of a manual for humanitarian negotiations. This manual, *Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups: A Manual for Practitioners* (2006), was co-authored by Gerard Mc Hugh, President of Conflict Dynamics International, and Manuel Bessler.

Following the publication of this seminal work, CDI has remained actively engaged in equipping humanitarians with the practical skills and knowledge needed to successfully engage in humanitarian negotiations. Through this engagement, CDI has recognized that numerous challenges continue to hinder the effective practice of humanitarian negotiations. This initiative seeks to address those challenges by providing ongoing clarification on the interpretation and application of existing policy guidance and creating further guidance on context and issue-specific challenges.

Program Architecture

CDI's Humanitarian Negotiation Initiative consists of four mutually reinforcing components:

1. **Policy development:** Building on the guidance contained in the UN manual on humanitarian negotiations with armed groups, CDI is undertaking the development of policy guidance on specific challenges to humanitarian negotiations, such as dilemmas associated with negotiations with certain proscribed groups.
2. **Development and delivery of advanced training:** Since 2006, CDI has delivered seminars and advanced training workshops on humanitarian negotiations for partners in locations spanning Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The trainings offered by this initiative are unique as they are based on the UN policy guidance on humanitarian negotiations as well as on the field experiences of UN and non-governmental humanitarian workers. These trainings focus on humanitarian negotiations with a range of actors, including State forces, non-State armed groups, national authorities, and other relevant actors.
3. **Provision of 'technical support' on specific negotiation challenges:** CDI provides UN and humanitarian organizations with targeted support at the headquarter, regional and field office levels to assist practitioners on specific negotiation challenges or dilemmas.
4. **Outreach and dissemination activities:** CDI collaborates with UN and other partners to ensure widespread dissemination and uptake of policy guidance on humanitarian negotiations. Outreach initiatives include presentations in various fora, responding to requests and inquiries on the UN manual or other policy guidance, and liaising with other institutions engaged in humanitarian negotiations. CDI developed and maintains the Humanitarian Negotiations Information Portal (www.humanitariannegotiations.org), a practitioner-driven resource that is intended to serve as a global repository of information and resources on humanitarian negotiations. This portal aims to promote knowledge sharing and learning amongst the humanitarian community on this subject.

Objectives

The overarching goal of this initiative is to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian negotiations.

1. To advance humanitarian policy related to humanitarian negotiations
2. To increase technical capacity to prepare for and conduct effective and structured humanitarian negotiations
3. To assist humanitarian practitioners in working through specific dilemmas and challenges in humanitarian negotiations
4. To increase uptake and usage of policy guidance related to humanitarian negotiations

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